Narrator

Cory L. Richards (b. 1948) is senior vice president and vice president for public policy at the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which he joined in 1975. He has been involved in reproductive health policy research, advocacy, and coalition building for more than three decades. Early in his career, Richards worked as press assistant and legislative assistant in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Interviewer

Deborah R. McFarlane is professor of political science at the University of New Mexico. She is the author, with K.J. Meier, of *The Politics of Fertility Control: Family Planning and Abortion Politics in the American States* (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2001). McFarlane worked as an administrator and a consultant in reproductive health in the U.S. and internationally for more than three decades.

Restrictions

No

Format

Five 60-minute audiocassettes.

Transcript

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Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Audio Recording


Transcript

This is April 7th, 2005, in Washington, D.C., and I’m about to interview Cory Richards, vice president of the Alan Guttmacher Institute [AGI]. I want to thank you very much for participating in this project. Maybe we could get started by talking about where and when you were born.

I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1948—June 15th, 1948.

And tell me a little bit about your parents.

On both sides, my parents were first-generation Americans, their parents, my grandparents, having come from Russia early in the century. I believe—although I have more knowledge about my mother’s side of the family than my father’s side of the family—but I believe that they all came from approximately the same area of Russia, which was near the Poland border, but did not know each other until they came to the United States. And they were all, I think, from Ellis Island, you know, dispatched to Omaha, Nebraska.

And so you grew up in Omaha. And what did your parents do?

My mother was a homemaker and my father, who died when I was thirteen, had an independent small business. It was kind of fun, at least for me as a
kid. There were three guys who had—one had a business that built—was also in a little lumber and supply company. The other one built freestanding garages, and the third one had a little wrecking company—and my dad had the wrecking company. (McFarlane laughs) So that’s what he did.

McFarlane That was a lot more fun.

Richards It was fun for me as a little kid on Saturday morning to, you know, go down and watch the buildings being destroyed. What else can I tell you about my family?

McFarlane Do you have any siblings?

Richards Okay, yes. I am the middle child. I had an older sister, three and half years older than me, and a brother, three and half years younger than me—perfectly spaced, through willpower. I later asked my mother how she was able to, you know (laughs), do that before modern methods of birth control, and she said, “Willpower. (laughs) I intended to.” So she was highly motivated, I guess you’d say now. Um, so my sister has since died, when she was forty-five years old, so about fifteen years ago, I guess, around there. And my baby brother, who’s in his early fifties now (laughs), is living in California with his family.

McFarlane Any religious upbringing?

Richards We were definitely a Jewish family, culturally Jewish, to be sure. I did have a religious education through high [school]—you know, I went to Saturday school, the equivalent of Sunday school, and I was bar mitzvahed when I was thirteen, and even continued going to religious school for a couple of years after that. But I wouldn’t say that we—I think we all as children were given
the appropriate religious education without a whole lot of—I never considered that we were a particularly religious family, you know, beyond that.

McFarlane So you didn’t eat kosher, or did?

Richards No, we did not keep a kosher home but we—I think when I say we were culturally Jewish, I mean (laughs) we celebrated all the holidays, with all the food. I mean, we were definitely a food Jewish family. My mother’s family—that’s quite an interesting family, and you will stop me when I go too far off the track. But my mother’s family was actually ideologically irreligious. My grandmother especially was definitely hostile to organized religion, up to and including specifications that she not have any religious burial.

McFarlane So you knew her—

Richards That sort of thing. Yes, although my mother’s mother died when I was about five or six. My grandfather lived until he was ninety-five, so quite a bit later. And they were quite politically active on the left.

McFarlane In Omaha?

Richards In Omaha, yes. I want you to know that my grandfather ran for lieutenant governor of the state of Nebraska on the socialist ticket in the 1920s, I believe. Needless to say, he was not elected, but they were a very left family. And I think that that really, you know, has influenced me a lot. My father’s family was completely—as far as I could tell growing up—was not at all political, in that sense. But I think I really was strongly affected by my mom’s side of the family. So—

McFarlane And so that was just kind of information you had—
Richards: It was in the air, right.

McFarlane: And, growing up in Omaha, what other influences or—what was is it like?

Richards: Well, you know, looking back on it now, I think that Omaha—I often say that Omaha is a great place to be from. I think, without being sarcastic at all, I think I got good, American, family values, kind of middle-class family values. Nebraska then was different politically, I think, than it is now, because there always was a streak of populism in Nebraska. And in fact, who came from Nebraska? William Jennings Bryan I think came from Nebraska. Is that right?

McFarlane: Yeah.

Richards: I believe that’s correct. So it was—now we think of it as sort of being a rightwing Republican [state], but I think that growing up in Omaha there was actually a fair amount of tolerance for diversity, in a way, that I don’t think of as being Midwestern, you know, per se.

McFarlane: Or is that the East Coast perception of Midwest?

Richards: Right, maybe that’s it, too. So I definitely was a public school kid. I think it’s fair to say that my family when I was young was a working-class family. We did not have a lot of money. It was a kind of a day-to-day existence. So I went to public school—good school. You know, good public schools in those days. We were just beginning, I think, to move more into the middle-class around the time when I was in about sixth grade and we bought a house. My parents actually built a house in the slightly better neighborhood in Omaha where more of the Jewish families lived.

And right around the time I was thirteen, right, one month after my bar
mitzvah, my father died. This is why I'm going to say all these things, I guess. (laughs) We were told at the time that he had a heart attack, but I later found out that he actually committed suicide. But that sort of changed our economic situation. My mom, who’s still living, eighty-four now, kind of a psychologically interesting character, and was very, very determined as a young woman to be a typical American woman, which very definitely meant being a housewife and not working. This is now in the, you know, we’re now in the, in the ’50s. So this was very, very strong.

And she actually—I think it’s not inaccurate to say—was really regarded as a brilliant child. She started high school when she was twelve and finished when she was sixteen, I guess, and got straight A’s all the way through, but was denied a scholarship to the University of Omaha. You know, we’re not talking Harvard or Yale. She would say, because her older sister was such a hellion, that the family was sort of blackballed, and I should say a word about my great aunt here in a second. But from that time on, I think, you know, this sort of damaged my mother in a certain way. And she kind of stopped her education, got married to a guy who was absolutely, like, quintessentially anti-intellectual, that kind of thing, and forced herself into the mold of homemaker. And to this day, you know, she reads the newspaper devotedly every day, but I think she’s probably read five books in her life. That would be going some—so I don’t know what that means, but that’s very—

**McFarlane** What aspirations did she have for you, though?

**Richards** Very inter[esting]—very driven for me and my brother—less so my sister—to excel in school. Kind of to escape, to a certain extent, to get out of
Omaha, to go to a good school, to, you know, get a good job and kind of get out of a sort of small, constricted existence. So we were—

McFarlane So she communicated that to you?

Richards Yes, and unfortunately without a whole lot of joy. There was much more a sense of duty. But we were really pushed hard in school and expected to do well, and both my brother and I did do well—all that kind of stuff. My older sister, who was by no means a dummy or anything, but who was just sort of a regular kid, you know, a B student instead of an A student. And I think maybe that, and the fact that she was a girl, I don’t know, meant that she was pushed harder. They had a more rocky relationship, mother/daughter kind of thing. So help me along so I don’t get off the track here from what’s relevant.

McFarlane Let me just ask you, and we’ll move on to schools: was their being Jewish in Omaha at the time an issue for you, or was there enough of a community that it wasn’t?

