Interview with: Leona Egeland Siadek
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Moon: Hi my name is Danelle Moon I am a director of San Jose State University Special Collections and Archives and today I am talking with Leona Egeland Siadek at the Crown Plaza Hotel in San Jose. Today's date is January 25 2007. [To Egeland Siadek] I'm just going to set this by your chair so we can get a little extra sound.

Egeland Siadek: Okay.

Moon: Okay well Leona, thank you so much for agreeing to the interview—and first of all, that you were able to come down to San Jose worked out really well. I've been wanting to talk to you about your experiences since I've had a chance to record Janet Grayhayes, Susan Hammer, Susan Wilson, Blanca Alvarez. I also just met up with Sally Reed a couple weekends ago up in Pebble beach, and she was very interesting to talk to as well. But I haven't had a chance to talk to anyone at the state assembly level. One of the aspects of this project is to try and get the women to talk about what it was like to be a part of the Feminist Capital, and whether or not you really identified with the Feminist Capital at the time you were going into office.

Egeland Siadek: Well the term the Feminist Capital was coined after we were elected, of course, so there wasn't anything prior to that that you associated. We loosely, related to each other as people involved in city politics and as women so we knew each other and we had worked on other people's campaigns together—mostly male—so we *did* know each other. Most of the people that were in politics were also either members of the League [League of Women Voters] or AAUW and we knew them through those organizations as well. So I don't know that we thought of ourselves as feminists. We were women involved in—interested in public policy, projects, in and around our neighborhood, and doing *something* to make life *better* and be involved, and also to break barriers. It was very, very sort of unsaid, but, it was *there*. You know, we *did* want to break barriers.

00:02:34

Moon: Now, looking back at your family history, were there certain people in your life who inspired you to either think politically, or act out in a political way?

Egeland Siadek: There was no one in my family who was involved in politics, who was involved in party politics, who ever ran for office, or—and of all the topics that were discussed at our house I think politics was perhaps one of the *least* discussed, current events, who was making the decision about, whatever, building a new library, or invading another country, I mean, whatever it was. My father in particular was very well read and history was his thing, so we discussed war efforts and international politics, and the movement of peoples, immigration issues. But, elected office…there was no one. And I never thought about it. And when I was in the legislature I had a call from a gentleman and my secretary said "This man on the phone says that he gave you your start in politics." It was a busy day but I remember I took the call, and this [caller] was the man that I beat out for student body treasurer in high school.

Moon: Oh, oh my goodness! [Laughs]

Egeland Siadek: [Laughing] So that was probably the first time I did anything political, was I ran for student body office in high school.

00:04:25

Moon: Now you grew up, you said, in Tucson—

Egeland Siadek: I did, yeas.

Moon: —and so what—were your parents aligned with the Democratic Party, or did they identify politically in any way?

Egeland Siadek: My father was a Goldwater fan. And my mother—and he had been a Democrat up until that point. And my mother was too. And my father, in fact, was part of the labor union movement being in the trade. And I have little cards—he was the Secretary Treasurer of his union and, you know, at one time. But he, for some reason, became enamored with Goldwater, and it didn't seem to matter that—it wasn't about his hawkish stance, it simply was that he *liked* the man and thought he spoke his mind. And so, he was going to vote for Goldwater, and he knew that my mother was going to vote against him, and so he told my mother—who didn't drive—that he was not driving her to the polls and she would say "Well I'm taking the taxi then." And that was, you know, the joking extent of politics. We didn't really talk about politics.

00:05:45

Moon: Now, but you went to college at the University of Arizona, where you received your bachelor's degree? When did you graduate?

Egeland Siadek: Yes. Um—1960.

Moon: And how did you come to San Jose?

Egeland Siadek: I came to San Jose to do my master's degree.

00:06:02
Moon: So you came here as a student, rather than—?

Egeland Siadek: I came here as a student, yes.

Moon: Oh, okay.

Egeland Siadek: San Jose had a program in science education, and you could get a master's degree in science education so that you could both get your teaching credential and a master's degree in the sciences.

00:06:21
Moon: Okay, so when did you graduate from that program?

Egeland Siadek: So, um, well, it was probably '62—

Moon: Okay.

Egeland Siadek: Something like that. Maybe '63— My thesis is *somewhere* in the archives, probably buried.

00:06:36
Moon: I'll have to look for it. It would be under Shapiro, though?

Egeland Siadek: It would be under Shapiro. Galen Bell, was my main advisor.

Moon: Now you went on to teach school after that, is that right?

Egeland Siadek: I did. I taught junior high and then high school, general science and biology.

00:06:57
Moon: How many years did you teach?

Egeland Siadek: Well, I'm not really sure how to answer that because I taught part time after I started having babies [so—]But I taught full time for three years and then I taught for two years on a part time basis. At that time, girls who were pregnant were not allowed to go to high school, also students who had been in accidents or whatever. So, I worked for the school district and I home taught. And I would connect the students with classes they had in the high school so they could get the credits, and some of them would return back to high school. Some of them—

Moon: So you went to their homes, actually?

Egeland Siadek: So I went to their homes and actually taught. And taught them *all* of their subjects; so we had math and science and whatever they were taking at the time. And if they couldn't keep up with all of it, we selected some and tried to help them. And then I taught for two years in a special program which was—*not* English as a second language, but it was geared for people who had never finished elementary school and wanted to—because they came here, and they were adults and they never had schooling where they came form. Or they were older, and it was before the mandatory age, before you could leave school. So many of them just didn't, they didn't finish the eighth grade and they went to work, and they are in this country. And they came from—most of them were from other countries, some from Europe, some from Mexico, some from Asia. And they were all at a place where either their children or their grandchildren were going through school and they were—they really wanted to learn the things that, so they knew the things that their children and grandchildren. So they were such *apt* pupils. And we started with grade one, two, three four, five, and we went through the entire curriculum. But using materials for adults instead of, you know, Dick and Jane. And it was *so* much fun. I mean, I always felt, they should [not] pay *me* to do this because it was so much fun. And then the second year, we had—well the first year we went through grades one, through four, and then the next five six seven eight. We went through the eighth grade. And we had a ceremony and they took the equivalence test. And some of the, I know went on to high school and got a high school degree, a diploma. So, it was very exciting. But, so when you ask me how long I taught is hard to—[thinking].

00:09:55
Moon: define it exactly.

Egeland Siadek: Yeah, yeah.

Moon: But in between finishing your master's degree and then going into the profession, had you, did you get married in between there, or—?

Egeland Siadek: I got married after I got my master's degree. Actually, I got married *while* I was doing my thesis.

00:10:18
Moon: Okay, so, around 1962, '63 or so.

Egeland Siadek: Yeah. I got my—I walked down and got my hood and Ilaan was—with my tongue sticking out— [Laughs]

Moon: [Laughing] And Ilaan is your—?

Egeland Siadek: Oldest daughter.

00:10:33
Moon: Oldest daughter, ok. Now how many kids total do you—?

Egeland Siadek: I have two.

Moon: You have two, so you have a daughter and a son.

Egeland Siadek: I have a daughter and a daughter.

00:10:39
Moon: A daughter and a daughter. And your other daughter's name is?

Egeland Siadek: Hyla.

Moon: Hyla. Okay. What a pretty name!

Egeland Siadek: Thank you.

00:10:44
Moon: Oh nice. So, you were married for quite a long time before you split up and moved on?

Egeland Siadek: Well, lets see, if I can recall, I was married to Gill Egeland for sixteen and a half years. And I was married to him during the time I campaigned, and through one and a half terms, in the legislature.

Moon: Now, was he supportive you going into politics?

Egeland Siadek: Oh yeah, yeah.

00:11:18
Moon: Well that's great. So, um—

Egeland Siadek: So after I finished teaching, I mean, I—actually when I had my second daughter, it was just too difficult to teach, so I stopped teaching. And then when I wanted to go back to teach full time, I couldn't find a job teaching. And because there was sort of a glut of teachers and I was way too expensive. I had a master's degree; I had all these years of experience, so I was way up there. They could hire two beginning teachers with a BA instead of me, so why would they, you know. So I really couldn't find a job. And that's when I—somewhere around there I gave a speech at the first Earth Day and afterward I had some individuals approach me—and my speech was about overpopulation. And that was the year that Paul Ehrlich had written *The Population Bomb* and, you know, so this is a big thing, and I talked about, and I don't remember my whole speech, but, you know, the fact that we have three water basins in California and all of our population, you know, its not like we're all spread out all over all of California so we really have a much more exacerbated problem of concentration in people and we need to address this. It can't just be that we cheer the ad for Maytag washers and the women with eight children because that's really nothing to cheer about at this point. So we needed to change our attitude. We needed to provide the legal means for people to control their own families; we need to provide education—you know, *that* kind of beginning radical.