Richards There was a sizeable—and is, still—a sizeable Jewish community in Omaha. So it wasn’t as though we were like the only family there. Nonetheless, there was definitely a strong sense of being, you know, a minority population, and being different. And being kind of other. So I think that strongly influenced me and, looking back on it now, I also realize that, you know, when I was approaching adolescence, I guess, I also began to realize that I’m gay. So that also gave me a sense of, you know, What am I doing in Omaha? How long is this going to last? How long are Omaha and I going to be a match here?

(laughs) And so—

McFarlane Pretty scary, huh?
Richards: Yeah, well, so I graduated high school and I left Omaha and, you know, never went back. I mean, I came to the East Coast and I've been an East Coast person ever since—

McFarlane: And you went to Yale.

Richards: Mm-hmm.

McFarlane: How did that come about? You're from a working-class family in Omaha.

Richards: I was a, you know, 100 percent scholarship student. I did well in school. I was never the absolute brainiest. I was always in like the top 5 percent of my school. I went to a really great high school in Omaha, Nebraska.

McFarlane: Which one?

Richards: Central High School, which was great in many ways. I mean, it was a wonderful academic school. Very, very good education. It was an all-city school downtown, located in the building that formerly had been the capital of Nebraska before Nebraska became a state. So it was an old building downtown. The student body was about a third black, about a third Jewish, and about a third, you know, white other. (laughs) And this was—I graduated in 1966, so this was right before the race riots of the late ’60s and all that kind of stuff. And it would be going way too far to say that, you know, everything was perfect. But this was a great education, and there was diversity and there was contact among the groups. And I did a lot of acting in school, and that’s one way that you got to be with a diverse group of—it seems like, you know, athletics was one way that people sort of crossed over, and sort of the artsy kind of stuff was another way.

So, I had a good education and I got a scholarship to Yale. I was sure
that I wasn’t going to get into any place. By that time I had firmly inherited my mother’s insecurity and paranoia (laughs) about life and, you know, that sort of nose-to-the-grindstone, get-down-and-tough-it-out kind of thing.

McFarlane (laughs) They’re out to get you.

Richards They’re out to get me, so right. I remember that I applied to, I think, six colleges around the country. And maybe the application process was a little less arduous than it is today, I don’t know, but I did this and of course I got into all of them, you know. (laughs)

McFarlane But you’re hitting the boom, the baby boom, in full, so the competition’s—

Richards Right. No, it was remarkable. So—

McFarlane So you got to Yale. Did Yale—what was it like going there from Omaha? Was it a great fit from the beginning?

Richards No, not at all. It was sort of, you know, Is there life after high school, in a certain way. (laughs) In some ways, I think I sort of peaked in high school. In spite of my (laughs)—I was a very popular kid and, even though I was dealing on one level with my sexuality, I was always, you know, dating really pretty girls and I had a lot of friends and all this kind of stuff (laughs) and it was fine. And I was also a noted actor at my school. I got all the awards and all that kind of stuff, and I actually, in my senior year, I actually had a fan club of like, you know, freshmen girls. So this was pretty heavy stuff for me. And then I went to Yale and it was like (laughs), you know, wow, talk about small fish in a big pond. Because then, I mean, I was really nothing special (laughs) at all.

And I also—this is maybe interesting in terms of coming to an entire
career working at the Alan Guttmacher Institute, is that I’m not really that academically minded. So, I mean, I think I’m naturally quote “smart,” and that kind of stuff, and quick and blah, blah, blah. But I’m not really that bookish, so I basically got through college to get through college, I think because—back to my mother’s kind of drive—there was no question that even though I was the first in my family, and I think the first among my cousins and stuff to go to school, and certainly to go to an Ivy League school. There was no question that I was going to do it, but I never went to graduate school or anything like that. I mean, you know, I did what I had to do to get myself credentialed to move on to the next step, and that was it.

This was also now in the late—you know, the revolution was on full blast here. We’re in the late ’60s, because I graduated high school in ’66 and went to college just as we all started smoking marijuana, and, you know, thinking about the war and civil rights and all that kind of stuff. Yale was a very progressive school at that time, under Kingman Brewster. So it was not quite a pass/fail system, but it was sort of a fail, pass, high pass, honors kind of thing. So I could always get a high pass without working that hard, which is kind of what I did. And I took liberal arts stuff, so I took English and that sort of thing, and I really fancied that I was going to be an actor, all through college.

McFarlane So you were doing—

Richards I was doing—extracurricularly, you know, that sort of thing. And then when I came close to graduation, it became crashingly clear to me that I really wasn’t going to be Laurence Olivier, and I at that point needed to, like, get a
real life.

**McFarlane**
And that was kind of your cynical—or insecurity from your mom coming through?

**Richards**
Yes—

**McFarlane**
Instead of, I think I can make this successful—

**Richards**
I think that's probably true. And all the time, I'm sort of hearing this mantra from my mom. “Well, you can always be a teacher.” You know, you need to have something to fall back on, that kind of thing. So I had—in my freshman year in college, I had become close friends with this guy who was the son of a first-term congressman from Maine. And in my first year, I desperately needed a summer job. I mean, I really needed this, you know, for the income. And I definitely didn’t want to go back home. I mean, I have good relations with everyone, but I was out. I was out. I was out there now, you know. (laughs) I had escaped. I didn’t want to go back.

So this guy, Peter Kyros, Jr., secured for me a job in Washington for the summer. And my job was to—in the mornings, I ran an elevator in the Capitol, and then in the afternoons I sort of, you know, interned in the office and did the total grunt work. And that was my introduction to the world of politics and policy. Because really, up to that time—and I’m at this point nineteen years old, so—but I was really, aside from the sort of consciousness from my family of being progressive and all that kind of stuff, which was just in my genetic makeup—I was really not particularly—I don’t think I really read the newspapers much. And I didn’t really care about politics at all. It just seemed—I never really thought about it. And there, you know, then I got to
Washington, and to make a long story shorter, I went there for three summers after college and worked in a Congressional office. I was fortunate enough to get rid of the elevator job after the—

McFarlane (laughs) The first year.

Richards After the first year.

McFarlane While you knew the ropes.

Richards It was a very interesting job, because they—talk about patronage, I mean, this is a patronage job that a first-term congressman can get for somebody. So it’s not very glorious, and it was running an automatic elevator (laughs), I mean, you just had to punch the buttons. Well, I got to be good at it, but I wasn’t good at it at the beginning because I ran, actually, the busiest elevator in the Capitol complex, which was where all—there was a train kind of thing that ran from the House buildings to the Capitol. And there were three elevators that everybody poured into. And two of them were members only, and mine was the public elevator, and so it was extremely crowded all the time. And I was told on my first day—this was my entire training—that I was to get the people in, jam as soon as the elevator was in, don’t take no for an answer, close the door and get them over there and just ferry these people back and forth. And on my very first day, the crowd pours in and I start to close the door and, you know, some real—pardon the expression (laughs)—asshole-type person, he was a short little guy, is like, you know, gesticulating that he’s got to get, he’s got to get in, and I’m saying, “I’m sorry.” I closed the door, and it turned out that he was Carl Albert, who was the majority leader of the House at the time. (McFarlane laughs) So I almost didn’t have a
political career, but I survived that.

McFarlane Well, if you had to pick one person.

Richards Right, so anyway—and then I'll wrap this up and you can ask another question—I became—I was struck working in the Congressional office at the intersection of politics and theater. And the thing that got me interested in politics first was the show of it, and the putting on of a campaign and the press releases and the presentation and the pretense and the pretending, and this was sort of the reality of the stuff behind the scenes and the gap between that and how it was portrayed really interested me. And I think I sort of rationalized to myself that I could do this on that basis, and at some point it did occur to me that politics was theater, but instead of, you know, entertaining people and making them laugh and cry, it really did have to do with, you know, it impacted people's real lives, and it was serious and important. So that kind of, you know, helped me come to terms with the fact that I wasn't going to be actually in the theater, but I was in this sort of very theatrical profession nonetheless.

McFarlane Did you major in Political Science?

Richards No, I majored in English, so I was basically equipped for nothing, hence my mother saying, “You could always be a teacher.” (laughs) You know, she always sort of had me teaching third grade somewhere.

McFarlane But that goes along with the dramatic vein, too, the English major.

Richards Yeah.

McFarlane And after the first summer, you thought you'd come back to Washington, or—
Richards: Well, during the—

McFarlane: Were you thinking about that?

Richards: It all actually seemed—through college I think it all was just sort of the default. I mean, it was the convenient thing to do. I could get the job. I could get the job. And I needed the job, so I did it, and I was just sort of, you know, sucked in over time. When I was in college, I never really thought that I would do this. But when I got out of college and I realized, you know, I needed a real job, then they offered me a real job. And so then I staffed—or after college graduation, I stayed working for this same guy for four years after college. And he was on the public health subcommittee in the House. It’s got a different name now, but the—

McFarlane: What was it called then?

Richards: The full committee was called the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, and it was the subcommittee on public health and the environment.

McFarlane: So he was on that committee?

Richards: Yeah. He was on that committee and he was the Democrats’—he was a Democrat, and the Democrats were in the majority in Congress, so he wasn’t the subcommittee chairman, but he was the next top-ranking member of the subcommittee. So that was one of his two specialty areas as a member of Congress. So—and I did his work on that committee, and that's how I became interested in public health issues. You know, again, it's almost—I mean, it all seems very accidental. None of it was planned for. I mean, I didn’t grow up wanting to work in politics, and I didn’t want to get into
public health—

_Tape 1, side 1, ends; side 2 begins._

I mean, I could’ve gotten talked into manufacturing or something like that, that I might be working in now, but, you know, I got into this—almost accidentally—into this wonderful field.

**McFarlane** And you thought it was interesting at the time?

**Richards** Oh, yeah. Yes. Right. And I guess I have a capacity to be interested in stuff. So the health issues were very interesting and I was the recipient of lobbying on family planning issues.

**McFarlane** Oh, okay.

**Richards** Because I was doing the work of this congressman who was not unimportant in this field, and this was the committee that authorized the Title X legislation. So, Jeannie Rosoff came often to the Hill to lobby me, and so I got interested in family planning stuff, which I wasn’t interested in really at all. I mean, I just hadn’t thought of it all. I think, mostly by being, you know, male, it just was not something I really thought about a lot.

**McFarlane** Had you thought about population?

**Richards** Um, no, actually. And I think that—you know, I keep saying, genetically I was progressive and all that kind of stuff (laughs), and I think that’s true. I mean, I think I came to all the right—correct—positions without a whole lot of deep thought. So I wasn’t really concerned about population growth or anything like that, and, in fact, truth to tell, this has not been a preoccupation of mine professionally. I’m much, much, much more interested in individual people having access to individual services to take care of their own fertility
control or fertility management needs. And that’s been my perspective, and that’s been, I think, historically, that’s been the Institute’s primary perspective. Anyway.

McFarlane

So was Jeannie—I mean, Jeannie was among the lobbyists that came—

Richards

Yes, among many. Many, many, many. And, you know, I was very young, of course. Now when they go to the Hill everybody seems twelve, but (McFarlane laughs), you know, it’s true. I mean, it’s all these young kids who are really making—not making the ultimate decisions, but I mean, really, you know, kind of influential and definitely think they’re running the world. Although I never really thought that—but very impressionable, then, as well. Or at least I was. And kind of naïve, in a certain way. So, the notion of being lobbied and stuff, some of it I didn’t even quite realize what was going on.

I know when I came to work at AGI, which was—we’ll get to this in a minute—which was Planned Parenthood at the time, I realized some of the techniques that were being used on me, in a certain way. And I think that one of the reasons that I was happy to come to work where I did was that I thought that the quality of the—which I don’t think I even used the word at that time, that I was being lobbied or that kind of stuff—but the quality of the government relations that came from Jeannie and her staff was so far above—I mean, it was noticeable to me, almost subconscious, but I was aware that the quality of this was better. These people—you know, she knew what she was talking about. There were facts and figures to bolster the case. And in a way that seemed seamless to me, they more or less did the work, so that if they would come up and say, Wouldn’t Congressman Kyros be
interested in putting a statement in the Congressional record about the
importance of family planning? And I would say, “Yeah, I might be able to
convince him to do that,” and they would say, “Well, here is one.” You
know, that kind of stuff.

Which is all to say that I think I learned, being on the recipient end, you
know, some really important lessons about how to be what I call a high-end
advocate, and not a sleazy (laughs) lobbyist. First of all, you’ll have to do a lot
of work and make it easy for people to do what you would like them to do,
but also you have to be reliable and give them information that is true, [so]
that they’re not going to come back to you and say, Why did you tell me this?
It turns out it’s not true, I’ll never trust you again. I mean, very early on I
think I understood the importance of credibility and integrity and all that
kind of stuff. But I think that’s very strong at the Institute.

McFarlane  Realizing there’s a long-term relationship with the—
Richards  Yeah. Yes, definitely.
McFarlane  —the office in Congress.
Richards  Right—which is hard, because (laughs), you know, the personnel change, but
the reputation gets passed on.
McFarlane  So you worked for—is it Kyros?
Richards  Mm-hmm.
McFarlane  Is that how you say it? For three years?
Richards  Well, four years after I graduated college.
McFarlane  Okay.
Richards  And then in 1974 he was defeated for reelection after four terms. I think he
had the distinction of being the only one, or perhaps one of two, Democrats who were defeated in the 1974 election, which was the immediate post-Watergate election, which was a very good election for Democrats. But he got defeated anyway, more on personal—not on the political stuff, but he had a bad marriage (laughs) and a car accident, and girlfriends and that kind of stuff, so it was that sort of personal stuff—

McFarlane Is this the Fannie Fox era?

Richards It’s the Fannie Fox era. He was—yes, right.

McFarlane Yeah, so he was—

Richards He was like an unimportant Wayne Hayes (laughs), you know, kind of stuff.

McFarlane Okay.

Richards But it was enough to—at the point, I was thrown out of a job in 1974 and—

McFarlane Was that devastating?

Richards Yes, because I carried on the same like, What’s going to happen to me? I’ll starve to death, nobody will want me, I don’t have any talent. You know, all that kind of (laughs) stuff. And, looking back on it, it just seems staggering to me, because the election was in the first week of November or something like that. I was offered a job on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

McFarlane Oh, this is long-term unemployment (laughs).

Richards And this seemed to me the longest period of my life. I mean, I was beside myself that I didn’t have a job, like, immediately. And it just seemed like I was searching for a job forever, forever, forever—

McFarlane It was just two weeks?