Moon: Oh, so you were a festering radical from—

Egeland Siadek: I was. So I was given a job and I was the first lobbyist for Zero Population Growth.

00:13:20
Moon: Oh, that's interesting.

Egeland Siadek: And it was a fledgling organization, very closely allied with Planned Parenthood. And I worked with their lobbyists and we went to—we had offices and we went to Sacramento and we talked to men about sex and we got paid for it, so it was a *great* job!

Moon: [Laughing] How long did you do that for?

Egeland Siadek: I probably did that for about three years. I mean, there were many things that went on during that time, but one of the big things was that time, but one of

the big things was that I *saw* Sacramento first hand and I spoke to people in office. And I learned how the budget process was constructed and put together, and what the committee hearings were like, and who made the decisions about where bills were sent, and which committee, and the committee memberships. So [I witnessed] Sacramento and how state government worked and the relationship between the elected officials and the administration which is all of the departments, and how that works with the governor. And you know, the court system was not quite part of it. But we talked a lot—and I *listened* a lot to people trying to get bills through based on you know, court decisions. So, ultimately, when I was elected, I felt like a sophomore, rather than a fresh-person. Because I— [thinking]

00:14:59

Moon: Okay, because you really had an understanding of the process.

Egeland Siadek: I had a basic understanding of the process, and it really was easier for me to talk Sacramento—To talk public policy developments, to discuss budgetary priorities, and to explain to people—or to try to answer the question "well how could *you* possibly do anything with that great big budget?"

Moon: Right [Laughs]. Now, you must have also had contacts in Sacramento, working as a lobbyist, was that helpful to you when you went into office?

Egeland Siadek: It was helpful and harmful while I was campaigning. So, just to talk about the campaign, you'll see in the literature that I have, and I was Mrs. Egeland as a *lobbyist*, well, that was a dirty word. And people don't—think about lobbyists as somebody, you know, paid under the table, and bribing people, and it's a special interest. Well my special interest was family planning programs for people, so, you know, it wasn't like I had a lot of money to throw around. It wasn't like I represented the oil companies or the cigarette companies, but the *name* "lobbyist" painted with a broad brush was used against me. On the other hand, I had worked in Sacramento and had a number of seated legislatures that were supportive of me during the campaign. They came and did some events for me, you know, were speaking for me, some endorsements; Willie Brown for one, George Moscone, and Marge Phong. So, I did know people, because I had been up there and I had been around. And while I was in Sacramento doing my job, I also took advantage of learning about the other things I liked to do. So I learned, and worked with legislators free, to try to get support from groups and I sort of knew how to put things together. For example, I worked with Willie Brown and his staff to get funding for the Sickle Cell Anemia and Tay-Sachs testing. And I was very interested in the testing program—the genetic testing programs—and spent quite a bit of time lobbying—even though that wasn't my job—but lobbying for programs for testing.

00:17:54
Moon: Now that was when you were actually in office, or prior to—?

Egeland Siadek: No, this was when I was a lobbyist. So that, well, I had done—at one time I was the county chair person for the March of Dimes and I saw a lot of developmentally disabled children born where the testing could have, you know, known about that before hand. So there were things that bothered me, I wanted to *further* those tests. So I got connected with people in departments, legislators that were pushing programs and it wasn't part of what my job was, but I gave my support to—so they were *friends*. So then when I needed them, they came to my aid.

Moon: So what interested you about medical care and, you know, health care sort of issues, you know, was it—?

Egeland Siadek: Well I'm not quite sure you can go through that many years of science without being interested in wellness, disease prevention—and I think its just always been an overriding issue perhaps my mother was, had very sever Rheumatoid Arthritis, she was sick throughout my childhood. So being *healthy* and *well* was really important. And I had studied a lot of chemistry, a lot of bio-chemistry, and bacteriology and, you know, all of that that fit in with—And you know, when I was in college, they had just discovered the double helix so it was the beginning of the study of DNA and RNA and all of the genetic concepts that, you know—*beyond* me now, but, I try to keep up but… So, it was just something that I though, knowledge needs to be put to the best use and it needs to be put to the broadest use. But what I learned was that there were people for their own reasons withhold testing that could be, you know, would let you know. Because of course, if you knew that you had a defective fetus you would probably get an abortion. And since they were opposed to abortion, they did *want* general testing because, not *everybody* would get an abortion but there would be an increase in abortion. So there were people that didn't want testing, for children, for fetuses, and *mothers*, and—

00:20:39
Moon: And people still feel that way.

Egeland Siadek: And they still—yes, it's a battle that still goes on.

Moon: Now, it was unusual for women to major in science when you were going through school. And did you do that primarily because of your, you know, your feelings about your mother and that experience, or you just always naturally were a, you know—science appealed to you?

Egeland Siadek: I became an accidental science major. I was actually an elementary education major and, so I have both a credential in elementary education and in secondary education. But I started taking my electives—you know, you have the required courses—so I thought "okay, what do I want to take for my electives?" So I took things I was interested in, and what I'm interested in is Science. I was—if my math had been better I think I would have loved to have been in astronomy, that was a real passion. And I roamed the desert as a child and observed the insect world, and the animals and the plants as kind of a naturalist. Anyway, it was my interest. So I took a class in biology, and then I took a class in botany, and then I took a class in bacteriology, and then I took a class in, you know, chemistry, and then organic chemistry. And all of a sudden those units started building up and they were my best grades. And I remember, as a junior, standing in line real early to try and register for my genetics class, which was *so* exciting because I had just discovered this double helix. And the teacher was *so* angry because he said to me that I was taking the spot of someone who was going to be in pre-med, and I should be ashamed of myself. And so I decided right then and there that he was going to be very proud that I was in his class. Now he thought I was going to register and then I would flunk out because it was too hard. He said "You know there's prerequisites, for this class?" I said, "Yes, I saw it. We have to have a—" you know, whatever it was "—biology, and botany, and zoology," and you know, all of that. And he says "And did you *pass* those classes?" I says "Yes, I got A's." "Humph," you know. So, I want you to know, that teacher and I *really* were buddies by the end. And I never studied so hard in my whole life. I wanted to get an A. I didn't, I got a B in that class. But that was the hardest class I ever took, it was so exciting.

00:23:35

Moon: Really. Did you ever think of going to medical school after he had said that?

Egeland Siadek: Um, girls *did* go to medical school then, but I never thought of myself as—I thought you had to be brilliant to go to medical school. And I never thought of myself as being brilliant I was just taking these classes because they were so interesting. And challenging. And they put the world together for me in a way that was—I just loved it. I just loved it. Maybe if I had it to do later on, I would have, you know, girls thought maybe about nursing or, teaching, you know. And my parents, you know, they were sending me to school to find a doctor marry.

Moon: Right, the Mrs. kind of degree. [Laughs] Oh, well, were they successful? Did you marry a doctor?

Egeland Siadek: No I never did. [Laughing] Never, I never did—

00:24:45
Moon: Now when you were, how old were your children when you started working as a lobbyist and going in to the political realm of your life?

Egeland Siadek: Well, my youngest daughter was an infant. And my older daughter was in nursery school.

Moon: Ok, so they were very young when you started.

Egeland Siadek: Uh huh, very young. And I would go to Sacramento and I'd often—not always—sometimes I went up back in one day but I would very often try to do it back to back because the gas was expensive. So I would stay over one night and then I would come back and put my rubber gloves on and one toilet in the house was filled with the diapers because nobody was going to do that. And they were real diapers in those days. So I had that—I kept myself full of humility. [Laughs]

00:25:42
Moon: You did double duty there.

Egeland Siadek: I came back to my infant—can't remember how old she was, but, you know, about a year—and when I actually ran for office my youngest daughter was in nursery school. So I would help take my turn at the nursery school carpool and then walk precincts. And my neighbor Juan [Vejil?] was in the same nursery school carpool. And we used to trade off—I can't remember, there was one other person. But the children were at Hillbrook, which is a private school in Los Gatos, and they were there for the nursery school. And they're four years apart—my daughters are for years apart. So my littlest one was, I guess, at the time she was at nursery school was, what, four?