Richards It was about three weeks.
McFarlane: Oh, for three weeks. (laughs)

Richards: Maybe it was close to three weeks. But I landed a job and I was really happy about that. (laughs)

McFarlane: So you didn’t realize that, by virtue of your experience, you could’ve landed other jobs?

Richards: Well, I probably didn’t realize that, although I had applied for—what I didn’t realize was that they, that Jeannie, you know, were actually, interested in me and had sort of picked me out as maybe somebody that would, you know, come over, so that, again in a way that was not apparent to me at all, but meant a lot to me. On the day after the election, I got a call from Jan Liedman, who was the top staff person at the time, you know, saying how sorry she was that the Congressman was defeated, and just chit-chatting. It was just like a courtesy call. But I didn’t realize at the time that she was, you know, feeling me out for what I was interested in doing. So all that just seemed very opaque to me. And so I applied at Planned Parenthood, because at this time, there was no Washington office of Planned Parenthood, and the Guttmacher Institute Washington office was the office of Planned Parenthood in name, publicly. So I didn’t even know there was such a thing as the Alan Guttmacher Institute. These were the people from Planned Parenthood, as far as I was concerned. So I came down. I had an interview.

McFarlane: In Washington or New York, you came to, to have your interview?

Richards: I had my interview in Washington. I had my interview with Jeannie in Washington. And of course, you know, she talked all the way through it (laughs). I don’t think I got five words in, but I must have listened
knowledgeably (laughs), and nodded appropriately, you know. But eventually I was offered a job. And that’s that.

McFarlane And so you weren’t out on the street, and—

Richards No, and I never have been since (laughs), because I’ve stayed here. But—

McFarlane Um, so this organization was part of Planned Parenthood Federation at the time, and there was a Washington office of Planned Parenthood?

Richards No, there was not a Washington office of Planned Parenthood. See, the history of that relationship—I mean, if you want to—

McFarlane Yeah.

Richards You want to move into that?

McFarlane Yeah, that could be interesting.

Richards Because I think, I mean, my career and the Institute’s evolution and the evolution of the relationship with Planned Parenthood all kind of track each other to a certain extent, and especially in the early years. But the Institute came into existence in the middle 1960s at the time shortly before the government began to put money into family planning—because up until the sixties, this was not considered appropriate activity for government. You know, this was private stuff and the government wasn’t to get involved. And for a variety of reasons that you know well, that convergence of various trends in the sixties that—you know, the Pill had come on the market. There was a concern about population growth. There was concern about poverty. There was research showing for the first time the maternal and child health implications of timing and spacing births, and there was to be some research showing that low-income women and minority women had more children,
not because they wanted to have larger families, which everybody thought, but because they didn’t have access to services. So all those things kind of combined to get the government involved in family planning.

And that [is why] Planned Parenthood, which ran family planning clinics, had no Washington presence at this time. There was no need to have a Washington presence. But for reasons that remain mysterious to me, a couple of the big foundations, one of which I think was the Ford Foundation, was instrumental in thinking that there needed to be an entity to both prepare for and then watchdog government money going out for family planning. So there needed to be some kind of institutional capacity to help, to determine who was in need of services out there, where there were services, where there were not services, to sort of match a clientele to providers, to help these entities who were, you know, mostly Planned Parenthood affiliates, have the skills to write an application to get money from the government. And then, simultaneously, to monitor that money to make sure it was well spent and went out to where it was needed and all that kind of stuff.

And so the Institute, which was then called the Center for Family Planning Program Development, was put into being with an initial grant, I think from the Ford Foundation, but that will need to be checked. And the Foundation—and if there was one other that [was] involved it might have been Kellogg—in their wisdom thought that this was going to be a temporary thing and didn’t want to set up a new organization. So they wanted to house this capacity somewhere where there was already an
institutional capacity. So what became the Institute was set up as a quote “semi-autonomous division” of Planned Parenthood, for the purpose of really taking advantage of the fact that Planned Parenthood already had personnel policies, and Planned Parenthood knew how to get checks to people, and Planned Parenthood had all the business and the pensions and, you know, all that kind of stuff. They didn’t have to set up a new organization.

But the Center—later the Institute—was set up from the beginning at arm’s length within Planned Parenthood, even though within Planned Parenthood. So there was a council, not a board of directors, but a council that set the research priorities for the Center. The Center always had to raise its own money—that sort of thing. And there was a dotted-line relationship from the president of the Center, from Fred Jaffe, to the president of AGI. Not a direct line, wonky. If that wasn’t wonky enough, what was really wonky was that the Center opened a Washington office.

McFarlane: Not Planned Parenthood?
Richards: Not Planned Parenthood. Because it was this notion of it was going to be done in a very sort of academic way through research to determine where the need was and therefore then to make sure that the money went out in the right way and all that kind of stuff, so that the advocacy capacity was in the Center, soon to be named the Alan Guttmacher Institute. Made all the more confusing because Alan Guttmacher was the president of Planned Parenthood. And it was—

McFarlane: No kidding.
Richards: Right. And it was during Alan Guttmacher’s term as president of Planned Parenthood, which, you know, that’s how he kind of capped off his illustrious career as an OB/GYN. When he retired, he became the president of Planned Parenthood. And he was a driving force in the setting up of the Institute.

McFarlane: Okay, that’s useful.

Richards: And none of this—as I said, from the outside world’s point of view, the Center was a New York thing and a research thing. The Washington office of AGI did not even go under the name AGI. It was the Washington office of Planned Parenthood.

McFarlane: And that’s where you worked?

Richards: And that’s where I was. So that when I applied, I went to an office that said Planned Parenthood. Actually it said in those days, Planned Parenthood, World Population. The letter that I got, you know, my offer letter was on Planned Parenthood stationery, and it wasn’t until I’d been there for two weeks and I got my first paycheck and the paycheck said Alan Guttmacher Institute.—I had to go up the hall and say, “Who are they?” And this was an organizational structure that was doomed, I mean, was destined not to last, because operationally what that meant was that Planned Parenthood did not technically control its own Washington office. Because the Washington office, we—Jeannie, who was the head of the Washington office, was accountable to Fred Jaffe, not to the president of Planned Parenthood.

McFarlane: Who was semi-accountable.

Richards: Who was semi-accountable through this dotted-line arrangement. In reality, it
worked fine in that there were not really any major—the break between Planned Parenthood and AGI that happened a couple of years after I came—I mean, it was in 1977, you know, and I started in January of 1975. So I mean, I'm twenty-five years old. I mean, I was just a kid watching this. I wasn't involved really in the politics. But as far as I can tell, there was never really a question of major divergence in mission or strategy, or anything like that.

What happened was, in a political sense, that a new president came into Planned Parenthood right around the time I started, whose name has escaped me at the moment, but I'm going to think of it in a second. He had been the head of AID—not the head of AID, he had been like the deputy director of the Peace Corps under Sergeant Shriver in the Johnson administration, or something like that. So he was not from the field, you know, per se. He came into Planned Parenthood. And I think he looked at the organizational chart and said, “This doesn’t make any sense. We must bring this Washington office under our control.” Which made perfect sense in terms of an organization chart, but it precipitated this—

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McFarlane: But not historically.

Richards: —this, you know, break between the two organizations. Let me just say one other thing about that before—

McFarlane: Okay. Yeah.