Moon: So you never felt that you know, you had—a lot of women who have gone into politics, their children were older—

Egeland Siadek: Much older.

00:26:46
Moon: —much older, you know, usually high school age or even older. So I was just curious how you navigated between—?

Egeland Siadek: It was difficult. But *I* was older, because I didn't start having my children at eighteen. I was twenty eight when I had my first daughter and thirty one when I had my second daughter. So, *I* was older even though *they* were younger. I was in a place where women did move in their careers. And so I, you know, I

got the best childcare that I could get. And this was a big thing in the campaign. This, um, "Well, what are you going to do with your children?" "Well I'm going to put them in the closet lady." I mean, well, I finally would turn to the women in the audience, because it really *was* a women's issue. "Well what do *you* do with your children?" You know? "Did you ask your child's teacher what she does with her children? Did you ask the nurse at your doctor's what *she* does with her children? What do we do with our children, ladies? We get the best childcare we can get!" "Yay!" You know, they're all like—well, you know this creepy guy would like, shrug, because that wasn't a very good question. But, that was what I faced in the political world. Because they just couldn't fathom that I could be a mom—

Moon: And work at the same time.

Egeland Siadek: But, any working woman had the same problem. It wasn't like it was the most unusual job in the world. You did what you could do. And what I actually did was I had someone live in my house. Because that way latchkey children. And I always had somebody to drive my children.

00:28:48
Moon: What was your first husband's occupation?

Egeland Siadek: He was a school teacher.

Moon: Oh, okay so he was also in education.

Egeland Siadek: And then he left that and went into real-estate.

00:28:59
Moon: Okay. Well I think that the question of childcare is a really important one for women in politics and you know, one of the reasons why I think young women don't get involved into politics as early on as maybe you did when you started—because you were quite young really when you were doing the lobbyist sort of work, and, you know, that's really an admirable sort of quality going out there and doing that sort of work. I know Zoe Lofgren when she was on the—I think it was when she was a council member—one of her children was very young, she was nursing, and I remember one of the stories was she took the baby with her to the chambers and everyone gave her a really bad time over that. And then after a while she just ended up having her mother, I guess, help her a lot with the childcare issues. But it was quite sensational when she was, you know, bringing her child to the council chambers at this one meeting, and I think that she only probably did that a couple of times—

Egeland Siadek: A lady by the name of Suzy Lang who worked for John Vasconcellos was the first one who did that in the capitol and we all cheered and sort of formed a ring around her "don't you *dare* criticize—!" but she brought her baby in so she could nurse. I mean, there were a lot of issues like that that made it more difficult not just to run for office, but to be the top person working for someone in office, because your schedule was varied. And a lot of the men who were in office wouldn't hire women to be their consultant in the committee, they could be *secretaries* but they couldn't have, you know, one of the higher jobs, because it meant they had to be at hearings in the evening or at work early in the morning and, you know, how could they do that? What would they do with their children? So, that was always an excuse. And it was *real* because child care wasn't as available. And you had to make some decisions about how much you earned. I figured two days I work for Uncle Sam and two days I work for my baby sitter and one day for me. But it was both real and it was used as an excuse against women.

Moon: Right. Well you went into politics at such an interesting time in modern feminist history. You know, looking at the continuation really of the ERA movement. And you know, the National Organization of Women. So all those issues were very fresh at that time and I think young women to day don't realize all the steps that had to be made to get to where we are today.

Egeland Siadek: No, no they don't. Most of the issues—well the equal rights amendment was going through in California about the time when I was lobbying. And that's one of the other extra things I did while I got, you know—

00:32:09

Moon: So you were working for NOW as part of the lobby for California?

Egeland Siadek: No, it was actually the National Women's Political Caucus.

Moon: Oh, okay. Right.

Egeland Siadek: And NOW was not as big. I mean, they were there, but I didn't participate with them till a little later.

00:32:30

Moon: Yeah, that's my sense in just talking to some of the other women I've met, so far. Nobody seemed to be a member of NOW or, maybe later on they were but in the early years they weren't. And the National Women's Political Caucus was really instrumental in helping women get elected as well as the redistricting that took place on the local level. Now, what was it that—tell me about how you got actually into the realm of office holding after working as a lobbyist.

Egeland Siadek: I had worked on *numerous* campaigns as I mentioned before and with few exceptions most of the people presented a great many disappointments because once they were in office they became much more cautious than were their campaign speeches about what kind of public policy changes they were going to bring about. And they were much more interested in reassuring their reelection than they were in doing something—you know, striking out, doing something brave. So it was disappointing and I remember somebody saying "Well, if you really want to agree a hundred percent with what the person does in office then you just have to run yourself." And I remember thinking "I couldn't do that, I couldn't do that." I could not run for the city council because I could not afford to do that. I didn't have family income nor a husband that had a large income. My work was half of our income. So when I taught, we depended on that. And I couldn't—I think the council got three hundred dollars a month whether they needed it or not.

Moon: Now um, what city were you living in?

Egeland Siadek: I lived in San Jose at the time. Although later I lived in Morgan Hill. But I lived in San Jose. So I *might* have run for the City Council if I was more independently wealthy, but I couldn't. And so a group said, "Well, what about the supervisors level?" you know, "We really want to get Sig Sanchez out of there" He'd been in district number five for years and years and years and he never appointed a women to one board or commission. He was very ultraconservative republican who felt that women just didn't belong. And was just, you know, *old fashioned*. And there were quite a few people that really wanted him out. And they thought that I was well spoken enough, was presentable, and had the energy, and they wanted me to look at challenging Sig Sanchez, and that, even if I didn't win, I would be able to bring to the floor some of these things. Like the fact that he had never appointed women and— And so I diligently went to the board of supervisors meetings for about six months, to try and get a handle on the issues; in particular, the issues in that district which were Gilroy and Morgan Hill and the southern part, which later became my district. And I spoke to groups, I talked to people, and I really garnered a lot of support. And in the end I decided that I couldn't beat Sig Sanchez. The demographics were *too* close. I didn't see voting patterns of women voting for women. And you couldn't go for Democrat or Republican, you know, this was a *rural* area. It didn't matter what the party, the ideologies were really more conservative in both parties. And I just really couldn't invest a year of my life in a campaign that I didn't think I could win.

00:36:59

Moon: What year was that when you were considering—

Egeland Siadek: It was probably 1972.

Moon: Okay. So, I'm thinking about Suzy Wilson when she got on to the Board of Supervisors.

Egeland Siadek: This was long before her.

00:37:11
Moon: Right. Because she didn't get onto the board I think until '78.

Egeland Siadek: Yeah, yeah. This was a long time before that. There were no women on the board. And then one day I got a call—but before I made my decision I got a call from Sig Sanchez. He wanted to meet with me. So I met with Sig Sanchez, it was actually the first time I really *met* him. And he said "So I hear you're running against me." I said "Well, I haven't decided yet." And he said "So, *you* don't want to run against me" and I said "*What*? Why shouldn't I?" "Because you can't beat me." I said "Well that's no reason not to run against you. We could bring out a lot of issues in the campaign, couldn't we?" and he just—we had a friendly but adversarial conversation. And I had already kind of decided I wasn't going to do that, but I said "Well, if I *didn't* run how would you promise to change your behavior?" "Well what do you want me to do" "Well I want you to appoint women to boards and commissions. You know, your record is atrocious. I want you to—blah, blah, blah" You know, I went though my long list. And so I said "Even If I couldn't beat you I could bring up all these things in the election, use up a lot of your time and money, and then you'd wind up having to do those things anyway." So he said "Okay. I'll consider it all." He said, "You'll see a new man." I said "Good. Well, I think you're strong enough to turn your face back to all your supporters and say 'It's time we all grew'."

Moon: And did you think he did, after that?

Egeland Siadek: And he did, and he did. Not rapidly. And we became *very* good friends, very good friends, because his supervisorial district was *my* district. So we went to a lot of events together and he was a great guy. But he was a little slow on the uptake, and I think it had to do with his own upbringing, his culture, his religion, and just the whole view that women were supposed to be in the kitchen, at home having babies, you know—

00:39:47
Moon: Right. Not supposed to be in politics.

Egeland Siadek: They weren't supposed to be in politics! And his supporters were the Farm Bureau I remember giving a speech to the Farm Bureau and Ray Benich, who was president of the Farm Bureau at the time and a big Republican grower in the area, very active in the Republican party was going to give me a ride back to wherever my next place was and, "Well," you know, he was very gruff, and "you gave a good speech" and you know he said "I don't believe in women or blacks in politics" only, he used the "n-word". *Oh*, shall I get out of your truck right now in the middle of the freeway? I said "Well, I'll have to change that

attitude won't I Ray?" [Laughs] Because I said, "When I'm elected you're going to want me to do something for agriculture in this community and I'm going to listen to you and you're going to respect what I can do." And that's what happened.

Moon: So did you go back after you were elected and ride in his truck again?

Egeland Siadek: Well, I don't know if I ever rode in his truck, but he actually became one of my "Republicans for Egeland."

00:41:08

Moon: Oh really!

Egeland Siadek: I had a Republicans for Egeland Committee for the second time around. But he and his wife were very nice and, yeah. And he did. He helped me understand a number of issues that the farmers were facing. Yeah, there's always issues of increase in minimum wage and what that means, and child labor laws and what that means. And everything is a two sided coin. You've got all the things you assume about it, but when you do research about an issue you find there's the other side of it. So, you know. So I don't remember what question we were on!

Moon: Oh, we were talking about what, you know, led you to a higher office.

Egeland Siadek: Oh, what led up! So I didn't run for the supervisor's seat. And Sig Sanchez remained there for several more terms. But the next year, there was reapportionment. And the *court* did reapportionment. And up until that point the legislature—and *since* then the legislature—has done their own reapportionment. Which means that incumbents were, you know, would *trade*. "You can have these five blocks and I'll take this one because I have more votes here." And that's how, you know, the districts look the way they do. There's no squares. Everything is crazy and gerrymandered, and still is. It's even worse now, I think. But the courts had to take it over because the legislature failed to do it. And the courts created a new district without an incumbent and my house was in the middle of it.

00:43:00

Moon: Oh, so it was like the perfect opportunity.

Egeland Siadek: And I said "There's no incumbent. It's for the legislature which I know lots about now." So I went back to all the women who had wanted me to run for supervisor and that I had worked with in AAUW and in the league and with all of the environmental things that I had been involved in. And I said, "Well, if I run, will you support me? Because here's an opportunity to—and they pay, they *pay* something so that I can afford to leave my job and do that. And I'm willing to take a year off work and campaign. And I'll work harder than everyone. But I'll, you know, I'll put my heart and soul into it. I feel that I know what the issues of this district are and I know how things are done in

Sacramento. And I think that I can really put things together in those six months that I had studied all the issues in that supervisorial district." I felt *wonderful* because I knew all the issues of the district!

Moon: Oh, I see. So you were really well prepared.

Egeland Siadek: I was *very* well prepared. I was well prepared. And so that's how it happened. So there was this new district, the twenty fourth assembly district, and it didn't have an incumbent and of course everybody jumped in. I had eight opponents in my primary. And Peter Tweet was the AA for Ed Reinecke the lieutenant governor. And, you know, you had Reinecke here campaigning and a lot of tough republicans. So that's how I got into the political word. And I laugh say that well "I look the least like Richard Nixon" so—

00:45:01

Moon: [Laughing] I know, I read a quote where that was said—

Egeland Siadek: Actually there was one other woman who was in the primary. But I think of the major candidates in that election I certainly looked different. And one of the things that had happened because of Watergate—which had just sort of happened—is that women, up until that point in time, all through the '50s and '60s, their husbands recommended for whom they should vote. And politics were not very feminine, it was a *man's* world, and *men* knew about those things. So, you know "I don't know. I'll ask my husband who I should vote for." That kind of thing. And it wasn't that women were dumb. There were many educated women. Its just that politics was not a woman's game. And none of the people that were running were women. So they had to choose between two men, mostly two lawyers. You know, one the incumbent, and one challenging the incumbent. And *somebody* had to decide whether this one was telling the truth or this one was telling the truth. And well, "I'll just ask Joe" or "I'll just ask Jim" now, so. And that's how it went. Well when Watergate happened they said "Well, wait a minute, you told me to vote for this *creep*? And look at what happened to the country! I'm not listening to you! What do you know? I'm going to make up my own mind!" And so I honestly believe that I was elected by Republican women in my district. I had worked with women. They didn't know if I was a Democrat or a Republican. All the projects, all the preschool education and the working for the library and the, you know, trying to save the Coyote Post Office, and whatever projects we'd all worked on together. And all the AAUW of learning about the peripheral canal and what good that was going to do and what harm it was going to do. And then for a brief time there was the environmental commission here in town that I was on. So I worked with all those women. And they didn't ask me whether I was a Democrat or a Republican, they didn't care. "You're running? I'm for *you*!"

Moon: So you really think that the Watergate was a lynchpin for changing women's position as voters?

Egeland Siadek: Yes, yes I think so. I think that was a pivotal experience in the history of our country in terms of the confidence in your husband's opinion.

00:48:04

Moon: Right, right. The other thing that several other historians have written about, and political scientists—Janet Flammang, have you met, I think you might have talked to her many years ago—and they connect the whole Watergate sort of, you know, situation to the whole change in politics, but they also look at women as being more honest and more forthright and making in some ways they had a moment in time where they could actually really go into politics in a different way than—

Egeland Siadek: Oh that's right on. I firmly believe that. There were issues in 1974—'73 and '74—when I ran, you know, "Blood Alley", what we call "Blood Alley", we had water delivery issues, we had so many issues but the *real* issue in the campaign was honesty in government, because the people had been lied to. They didn't like the sneakiness. And people believed me. And I was very straightforward in what I explained about my position, how I would answer questions, and I think that when I met people—eyeball to eyeball especially—they believed me. And I *do* think that honesty in government was a big issue because it was obvious that you could ask ten questions about a candidate's position but it's the eleventh issue that's going to come up that you didn't ask about and nobody *knew* that was going to come up, so you in fact can never really find out about a person by asking "How would you vote on such-and-such?" How do you find out about a person? Well you talk to them. And you have to trust your own sense of their worth, their honesty, their integrity, and how they would address the issues, because you'll never know all of the issues that they'll have to vote for. So you have to judge, you know, will they give it their all? Will they have the energy to work hard for you? Will they come back and ask you how you feel about things? Could you call that person and give your opinion and say, you know, "I don't agree with you"? And would they listen? So all those things became important and I think Watergate was very pivotal.

Moon: Now, when you were campaigning the first time around, who were some of your supporters? I know financially it was one of the issues for going into city council so who did you work with to endorse you and who were your main supporters?

Egeland Siadek: I had an army of women.

00:51:11

Moon: [Laughing] All right, I love armies of women.

Egeland Siadek: And Lee Sturdivant was my campaign director, and she left her job as the Cupertino School Librarian and she had been in a hundred political campaigns and always wanted to run her own. But who was going to ask *her* to be the