Richards: —going into that, because I think that—I mean, I said there was no really strategic difference, but I think that the way it was set up, with AGI being the Washington office of Planned Parenthood, has set up a tension that in good
times has been a very positive creative tension, and good for the field—which is to say that AGI always felt, even when we were the Washington office of Planned Parenthood—I mean, I think Jeannie always felt, and we were always taught to feel, that we were acting for the field. And to some extent, what was good for Planned Parenthood—because it was the oldest and the largest and the biggest and the, you know, blah, blah, most arrogant—what was good for Planned Parenthood was good for the field, but that it wasn’t good for the field to be perceived as only Planned Parenthood.

So that AGI was the driving force in the establishment of the National Family Planning Forum, which became NFPHRA [National Planning and Reproductive Health Association], which, in a sense, is in some ways a competitive organization to Planned Parenthood. And Planned Parenthood, you know, tolerated this but never really liked it, but, I think, was persuaded that this was okay. So all of that, I think, was in the air at the time when this new president of Planned Parenthood came in and precipitated this break between the two organizations by insisting that the dotted line be, you know, filled in, and that, in a personal sense, you know, that Jeannie report to him. And so—

**McFarlane** Now had Fred Jaffe passed away by then?

**Richards** All right, this is where I have my first, you know—

**McFarlane** It’s okay.

**Richards** No, no. This was in ’78, ’77, and Fred died in ’78. Okay.

**McFarlane** Okay. So he was still—
Richards: Yes. Oh he was, yes. No, definitely—

McFarlane: Still a player?

Richards: Oh yes, oh definitely. Definitely he was a player in this. So what more needs to be said about the breakup?

McFarlane: The breakup happens in ’78?

Richards: Seventy-seven.

McFarlane: Seventy-seven.

Richards: It sort of was in—

McFarlane: Before Fred dies, then.

Richards: It was sort of in 1976, 1977. I think things really started to go south in the fall of ’76. And I think it was probably done by the middle of ’77. So what happened was that the Institute in a sense seceded from Planned Parenthood—set itself up as an independent corporation, took the name, which was very, very controversial because Planned Parenthood wanted the name of Alan Guttmacher, and there was a major—and the terms of [the breakup] were terribly important, because AGI was totally fragile. I mean, remember, it didn’t have any organizational capacity. And Planned Parenthood had all the organizational capacity. Planned Parenthood also had all of the severance money, the pension money, of all of the AGI employees.

McFarlane: Real smooth.

Richards: Who were going to get the real stuff. I mean, this was about money and this was about survival. And there was a real question as to whether or not the Institute would survive through this if there were an acrimonious breakup.

So this breakup had been precipitated. It happened. The minute it happened,
everybody realized that this could be a bad thing for everybody.

So then the two organizations were saying—sort of, you know, remarried on a more mature level. And Planned Parenthood became a—or AGI became a special affiliate of Planned Parenthood, that special affiliation agreement being based on that there would be some overlap in boards to tie the two organizations together. There were some funding restrictions on AGI so as not to, you know, poach on the turf of the Planned Parenthood affiliates. And the third crucial thing was that there was this expectation of continued support, financial support, from Planned Parenthood to AGI, in two parts: a general support grant, an institutional support grant, and a contract for services in Washington.

The big issue over the breakup was—it was started because of the Washington office, and so it was like, What’s going to happen to the Washington office? Planned Parenthood, at that time, you know, was going to then set up its own Washington office. So there were all these negotiations over would the Washington office of AGI do advocacy, or would it only do analysis and Planned Parenthood would do the advocacy piece. And that sort of worked out, you know, over time. But it was very hairy at the time and it was very—there were real questions of whether AGI was going to survive. And then Fred Jaffe died, you know, months after this. And Jeannie, who was kind of the point person for all of this controversy, became the president of AGI. And there were real questions, I think, out there in the world as to whether or not she was going to make it as the president of AGI and whether AGI was going to make it and whether she was going to be able to
raise the money and all that kind of stuff. And I mean, you know, she was a woman and she was not a—you know, she had a law degree from the University of Paris, but she was not a researcher or a Ph.D., all that kind of stuff—although the Institute has come a long way over the years, because neither was Fred Jaffe. I mean, Fred Jaffe was essentially a crusading journalist. So the crusading journalist and the sort of political organizer from a foreign country, Jeannie, you know, founded what has become this prestigious research organization that now doesn’t hire anybody unless they have a Ph.D. (laughs) So, I mean, times have changed, but it is kind of interesting and it does say something about what the origins of the Institute were in relationship to research—which is to say, this was an organization that was put into being to make change, with research being its currency for doing that, as opposed to university-based research or a research organization that exists to create research. This is research for—

McFarlane Action.

Richards —research for action, and the marrying of research and action.

McFarlane Now, what were you, when you were hired in ’75, what were you doing?

Richards I was hired on as the first full-time, quote-unquote “lobbyist” to work on the abortion issue for Planned Parenthood in 1975. This is two years after Roe v. Wade. Planned Parenthood at that time didn’t have anybody that, full time, devoted him or herself to the abortion issue. There had been one person before me, [who] was hired on temporary grant, but this was—so that’s what I did. And I was sort of a part of a three-person team. There were two women, slightly older than I, who’d been there before, Diana Hart and Jan
Liedman, who were like the senior lobbyists, and we divided up these issues and were sort of the team. And they had much more experience with the issues, and I had, the sort of direct experience. So it made a nice team.

And then when Fred died and Jeannie became the president of AGI, there was a long period—because you have noticed that I've had, you know, various sort of like creeping titles, over time, and I think a lot of it, to a certain extent, tracked Jeannie’s transition from the director of the Washington office of the Institute to being the president, and letting go of the Washington piece over time. So—

_Tape 1 ends; tape 2, side 1, begins._

**McFarlane** (unclear) what you’re saying.

**Richards** Yes. And in very characteristic Jeannie way—

**McFarlane** I don’t (unclear).

**Richards** —because in many ways, she worked by indirection. Jan Liedman, the kind of most senior person, had just left by this time, and so when Fred died, Jeannie made Diana the deputy director of the Washington office, and made me the associate director of the Washington office, because Diana had more seniority. But there was no division of duties or, you know, nothing was very clear.

**McFarlane** Figure it out.

**Richards** Right. And later, Jeannie confessed that basically her strategy was like, you know, by a year later one of them would have left. (McFarlane laughs) And you know, let it sort itself out, who really wants to stay here and who—whatever. And you know, that’s what happened (laughs). So—
McFarlane: Well, I’d like to back up into—

Richards: Go ahead.

McFarlane: —into, you’re supposed to lobby full-time for abortion rights. Is that an accurate statement?

Richards: Yes, that’s how I was hired. Although—and this is significant, this is significant in how we have worked in this office, you know, for all the years since, and how I like to work. As soon as I got there, I started working on other things. It was sort of odd in a certain way: I was hired because there was a vacancy to be the lobbyist on abortion issues, but I had come from the Hill with experience and contacts in, around, Title X and family planning. So right away we get to the concept of teaming—before it was fashionable—and, you know, pitching in and working as a team. So the three of us kind of loosely divided up the issues. I mean, I went to the coalition meetings on abortion, although the coalition around abortion in those days was very, very small. I mean, it was literally, a three-person—the core coalition were three groups, was Planned Parenthood or [rather] the AGI, but Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights were the three primary issues. So I and my colleagues from these two organizations palled around—

McFarlane: And figured out the—

Richards: —all the time and, you know, devised the strategy and that kind of stuff. Although there was a larger coalition of sort of second-tier organizations, second tier meaning organizations that had an interest in the issue but didn’t have full-time staff on it that was, you know, NOW and the National
Women’s Political Caucus and all that kind of—in some ways, similar to the large coalition of organizations that work on abortion now, but the core was—now the core is, like, eleven groups or whatever that meet all the time.