person to run, you know? She could lick stamps! And *maybe* coordinate the precinct, but probably not. But she ran my campaign. She did the most fantastic job of organizing and creating and attending to the details. And after all, she *knew* the details because she'd been involved in all these other campaigns for years and years. So I had women who had never been given an opportunity to have the top positions in a campaign. Who would be the treasurer? Who would be the precinct coordinator? You know, who would do the PR? Who would make the decisions about where to spend money on the signs? And all of those, they were all *women* and they all did it for *free*! I didn't pay anybody anything. I didn't have any money to pay anybody anything. And every one of the women went on to paid jobs afterward, doing other things either in campaigns or for elected office. Because they learned so much they did such a wonderful job and they impressed everybody wherever we went. We had the *best* run campaign. I didn't do anything except walk precincts. And I'm a hiker. And I walked for a year and a month every single walkable district in my precincts. And I just trudged up and down hills and up and down driveways and met people. And that was my job. "Bye I'm going!" you know. And I would walk all day long and just hand out my brochures and meet people. And we coordinated so I, you know, during the day I went to areas where mostly women were home or it was older people. And I had to walk a lot of times dinner hour and on the weekends, especially on the weekends. And trying to figure out when people were home and what to do when they weren't and all of that. So I didn't have paid staff and we had fundraisers and our campaign headquarters was in an old, old house. I don't even know if it's standing, now. It was on Almaden. It was next to something called The Three Bears Bar and Lee moved upstairs to save her money. And that way she paid the rent for upstairs, and that's how we got the downstairs. And it was just a big old space. And we made things, you know, my kids had a carnival in the driveway and charged two pennies a ride, and we took their money. We had bake sales. I think we raised $25,000. That's what the primary cost, $25,000. Now, of course, that was a long time ago. But it was a tremendous amount of money to raise. But we did it the hard way. And we made signs. We couldn't buy signs, we *made* signs. And my husband was quite tall so that was his job in the campaign was putting up signs and going around and making sure to put back up the ones that the opposition ripped off. So the primary was a real expensive, hardworking. And we didn't get a lot of money. So who supported me? All these women. All these women who had—it was *their* cause. I was there cause. It was so neat. I was their *cause* and the cause was that we had an opportunity from Santa Clara County into the State Legislature. And I did know hundreds of people by this time. I'd lived in—this was my community. And so, it was really fun. I did get the endorsement of a few labor groups. Probably Lee broke their arm trying to get them to endorse me. But we had—you know, we would be interviewed, and they would interview us. But a lot of unions didn't endorse so much in primaries. And with so many people in the primary and people who had run before, and had been endorsed by unions before, so a lot of the unions they just stayed out

of it. But they came and they sent people to the fundraisers. Somewhere there's a folder of my primary campaign that I can't find, it would be interesting to see *who* the endorsements were. But when I won, I did not get the party support in the general.

Moon: Oh, well that must have been disappointing.

Egeland Siadek: Well, I didn't come from them. I had not been a big party participant. They owed me nothing, I owed them nothing. They didn't know what happened. Their guy was—they had Ernie [Abatia?], they had Bill [Deal?], they had other people in this race that had been very involved in the Democratic Party, and they were *very* disappointed. Because the philosophy was it was a throw away district then. There was no way I was going to win. It was like a 52% democratic district, maybe 54%, but it was low, very low. And the Democrats in South County were very conservative. And so, they wanted to put their money into Mr. [Caulbo's?] race and others where they really had a good chance. And so the party in this county were not helpful to me during the general. And it was very disappointing to Lee. I mean, now, *some* people were, you know, some people were. And those, you know, Lee and Peter Sagal were, I'm sure they called everyone of their chits in on friends to come to events and be part of it. But there wasn't an overwhelming support. It was that young people, women, and minorities didn't win, and we're wasting our time there.

00:59:19

Moon: What sort of issues did you run on, in the first campaign?

Egeland Siadek: Well, lets see. Let me remember—

Moon: If you can remember, some of the same things, probably that the supervisors were doing—

Egeland Siadek: There were a lot of local issues with regard to trying to do something to widen Highway 101 so that it was no longer going to be called ""Blood Alley"" there were flood control, the big damn, the San Louis Reservoir needed money and there was a lot of flood control issues. In South County we had night pig hunting, and cattle rustling.

01:00:02

Moon: Really? Night pig hunting? Like wild pigs?

Egeland Siadek: Yeah, there were feral pigs. And the hunters would go and they'd cut the wires and they'd cut them down and the cattle would be able to get out, and, you know, they trespassed. And so these were big issues in South County. I'd say San Benito County water issues were the biggest issue. In San Jose there were, as always, issues of health care benefits for seniors. There's a large number of seniors living around the college. It was the beginning of trying

fraternity and sorority houses for half way houses. There were big issues about—

Moon: All the crime and stuff that was kind of rampant then.

Egeland Siadek: Yeah. And I think the health and education issues, as always, you know—Who is entitled to health care? What are the benefits that they should get? What do you do about those who try to get their benefits and they don't really qualify? How are we going to fund schools? How are we going to increase the funding for schools? Look at California its like, we're second from the bottom. How could we be equated with Mississippi? It was, you know, the test scores were bad. Some things don't change! But the quality of teachers. Trying to see who—issues of control for school districts. The same old, local/state, local/federal kinds of issues.

01:01:56

Moon: Were there controversial issues? Like, I know your previous work in Planned Parenthood and abortion in the area—

Egeland Siadek: Probably the family planning issues were the most controversial. Since I had a long history with family planning programs and eagerly took credit for helping to create the Office of Family Planning when I was a lobbyist and getting contraceptives to minors and allowing condoms to be sold to minors, and forcing health plans to pay for vasectomies. I worked with Tony Beilenson, he was my mentor in Sacramento and carried all my sex legislation. He was great. And all of these were separate from the therapeutic abortion issues. So there was no question about where I was. In fact, one very interesting town hall meeting in Hollister, the opposition had planted different people in the audience to ask different questions. And so each candidate gave a little talk and then—actually this was the second time around with Claude Fletcher, but it was such a funny evening—so we're talking about the San Louis Reservoir and then this person raises their hand and the question's about contraceptives to minors and somebody else is saying "I hear you think its okay for high school boys and girls to share the showers," you know. And then somebody else is asking about abortions. So when the next question, I said, "I'm going to answer that question, but, you know, it's really strange I came to San Benito County to talk about highway widening and the San Louis Reservoir, I didn't know that all you wanted to talk about was sex." Those other issues didn't matter, you know. I tried to do that a lot because there's no way—for many people it's a religious issue. And for many people it's a control issue. And for many people it is a firm belief that what I believed in was immoral. And so I honor that, and good that they can live in a country where all of those beliefs are appropriate. And we just have to try to work out something together. But that was the most controversial issue. And it certainly made no sense to me that the same people who were opposed to abortions would also be opposed to family education in the schools, and opposed to contraceptives. People are not getting an abortion because they think it's a fun

experience. They're getting an abortion because they're pregnant and they don't want to be. So why not do everything—if *you* are opposed to abortions, why aren't you doing *everything* possible for all these other issues? It just never made any sense to me. I mean, that's what *I* would do.

Moon: Now, you had said earlier before we went on, that one of the things they didn't like about you initially was that one, you were a woman, and also that you were Jewish. So did you get a lot of bad press because of your identity?

Egeland Siadek: I didn't. I didn't get—I only got hate letters from individuals who found out about it. It was never an issue in the campaign. Never, unless my campaign staff hid it from me. I don't know. I'll have to ask. [Laughs] But I don't think that ever was an issue.

01:06:32

Moon: Okay. Now, I love that story that you started with, in going through the documents that brought today. Could you just describe again that whole business of going from Assembly Men to women?

Egeland Siadek: Well when you introduce a piece of legislation your name is on the bill. And it said Assembly Man Egeland. And I said, "Well, no, no. I want Assembly *Woman* all I have to do is put a 'wo' in there, it's not a big deal." And so I went to the printing office and just said "Do I *look* like a man to you?" "No" "Well, could I have a 'wo' in there because it can't be that big a deal. I mean, I'm only one person but you could do that, and just insert the type differently." Well, as it turned Pauline Davis who was the only other woman in the assembly said "I do *not* want to be an Assembly Woman, I am an Assembly man. And I have been an Assembly Man for years, and that's the title of my office. And it has nothing to do with gender." I said "Well, for me, it *does* have something to do with gender." So she remained an Assembly Man and I was an Assembly *Woman* so they had to—all of a sudden now, they had to do something different for me. Then Theresa Hues was elected in a special election the following year and she wanted to be an Assembly Woman too. So then there were two of us. And I'm sure as the time went on and more women were elected it was going to become more and more of a problem. And so that's the reason that we have all bills are now "Assembly Member So-and-so."

Moon: Well that solved that, I guess, a little bit. Now, as I recall I think I read something that said you were one of the first women to be elected that was not a husband sort of—following the husband sort of appointment, do you know what I mean? You know where the, who—

Egeland Siadek: Well that really isn't true. I don't know where that came from-and I've heard it too—and it's not true. Pauline Davis did follow her husband Lester. And I think there were there for thirty years between the two of them. So that was true. And it may have been true for other women. Marge Phong did not have a

husband that was in politics. Yvonne Braithwaite-then later Burke—did not follow her husband. So when I was a lobbyist those were the three women that were in the legislature. And in 1974 Marge became Secretary of State in California and Yvonne went to congress. So then only Pauline was left. And think throughout the country the situation as Pauline had it was true, and interestingly, *more* so today. If you look at the composition of the legislature in California you will find a significant number of women who were elected either to the legislature or to congress after their husbands.