McFarlane Interesting.

Richards You know, it was really very, very, very, very small. So I was doing policy work on the range of issues, but the range of issues in those days were basically Title X and abortion. AGI wasn’t working in prenatal care stuff. We were not yet working on international issues. This was pretty much it.

McFarlane So you weren’t helping out population assistance or doing anything—

Richards Not yet. That came just a few years later.

McFarlane Okay.

Richards In 1978. And by about—1978 was when we hired our first person to work on international issues. And this came about through a special grant from Stewart Mott. There was in, I think it was 1978, there was a select committee on population in the House that had a limited duration. And so Stewart gave money to AGI, which was still Planned Parenthood, to hire somebody to kind of watch that. And so we’ve had a full-time staff person working on international issues ever since then.

McFarlane Okay, so from the beginning you’re kind of assuming more responsibilities. You come in in ’75 and Jeannie goes to New York in ’78?

Richards Yeah. But she doesn’t really go to New York full time. And I think there were—you know, this is now into her history (laughs), but I mean, I think there were two reasons that were probably equally strong, and one was personal and one was professional. The personal one is that Jeannie was a
Washingtonian. Jeannie had a house in Washington, Jeannie was a single mother with a daughter living in Washington. She had lived in New York, she had moved to Washington, but now she was a Washingtonian and she wanted to be a Washingtonian and resisted, I think, really—in a psychological as well as a physical sense, you know—resisted the notion of transferring herself to New York. The second thing is that she was known as the political person and she was respected as the political person, and I think she really felt that the relationship with Planned Parenthood was sufficiently tenuous, and it was so focused on the Washington office that if she moved out of that and left it to these kids, these young people who were here, that the relationship with Planned Parenthood would blow up. And let’s face it, the financial contribution from Planned Parenthood to AGI was critical to keeping AGI in business and it was critical to keeping the Washington office in business, because you know, it’s always been hard to raise money from foundations for advocacy work. Foundations by law are prohibited from funding actual lobbying, which is a, you know, technical term, which is a subset of advocacy but not advocacy. That’s very carefully defined. But it just makes it very hard, so that money from Planned Parenthood to the Washington office was critical to the continuing existence of the operation.

And I think [Jeannie] felt she needed to keep a hand in, and she wanted to keep a hand in because that’s what she loved. So she actually never gave up her house in Washington. And for the first several years stayed in a hotel in New York when she went to New York. And then grudgingly, eventually, got an apartment and more or less worked in New York and then came to
Washington, you know, a little bit. But in the early years, I think, again, from personal and professional reasons, she was in Washington, and kept control over Washington. So that’s why there was this sort of long transition from, you know, associate director to deputy director to director to public policy vice president, all that kind of stuff, which was really, in some ways, her moving out. In the later years, which is now many years ago, but I think it’s probably fair to say, by the time we’re in the middle, certainly by the middle eighties, a lot of the withdrawal was that she had in fact, you know—that I was definitely running the Washington office and doing all that kind of stuff. But I was just looking back on the old Washington Memos that go way back to—which is our, you know, former policy rag—I shouldn’t say that—our, you know—

McFarlane Newsletter?

Richards —organ. Organ, that’s the right word. Yes, newsletter. And it was called Washington Memo because from the beginning of the Washington office in the late sixties, literally, it was a once-a-week memo from Jeannie to the key people in the field and specifically in the Planned Parenthood field. And it became a publication, but it always retained the name Washington Memo. And for many years, if you remember it, Deborah, it had “from Jeannie Rosoff,” and it had her trademark JIR initials on it. And you know, over time, first the initials went away, then it stopped saying “from Jeannie Rosoff.” It said, you know, Jeannie Rosoff, president of AGI, that kind of stuff, and there was a masthead that had my name on it, and then eventually it just went away entirely. But that was sort of the slow giving up of that. As she, I think,
became more established, you know, truly as the president of the Institute and was seen as the president of the Institute and as the capacity in the Washington office got to be more established, and the personnel, or I, you know, got to be more established and older and didn’t seem so much like this young kid running around—

**McFarlane**

Well, what were you seeing? Let’s go back—

**Richards**

To the outs[ide]—in the external world?

**McFarlane**

Yeah. Let’s look at—I don’t know if it makes sense to do it by presidential administration or by five-year increments. If we’re just looking at say, you know, ’75 to ’80.

**Richards**

Well, whatever the increments are, let’s just go through that, kind of march through time.

**McFarlane**

Yeah. Let’s march through time, maybe up to ’81, just what you’re seeing as somebody who’s very familiar with the policy making.

**Richards**

Right. Okay. Well, I came in just as the politics of this were about to tank, just as abortion began to, you know, pollute the politics of family planning. Remember that Title X was enacted in 1970. I came in 1975. This was the Ford administration. And of course there, you know, before that had been the Nixon administration. Title X was created in the Nixon administration and signed by President Nixon. But the program had—its period of economic growth really was in the first few years of its existence, and then in sort of constant dollars, it’s remained, you know, pretty steady, or drifted actually downward, ever since. But at the beginning, it was this heady period as family planning clinics were proliferating around the country and, you
know, the money was going out and it was growing and it was exciting—all that kind of stuff. And in the early years, it was essentially divorced from abortion because the Supreme Court decision was in 1973. So, you know, I came very shortly after that.

And I came right at the time of the Hyde Amendment, which was first enacted in 1976. So in a certain way, the period ’76 to ’80, on the abortion issue, was the time of the Hyde Amendment and there was a very, annually, a really protracted battle between the House and the Senate over the terms of the Hyde Amendment. And it wasn’t until 1980 that the Hyde Amendment permanently went into effect. There were different incarnations of it every year and they were being challenged in court every year. And it was in effect, it was out of effect, it was in effect, it was out of effect—and that kind of stuff. Now it seems staggering to think that the notion of abortion funding was so potent that there were some times, you know, at the end of your four-month battle between the Senate, which was insisting on abortion funding, and the House, which wanted to cut off abortion funding, it was the issue that was holding up Congress’ ability to go home for the year and close out the work. So that was one of the big things that was going on. The late seventies also saw the rise of the pro-family movement that was new then, that’s now, you know, the Family Research Council and all these organizations that are running the show.

McFarlane Did you have a sense that this was an emerging power?
Richards Yes.
McFarlane You did?
McFarlane: Tell me about that.

Richards: Definitely. There was—1976, 1977 was International Women’s Year. And there was a big national conference, in Houston, I think. And these issues—the issues of abortion and that kind of stuff—first exploded there. And the progressive side was highly organized and, like, crushed the opposition. And in 1979, I think, [seventy-] eight or nine—first it was the International Year of the Child, and then there was a White House Conference on the Family. And this is where these emerging groups, these pro-family groups, first demonstrated their organizational prowess and sort of hijacked the White House Conference on the Family. The White House Conference on the Family was a Carter construct, and it was sort of Carter’s way of—I mean, I think that the Carter administration wanted to put the power of the government in a positive way toward doing things for the family, and for family concerns, and it was sort of hijacked by the emergence of the right wing. And that’s when the Moral Majority first started.

McFarlane: How did they hijack it? I mean, you were at the—

Richards: I wasn’t actually at the conference. That’s where they first laid on the table the issues of parental consent for family planning services, you know, the pro-family, anti-abortion agenda kind of got embodied in this process and got—I think the main thing is that it got enormous news coverage. They were a force to be reckoned with. And this was now leading up to the 1980 election that was going to elect, you know, Ronald Reagan. So on the second half of the seventies, the Moral Majority was coming in, these pro-family
groups were coming in, and they were beginning to affect them. And so there were amendments in the Congress—there was a big reauthorization of Title X in 1978 that had—I think there were thirteen amendments that were offered by the opponents of the program, all of which were defeated. But nonetheless you could tell that the sands were beginning to shift, or at least, you know, threatening to shift.

McFarlane

You were very aware of that then?

Richards

Oh yeah. I mean, the survival of the program was at issue. Congress was in control—both houses of Congress at this point were still controlled by the Democrats, so there were very strong supporters of Title X still in Congress, you know, who were still the chairmen and you know, controlled the mechanics that controlled the debate and everything. But the insurgency was strong. And then when Reagan was elected in 1980 and the Senate switched to Republican hands, the House was still Democratic. But then, you know, two of the three branches that made laws were in hostile hands by this time. The situation was really dire.

And in the first year of the Reagan administration in 1981, President Reagan proposed that Title X be deauthorized, you know, put out of business and the funds for family planning be put into a block grant [to] the states, along with other programs. This was an attack on Title X specifically, but it was part of a much broader attack against categorical federal programs in favor of block grants to the states. This was the beginning of the notion of devolution of power from the federal government to the states. This was—you know, the Republicans were in charge now, and this was their historic
position, that there should be a smaller federal government and there should be more authority and power at the state level. So they’re going to take all this money and give it to the states to spend more or less as they saw fit—which would’ve been the end of Title X as an identifiable, categorical program.

McFarlane How did you fight back?

Richards We fought back in coalition with—the whole progressive community, essentially, was against this effort as a whole. The battle over Title X, which was a very specific battle within this—I mean, we were able to hold because the House was still controlled by strong supporters of Title X, who just resisted it. And [it] was largely was Henry Waxman, and Paul [Rogers]—who was the head of the subcommittee—Title X, the subcommittee that my Congressman used to work for. And a guy by the name of Paul Rogers from Florida was the head of the full committee. He was southern and moderately a progressive, but not a flaming northeastern liberal, and in a quiet way, you know, very powerful guy.

And in those days there was a lot more—a lot more—support from Republicans in the Congress for family planning. When I first came in, family planning was regarded as a bipartisan issue. By a few years later, it had become, you know, pretty much a partisan issue. But it wasn’t a partisan issue at the beginning. And even abortion, when I look back on it now, it’s stunning. The biggest supporters of abortion rights in the Senate and the strongest advocates against a ban on federal funding were the band, always small—
McFarlane—both issues, both abortion and family planning, were bipartisan when you got into this in '75? I mean, that’s your perception?

Richards Certainly much more bipartisan. And what feels, you know, particularly significant to me is that some of the strongest and most eloquent supporters of women’s reproductive rights and the need for public subsidies for abortions for poor women came from Republicans. I mean, Ed Brooke, the senator from Massachusetts, was the chief Senate proponent of the Senate position on the Hyde Amendment. Jacob Javits from New York, Charles Percy from Illinois, and Lowell Weicker from Connecticut—I mean, these were not just people who voted but they were sort of, you know, in my mind anyway, sort of towering civil libertarians. And that’s what really changed dramatically as the Republican Party has become more and more captive [to] its right wing. The moderate Republicans, even by the time I got into this field in the seventies, were always a small-ish caucus, but they were, you know, what used to be called the Rockefeller Republicans, were a real force within the party. And by now, however many years later, I mean, they are just a handful left.

McFarlane It must seem strange talking about that at this point.

Richards Yeah. Yeah. What you face.

McFarlane Um, so by ’83, Jeannie Rosoff—you were actually given the title of director of Washington office—although that seems like it was a natural transition, progression.

Richards Yeah, you know, I don’t remember any major milestones that caused the change, although there may have been one, like, you know, Jeannie taking an
apartment and moving to New York or something like that, but that just
doesn’t feel to me—important, going back, it just feels that there was a
gradual shift of power and control. I mean, the apartment was very small—

**McFarlane**

Did you—have a significant relationship with Jeannie?

**Richards**

Yes. And yeah, I think that she’s clearly one of the handful of most
important forces in shaping my outlook, politics and policy, and ways of
behaving. And it’s not that—some of the things I may do—have you do—in
contrast to the way you, maybe—but nonetheless there was an important
lens, in a sort of way. And she taught me very important—almost
fundamental values about how to—not so much how to operate but how to
conceptualize the issues that we deal with, that we had at the Institute to deal
with.

One of the things that has kept me here for so long is that she really,
from the very beginning, you know, when I was twenty-five years old, really
encouraged us to—even though we had to do our own little job— to think
about our issues in the broadest possible way, and not get mired in just the
day to day, but to think about, broadly, in terms of how these issues intersect,
religion and law and philosophy. And she was very taken with the notion that
these issues that have to do with the beginning of life and the formation of
families—all really profound and deep issues that the great academic and
thought disciplines are all concerned with. And we should be concerned
about them in that way [and] not just think about, you know, what’s going on
with the abortion issue today—kind of how to put things in context.

So the notion of putting religion in context, or putting pre-natal care in
context with abortion and seeing, you know, women over the course of their lives needing different services at different points of their lives, as opposed to, you know, women who have abortions and women who want to be mothers and all that—a kind of much more integrated, comprehensive sort of view of things. It came from her, and really has infused my thinking and made working on these issues much more interesting, because I think they really are profound.

McFarlane

Did she do that on a one to one, or in staff meetings, getting that across?

Richards

I would say informally, rather than in meetings. One of the other things that was really great in the early years that has changed a lot, having to do with economics: when I first came to AGI we had lunch out of the office in a restaurant every day. And very often—not every day, but very often—there would be, you know—Jeannie loved to introduce friends, and what I’m sure happened was—

Tape 2, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

—there were lots of opportunities for informal talking, which is how information got shared about what was going on. And also, because it was a little more informal, there were more discussions about what’s going on in life and in the world and in other things. And Jeannie has always been interested in books and theatre and all this kind of stuff, so that kind of just fun discussion was sort of built in. And maybe to a fault—I mean, we very rarely have staff meetings, formal staff meetings, now. I think little gatherings in the hall, or just more informal ways of communicating and sharing information are how I like to operate, too, probably, because I was sort of
brought up that way.

McFarlane But part of the big picture, in some way [is that] this was personally, or is personally, satisfying to you—that these are large issues, and profound issues.

Richards Yeah, definitely. And when I think about working at AGI, I often think about how much harder it would be, you know, to work at a place like NARAL. You’d have to worry about just abortion all the time. I mean, it’s both in that AGI has—its work, its agenda, its programmatic agenda—has really expanded as the issues of the field have expanded, to really encompass practically the whole field, which just makes it much more interesting to think about the relationships with these things. And it also means that when stymied in one area, you would sort of try to make progress somewhere else, including, you know, when stymied in the United States—of course we’re never going to stop working in the United States or thinking about the United States as our first priority, but it’s at least nice to think of, you know, there are places in the world where, even during very bad conservative times here, progress can be made in other places. So I think it serves that purpose well.