01:10:02
Moon: Yeah, Alquist is a good example.

Egeland Siadek: Yes, yes.

Moon: Interesting. Well, looking backwards from the post suffrage era, which is an era I have studied quite a lot, that was very common in that time period. So I was just curious when that kind of ceiling might have broken up. But it must have been around that same time period, I would think.

Egeland Siadek: Yeah, I think that Marge had a state wide constituency of Chinese-Americans and other Asians who were very interested in seeing and Asian-American in a constitutional office. And Yvonne being African-American, the same thing. So they did have a statewide group of—

01:11:00
Moon: Of different kind of ethnic constituency kind of thing. Now when you were in—once you got into the legislature, what was that experience like? What were some of the—I know one of the comments you made earlier was that one of the reasons that you got into politics was that you were disappointed by some of the promises that were not ever fulfilled by certain candidates. Now, what did you feel—or that they weren't like, radical enough in putting their issues out there and going after them—what were the issues that you really felt that were speaking to your conscious when you were doing your work?

Egeland Siadek: The whole are of health was of great concern to me. And the whole are of health particularly for children was—should have been for everybody—but seemed like they weren't, wasn't part of what they called the juice committees. Nobody paid you a whole lot of money or supported your campaign because you were for one of these issues. So they were issues that were kind of left behind. Allowing banks to create different kind of services or allowing products to be sold in a different way, these were all things that that some industry was very concerned about and would give them a bigger market share. And they had a big lobbying force. And those people on committees like banking and commerce and insurance and I'm sure others were—if you were a champion of those issues you were assured of selling a lot of tables at your dinner. And somehow the services for children, you know, they couldn't vote and, yeah, their parents, but their parents were more interested in job

opportunities and, other things. So, you know, civil rights for children were—who was championing those? Who was the champion of extended health care for children? And what I found as I got into it more and more was that mental health programs became that little area that I really worked on, a lot. So I would say that that's where my focus was, I was about young children in particular, and health, in general for people. And I put family planning in the area of health.

Moon: Did you work a lot with John Vasconcellos on some of those things?

Egeland Siadek: Well John chaired the Higher Education Committee at that time. And I was on his committee. So I did work for him. And, interesting, John—my Zero Population Growth office was right next to John's Assembly District Office those many years ago. Of course, John did not agree on the abortion issue but he was the one person that agreed with me that if you don't want abortions you work for family planning.

01:14:45
Moon: Oh, yeah.

Egeland Siadek: And it gave him a leg up on being able to vote for and be part of not being totally against all the things that the women's groups wanted. Because he could be for all those and yet not compromise his feelings on the abortion issue.

Moon: Yeah. How did he treat other women, women like yourself, in kind of that political sort of office work? Was he egalitarian? Or was he—the reason I ask—

Egeland Siadek: He *strove* to be egalitarian.

01:15:24
Moon: The reason I ask is I met him—oh, gosh, about two years ago—and he is got a potty mouth. And I was just curious if he like, tamed down how he spoke in public. Well obviously he did on the political side of it, but in his interactions with people in the offices if he was as colorful.

Egeland Siadek: I think he always was colorful. It was the style, then. Lots of four letter words were used. And if that offended you, Sacramento was not the right place to be.

Moon: Right. I was just curious if men to act differently with the women that were coming into politics at that time.

Egeland Siadek: Well, most of the men ignored me. I was a fluke and I obviously was going to go away during the next election, somebody was going to take me out. And it was annoying. I mean, it took a while to gain respect. It took a while to be—[Indistinct]. My campaign slogan for the second time was to "Reelect Leona Egeland, she's not one of the boys." And I didn't strive to be one of the boys.

And I certainly never could have been one of the boys. And there are lots of funny stories about that. The boys played poker at Fats all night, once a week. I was not invited to the poker game. The boys went on a trip once a year to the Gull Country and I guess visited bawdy houses. And they were the guests of E Clampus Vitus. And E Clampus Vitus was an organization that somehow in the frontier days was created to protect the women and the children—uh, the widows and the orphans, (especially the widows) and they were in the Gull Country area. But there are still all these guys who are E Clampus Vitus and so they would invite the legislators up to, you know, that end. And, there's a funny story, one of the gentlemen who represented "cool California", Eugene Chappie—he was a representative of cool California, and he later went to Congress—and he sent out an invitation to, like he did every year, to go to this thing. And I said "Oh, that sounds like fun!" So here comes Gene Chappie with his hat in his hand, saying, "You don't want to go to this. Its all them, and you know, they're kind of bawdy." "That's okay, Eugene!" "You *really* don't want to go to this." I said, "I have a feeling *you* don't want me to go to this." And then he gets down on his knees with his hat! I said "Gene, get up they're going to think you're proposing!" [Lughing]

01:18:38

Moon: So he's begging you not to go.

Egeland Siadek: "Please don't go!" I said "Well, what would you trade me, if I don't go? How about three votes?" So he said "Okay." And, somewhere in the record, Eugene Chappie has voted for—he said, "anything but abortion." And I said, "Okay."—and there are some votes by Eugene Chappie that no one would have thought he was really for. It was our private joke. So they didn't want to be visibly excluding me. But nobody went out of their way to welcome me. Actually, John did. Because I had known him before, and because our districts were neighbors, he always did go out of his way. He came to every one of my events, my fundraising events, big and little. And to this day we remain email friends. And I saw him at a—he came to Napa for a little farewell lunch when he was retiring.

Moon: Well he was a character, I think. You know, just to meet him in person, he's got lots of energy. And he had come to San Jose state right after he retired and they were doing this little special sort of thing for him through the Political Science Department which was really quite nice.

Egeland Siadek: And I bet most of them that were there, they just didn't—I wasn't included in any of the things that were going on, in particular. The first time that I—you know, you have your bills go through the house of origin. And then you go over to the other house. So my one bill, I don't remember what it was, but I had to go and sign in on the Senate side. And the way that you do is, you know, you walk in, and you can go—like, if the hearing starts at nine the door opens at eight and they have a roster and you sign up. Or that's how it used to be. So you sign up and they would take you in order. And so there's a big

huge sergeant of arms growled at me and said "On the Senate side, we don't let staff sign in for the members." So I whipped out my card and I said "Thank you Sergeant, I will tell my staff never to sign in me." [Whispering, slightly indistinct] And he looks at the card. [Speaking voice] So I had a lot of those because the other house didn't even know—you know, the staff, they didn't even know who I was. And so I had to—It took a while to distinguish myself. But my classmates—I was in a class, all of those who were elected in 1974—out of those there were several very egalitarian men. Garry Heart was a very close friend of mine all though the years, and we're still in touch. And I don't think it bothered him at all that I was female. But for some, it always mattered. And for others it was fun to be friends with the novelty. And as time went on, they realized that I was smart, I could read legalese, and I could even help them with their bills because they made mistakes and then they would not want that to go forward that way.

01:22:25

Moon: Right. Now, was there any camaraderie that you felt with the other couple of women that were in office at the same time?

Egeland Siadek: Only Pauline was there.

Moon: Only Pauline. Okay. So it was just you and Pauline. And there wasn't really camaraderie between the two of you?

Egeland Siadek: None. And then Theresa Hues and then there was. I had a buddy to do a few things with. We did have one vote, a unanimous vote, and that was to open the bathroom—the member's bathroom—to the women that were on the staff. They hadn't been allowed to do that. But it took a while, and even to the end I had colleagues that were very cool. They didn't approve of my politics. They certainly weren't going to be nasty, but they certainly weren't going to be friendly. And then others that thought it was fun to be nice, but they were all nice in a kind of condescending sort of way. And I have that article I said I was going to tell you a little bit about it. Let's see, where did it go? Oh darn. It was one of the Republican things—I think it was 1975 that—up until that time you sat in the assembly chamber with two people at a desk, and they did it by parties. And I don't know if it was '75 or '76, well anyway, at some point in time they decided that they were going to mix people up. They were not going to have—you know you were not just going to sit with your party. So they were going to try it and one of the Republicans said "Oh, well, if I've got to sit with a democrat I want to sit with Leona Egeland or Sally Tanner." Well, then Maxine Waters—This was the end, it was my last term, so there were other women—

01:24:37

Moon: So was that 1980 or so?

Egeland Siadek: Yeah. So Maxine Waters went into a pretend coughing fit, you know "Cough, cough, cough, cough, cough!" Because he didn't even consider, you know, she was an African-American. So she took it that way. He didn't even think of her as a woman to be flirting with. He didn't even think that—I mean it was just… I mean, but those were the kinds of situations that came up a lot. And my classmates, to their credit, there's a restaurant The Sutter Club, and the Sutter Club is a private men's club, or it was in 1974. It now admits women, and it's modeled on the old posh— But there's a piece of the Sutter Club that the front part is on state property. So I said, "If they're on state property and that piece of their property is not taxed, then they should not be allowed to have those kinds of discriminatory policies." And in the meantime, one of the lobbyists had organized a welcome to the class of 1974 party, and it was at the Sutter Club. So I got my colleagues to boycott, and to their credit, they did. There's one other story—because it's one of my favorites, I must relate it to you—because there were very few legislators who helped me during my campaign, certainly not in the primary, but even in the general, those that did were very dear to me. And the minute I was elected there was a big fight for the speakership. And Willy Brown was challenging Leo McCarthy. And so I voted for Brown, and I was put into a room up on the fifth floor that had previously belonged to John Vasconcellos' administrative assistant. That was going to be my office. And this room was probably the smallest, because it wasn't even a member's office, but that was my punishment. So I was in this office, my two secretaries had to give signals to each other so that nobody would squash somebody between the door and opening the file cabinets. And it was just a real nightmare in there. And we were in that room for a few months. I said "We can't, we have to get out of this room. This is, there's no—there's got to be something about this." So as Pauline was the only other woman there, and she *certainly* didn't consider herself a feminist in any way I had a statewide constituency of women. So I sent letters, I organized a meeting. "I'm your representative and I want to hear what you, what kinds of things you want me to have on my agenda." And I invited the president of the California PTA, the president of AAUW, the president of Business and Professional Women's group, every women's organization. Not just feminist kinds, but NWCP too, but all of the women's groups, business groups and everything. And I invited the state president And we set an agenda. And they were thrilled, because they had never got that kind of attention. And every one of them was going to come. And so then I went to Leo McCarthy as the speaker and I said, "We're going to have a meeting to talk about women's issues on the agenda for the next several years, and here's the people that are going to come." "Oh, that's very impressive. Where's the meeting?" I said, "It's in my office." And do you know? The next week, I had a new office, on the fourth floor and it was really big. And he came in and he greeted everybody.

Moon: [Laughing] Did you take picture of the old office?

Egeland Siadek: [Laughing] I should have done that! So it took a while, it took a while. And sometimes I didn't in though. Sometimes—you can't win them all!

01:29:51
Moon: Yeah. Now how come—what made you decide to retire from public office?

Egeland Siadek: Well, I went through three elections and it was the last year, there was a huge speakership fight. It was so nice that friends were eating friends of heads. And lying to people. And it was just a very nasty, nasty infighting up there that the public didn't know much about. I had also felt that I had done an awful lot in the area of mental health for children and funding for mental health. And I guess I should tell you about my very favorite bill, later. It's about anti-spanking. But I had done what I came to do. I had been divorced. I had my divorce progress on the front page of "The Morgan Hill Times" for weeks. My children's grades were on the front page. You know, on a slow day, we'd always talk about Egeland's divorce. It was not an easy life. Having two homes. Nobody lives in the district. You keep a home in your district and you run up and back. And the only people that live in their district are those that represent Sacramento. That can drive to their districts. But I wasn't home every night. Two and half hours. I'm not going to—you know, you *have* to be away. And so you're constantly driving and running and it was taking its toll on me. And I didn't—I watched the metamorphosis of people around me as they became less and less interested in the issues that they came up there to do something about and more into reelection. And I didn't want that to happen to me. I wanted to be able to leave the legislature and still like myself the rest of my life. But the biggest two things were that I didn't want to turn around and look at these two grown women one day and say "Who are you?" It was *hard* to—you know, I'm running around, I have examples of my schedule. On the weekend, you know, "At-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta—" [Noise made to describe being busy] And I'm driving past the park where all the families are having their picnics and *enjoying* their families. And I'm driving to the next group speech. And I didn't have that kind of time, and I was missing. My kids were *great*. In fact they—we've talked about it, and they said, "You know, mother, it was really good that you were so busy, because then we got to make decisions and you would have tried to control all of our lives instead of just part of our life." And I was very lucky that I had children who were very independent and could make a lot of decisions for themselves. But I was the one missing out on that. And then after the divorce I did start seeing someone else and my next opponent would have been a man whose chief campaign issue was going be to do things like take pictures of this guy's car outside my house overnight. And it was going to be ugly, and I knew that's the kind of person he was. And it was like there was that, and there was that, and you put them all together and I was tired, because I really, really worked a hundred percent. I read every bill. I talked to constituents. I did it the way you're supposed to do it and I was exhausted. And I had great staff, just, wonderful, wonderful people, and we're still friends today, and I didn't really want to disappoint that army of women who had worked so hard to get me there. But I think that's the thing that we

have to understand is that *choice* is about taking it or leaving it. Choice is about going on with your life to do something else, different phases. And I was actually there for three terms, which is all you get now. So termed myself out. I was ahead of my time.

Moon: So you weren't really corrupted by the political process like—

Egeland Siadek: I hope not!

01:35:26

Moon: It doesn't sound like it from what, your descriptions.

Egeland Siadek: I hope not. It was hard to become a civilian. Nobody wanted to know my opinion on everything anymore! [Laughs] And I'd go to fundraisers and they'd say, "Hi, how are you?" As they're looking around for who else to talk to! So all of a sudden, you're not—you don't feel… You're not a celebrity. You're not a celebrity. And that's the way it should be. It isn't *you* that's the celebrity; it's the office you hold. It's the office that you hold. One time we were in the bank and I remember my young daughter saying—we had to go someplace and we someplace really fast—and she said, "Well mommy, tell them who you are!" And I said, "You mean, Leona Egeland?" "No, no. The Assembly Woman." I said, "Well, that's the *job* I have, that's not who I am." You know. "I don't have any more right to jump in the front of the line than anyone else. Maybe they have a doctor's appointment. Maybe they have—Just because I have bills up doesn't, you know—" But it *is* the office you hold and not the person. And you really do get to feeling you're so important and your opinion is so important. You know more than others. And you really do know because you've had the opportunity to study a lot of issues. You have a whole staff that brings all of these issues to you.

Moon: I don't know if you remember the luncheon farewell tribute that was sponsored for you when you retired. And Norm Mineta was there was well as a number of other people and he had said that you helped destroy the stereotype that women can't be effective legislators. And I thought that was a nice compliment.

Egeland Siadek: Well that—and I achieved my goal. It was what I hoped to do as a pioneer. Because when I did come in, I actually had compliments of people, by colleagues who said, "Well, they insulted you and you didn't even cry! I thought women, you'd cry when you had your period." I mean, they really said things like that to me. And all the way to Norm's comment. I do think that I and all the other women you're interviewing helped break the glass ceiling so to speak and just by being there and having all the little girls in the school, and that's you're representative, and your picture's in the paper, and they see an image of women in politics. So politics wasn't just the realm of men. There actually were women who did that. And then women could be in those top positions in campaigns. When I chaired the Mental Health

Committee, my consultant was a woman. The consultant to my [Indistinct] sub committee was a woman. I remember one time sitting in the office and, the three of us sitting there and she said "We just made history. I don't think there's ever been a time that the finance person, the policy committee, and the legislator were all women." And that was the kind of thing that we experienced. It was great joy. It was really a great joy. And all these funny stories. Some of them sad, but most of them are fun to look back on. I feel really privileged that I got to experience that.

01:39:39

Moon: Well, and just, you know when were talking on the telephone, you know, several weeks ago we were talking about Nancy Pelosi and just the victory of her becoming the head of the House of Representatives. It's just such a milestone example of where women have come from since just1974. I mean, really that's just fabulous and that we have Hilary Clinton running for the president's office.

Egeland Siadek: I'd like to put it a little differently too. I think it's not just that they're women, but that the issue of the fact that they're women isn't the prime issue. The big problem with getting Nancy Pelosi elected was that she was from San Francisco, she was from that crazy state of California—My god, you know what kind of views *they* have! If there was a man in the same place, they would have said the same thing! And the big jest was could Nancy Pelosi raise the money necessary, and she could. And if it was a man that would have been the same question, can he raise the money to support Democrats? And the fact that here campaigning and her fund raising was able to help change the house was not because she was a woman but she did that as a human being. And so that those questions of can she or he raise money, will somebody crazy from California be so totally off the wall that could we stand them? All of those things it wasn't just that she was a woman. The fact that we actually look at those other things—and the same thing with Hilary. I think the issues with whatever is going to emerge, do people like her? What kind of baggage does she carry because of her husband? And the way she responded during that time. What kid of baggage comes out through the financial doings of her law firm in Arkansas? And if she were a man those same things would be questions. So it isn't that just she's a woman, it's that the United States is looking at it and it's not the first and foremost question.

Moon: So gender isn't as significant, is what you're saying.

Egeland Siadek: I don't think so.

01:42:16

Moon: Yeah. I think you're probably right about that. But I think it's also looking at it from a women's historian's perspective is looking at where we started and where we've gotten to. So it's great to be able to say, "Yes, finally a woman is in that top dog sort of office." So I think that's really interesting. But I also

think that the foundation for women today in politics is based on the contributions that you made in the '70s and—

Egeland Siadek: I hope so. I hope so. I hope there are little girls that were in school that just don't question that women should be in politics and maybe they would look at the jobs too. I know that I helped convince a number of women to run for the legislature, and they did and they won. And I was involved very directly with Dwaine Easton and Jackie Sphere and a few others that might not have been elected. And, you know, it was great.

Moon: That is great. Now you were going to tell me a story about your favorite bill that you worked on.

Egeland Siadek: Yes, my favorite bill. Well, I believe in spanking. And I have never spanked my children. And I don't—I think violence begets violence. And I felt very strongly as a school children that those children where were paddled were often paddled very severely and then it became this macho thing. And if you look at who was paddled in school it was mostly junior high school boys. And the coach would you know, it as like this big hero stuff. And macho, macho—whatever. And I think that some of the things were really over done. But when I was in the eighth grade in Mr. [Collaf's?] math class I was passing a note between my two friends Ray Hopkins and Howard Goldstein. And *I* got caught with the note. And I didn't tell on them. And *I* got paddled with a huge paddle. And it hurt. And it was embarrassing. And I never forgot that. And then later when I was a teacher and observed paddling I used to just cringe at it. So when I was in the legislature I had the opportunity to do something about it. That was my personal bill. And I tried it several years. Because there were many people who believe, "Well, I was such a bad kid I deserved to be beaten. And that's why I'm the good person I am today." And trying to convince them that that's not the norm. And that we do have a lot of violence and we have to look at curbing violence. And there are other ways than to teach violence. But I finally got that bill through! And it wasn't that there *couldn't* be paddling. But the way I decided to work it was that the parent had to agree and put in a letter in the school. So the school had to send home a letter. However they worded it, "We want your permission to paddle your child. And we will notify you when this is going to happen." So for all those people who believed you should beat the hell out of kids, but the *parents* should be able to know about it. Parent rights. And I said, "So here is the way that you get the parent to work with the school," knowing full well that they are just not going to get those notes back. So I got enough votes to pass that bill because they saw it as a way that it furthered parental authority.

01:46:33

Moon: Yeah, parental rights issues. That's, that's really great. So that's kind of fun to look back at all of your bill files and see all the things that you worked on.

Egeland Siadek: Sure. And this one, Howard Goldstein is the man who invented the heat tiles at NASA and he was inducted into the NASA hall of fame, one of the very few civilians. And when they had his party inducting him in they had a roast, and I got to go, and I told that story about the note. And I said, "We should have probably dubbed this the Howard Goldstein Non-Spanking Bill." [Laughs] So I always tell him about that. And this is Uncle Frank Lannerman. And he was quite old—I don't know how old he was—but he was beginning to fall asleep in his committee meetings. He chaired the mental health committee and I was on his mental health committee. And he was a Republican from La Cañada, California. He's the Lannerman in the Lannerman Petra Short act. He was very involved for years and years with the developmentally disabled and the mentally ill. And I special education programs. And so one day Leo McCarthy called me in and said,"I'm going to take the Committee away from Uncle Frank because he's falling asleep and It just doesn't look right. And we'll give it to you." "Why?" Well, first of all, McCarthy was the one I *didn't* vote for for speaker, right? I said, "Is this part of my punishment?" And he said, "No" he said, "You're the only one on the committee that Uncle Frank won't punch on the nose." I said "Thank you, that gives me a lot of confidence." I said, "I'll take it on one condition, Uncle Frank stays on the committee." He says, "You're crazy! You want him off the committee!" I said, "Nope, he knows every parent of schizophrenic kids, parents of the autistic, he knows the friends of the this. And every single group he's worked with, all the area and regional centers, everything, and he's going to introduce me to everybody. So you're going to have to let me tell him and then ask his permission for him to go around the state with me." And so that's what I did. He was such a gentleman. And he and I traveled all over California and we met with all of these groups. And he introduced me like he was introducing his daughter. And it was great. It was great.

Moon: Was that one of your favorite committees?

Egeland Siadek: It was. Yeah.

01:49:37

Moon: What were some of the other committees that you chaired?

Egeland Siadek: Well I chaired Mental Health, and I was on Health Committee. Ultimately vice chair of the Health Committee. And I chaired Budget Sub1 which was health and welfare and social services. So those were the two that I chaired. When I first went to the legislature, I asked to be on Health, Education, and Agriculture. And John Therman didn't want me on his Ag Committee, because there were no women on Ag. And I said, but I have a big Ag district. All of San Benito County and all of Gilroy. And, you know, we had all kinds of Ag—more *then* than we do now. Well anyway. John Therman was a dairy farmer from—Turlock, I want to say, someplace in the central valley—he was a dairy farmer who never thoroughly understood milk pooling. And milk pooling was a scheme that was invented so that milk from dairy's is pooled,

so that you get the less cream, and the rich cream, and the whole cream, but you have it so you—it's the pricing, it's the mechanism for pricing milk so that dairy farmers in California could compete with the dairy farmers in Arizona or some other place. And I became an instant expert on milk pooling. So I became a very valuable member of the Ag Committee. But you had to do that kind of thing.

Moon: What are your—in thinking about where we are in politics today and where women have gone and venture into, what do you hope your legacy will be as one of the early members in the Assembly?

Egeland Siadek: Well I'm lucky enough to live and see my legacy because there are now 114 women who have been in the legislature in California, and thirty percent of the legislature are women, and they are not asked if they could understand the budget or what they were going to do with their children. And they run on the merits of their own intellect and their own persuasive abilities. And they make their own mistakes. And we have women running against women, which wasn't done in the beginning. So I have seen that we are almost more than equal candidates. And that many men don't win when running against a woman.

01:52:46

Moon: Well that's really great. I'm so glad we got a chance to talk today because you have, I'm sure there's a hundred more stories you could tell.

Egeland Siadek: There's always stories. That's why when I went through the materials I said, "Oh, I can't give those to her. I have to go through them and hopefully write these down so that my grandchildren will have the memoirs." And then I'll put in my will and you can have them.

Moon: How many grandchildren do you have?

Egeland Siadek: I have one boy and one girl.

01:53:18

Moon: Oh okay. Well that's pretty fun.

Egeland Siadek: That's probably all I'll have.

Moon: All you'll have, okay. Well, two are better than none!

Egeland Siadek: Absolutely!

01:53:26

Moon: Well this is very interesting to me. And I'm hoping that at some point maybe you could just—part of the project is put some documents up on this document set that's created for college students. And so I like to have photographs of the women I've interviewed, and if you have any extra

campaign literature, like the materials you showed me, if you could send me a copy of a couple of those things that would be a perfect thing to compliment—

Egeland Siadek: I'll be happy too, I'll be happy too. Yeah, it's a great project that you're doing and I do encourage people—men and women—to follow their dreams. To understand that it's an opportunity in politics to make changes for thousands of people. And just think you get the opportunity to do that. It's *so* exciting. It's a very, very exciting, place to be.

Moon: Now, have your girls gone into politics?

Egeland Siadek: They have no interest whatsoever. But then, they're still young. And who knows?

01:54:43

Moon: Yep, absolutely. Well thank you so much.

[End Audio File 1]