McFarlane You started to tell me about how when AGI got into international—was this (unclear)’s committee?

Richards Yes. That was the kind of hook-in, so as I said, we had a sort of temporary position to work on these issues. But when the temporary money went away, by that time we had embodied that interest in our core work. And what was happening at the time, late seventies, early eighties—I think by this time what was happening was that all the politics were beginning to converge. The
politics of abortion were converging with the politics of family planning, and the domestic politics and the international politics were converging as well.

Up until that time, you know, getting money to the international population program, the AID program, was pretty much a behind-the-scenes affair. It was sort of separated from the politics of what was going on domestically. And part of that has to do with the [fact] that they’re considered different committees of Congress by different people—that sort of stuff. So that the politics early on—I mean, historically this all happened essentially at the same time, but as I think about it, over a ten-year period, maybe from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties—in the first part of that period the international politics were in a sense not tainted by what was starting to happen on the domestic side. But very soon everything converged.

So I think we were at the beginning of seeing that convergence, and feeling the need to have somebody monitoring what was going on on the international side, both for its own sake—the international side being U.S. foreign policy—both for its own sake and for how that would affect domestic politics. And in fact, looking back on it historically, action on the international side has often been (unclear) for action on the domestic side, which is to say in 1984 the Mexico City Policy was instituted by President Reagan, which was, you know, essentially what we now call an abortion gag rule, or an anti-abortion gag rule, that four years later, in 1988, became the gag rule on Title X on the domestic side. So it was sort of tested out on the international side, where there was a little less attention, a little less constituency interest, to kind of see how it went. So I think we recognized
pretty early on that these things were coming together and needed to be considered together.

McFarlane What were your first clues—help me out here—that they were coming together?

Richards Well, I think even in the—my memory does get a little hazy here—but as soon as the Reagan administration people came in, I mean, it was clear that they had a global view, a global political view. And so, the Mexico City Policy that was announced formally in the spring, I guess, of 1984, was being, you know, worked on and developed, and there were rumors about it, and we were watching who was being appointed to the delegation—was going to be on the U.S. delegation to the UN Conference on Population, you know, from the beginnings of the administration. So it was just clear that—

McFarlane Mm-hmm.

Richards And certainly when James Buckley, the former senator from New York, was appointed to be the head of the delegation, you know, it became clear. I mean, it just became clear that the politics were converging. And before, as I recall, before Buckley was named, there was a rumor that the head of the delegation was going to be Everett Koop, you know, who turned out to be the surgeon general, but who was, you know, really a domestic anti-abortion leader. So, it was clear that there was crossover. And of course by now, I mean, you know, these many years later, all of the rightwing groups have affiliated groups in other countries and U.S. money is seeding a lot of the abstinence-only activity that’s going on around the world. And, you know, the world is getting smaller, and it really (laughs) is one world, politically, to a
great extent.

McFarlane: Were you in Mexico City?

Richards: No.

McFarlane: Okay. So we go into Reagan’s foreign policy and gag—

Richards: Things in the first half of the Reagan administration—things were happening really fast. I mean, in 1981 was this direct onslaught of the—oh, you know, on the existence of the program—and, I mean, wasn’t it the Reagan administration where we came to the notion of the first a hundred days? I think this notion of move fast or, you know, early in an administration, and that’s what they did. They announced their plans and they tried to ram them through, and it was in a sense all over by June of the year. Title X had survived, but its funding had been—it had survived as an identifiable program, but its funding had been slashed an enormous amount. So that happened in 1981. In 1982, all through 1982, the administration was formulating what came to be called the squeal rule, which was the mandated parental notification for teenagers seeking contraceptive services, that was initially proposed in 1982 and then formally proposed in 1983, and was litigated throughout 1983. In 1984, the Mexico City Policy came in and the defunding of IPPF and the defunding of UNFPA. So all of those things—the Reagan administration’s first term, on family planning, was enormously busy and enormously threatening.

Meanwhile, on the abortion front, when Reagan came in and Democrats lost control of the Senate, and the Senate was in the hands, now, of Republican anti-abortion leaders, the whole question of whether there was
going to be a constitutional amendment to ban abortion, you know, was happening right at the very beginning of the Reagan administration, too, so there were all these hearings in 1981 and 1982 on a constitutional amendment. There was a bill by Senator John East that was designed to sort of bypass the constitutional amendment process in a way that many thought unconstitutional, but, you know, he tried anyway. There were attempts to strip the courts of their authority to make rulings in this area, which is very similar to what we’re hearing today about stripping the courts of their authority to deal with these end-of-life things or moving them from the state courts to the federal courts. I mean, you know, the same kinds of things were happening. Senator Hatch had a constitutional amendment to return things to the states. This all went on in 1981 and 1982. It was all defeated by the end of 1982. But it was very—it was very hairy.

So the combination of that, the onsloughts on abortion and on family planning, in the first half of the decade—the first term, for Reagan’s first term, really, you know—were tremendous. Then in the second half, from my point of view, until 1988, when the gag rule came in, which was a major threat to the integrity of the family planning program—but there were, you know, a few years there where there was the Iran-Contra scandal and stuff that kind of took the wind out of their sails a little bit. And then, from AGI’s point of view, interestingly, in the mid-eighties, we, through a long process with the board, decided to expand our agenda from just the preventive side of fertility to having a programmatic interest in access to prenatal care and that sort of thing, and did a couple of major studies on prenatal care. And
during the second half of the eighties, there were really important expansions of access under Medicaid to prenatal care that we worked on that have laid the groundwork for really important change—one being the de-linking, for the first time, of the—this is getting very complicated, and just, you know, stop me at any second—but there used to be a total convergence between eligibility for welfare and eligibility for Medicaid, so that in addition to being poor, you had to be a single mother with, you know, one eye in the middle of your head and three ears (McFarlane laughs), you know, in order to qualify. And in the mid-eighties, for the first time, there was a delinking of those, so that first states were allowed, and then required, to provide—to put more people on the rolls for prenatal care. Women who would not otherwise be eligible, but would be eligible upon the birth of their child, would be eligible on the birth of the child.

So they broke this sort of link between Medicaid and welfare, and have also served—now, these many years later, there are these expansions for family planning services, so that states are expanding Medicaid eligibility for family planning on the same theory that they did the prenatal care expansions in the 1980s. And we were involved in all of that. So that actually was kind of a nice example of, you know, when stymied over here, you can do a little work over there.

**McFarlane** Was that a public health decision by the board, or was that a political decision?

**Richards** Very, very interesting. It was a—I look back on that discussion with real pride. AGI has always had a very broad-based board, and we had some very
strong people who worked in prenatal care in their professions, very strongly, one of whom, one of the most influential, was Arden Miller, who was the chair of our board, but, you know—and who was a family planning person and pro-choice and everything, but his field really was services to pregnant women. And he and others agitated for AGI to get involved in this because he felt that the kind of research and analysis we did was not happening in that field and needed to happen to move that forward and that we had a role to play. So, the board had long—at least a year, maybe more than that, you know—discussions over time and task forces and everything to discuss whether or not we should take this on. And there were people who said, Let’s take it on because it’d be good for our image—that kind of stuff. And I think they were, like, slapped down. And the tone of the discussion was to say, We’re not going to do this for that purpose. We’re going to do it because we think there’s a contribution to make—and, you know, that kind of stuff. And so it wasn’t really made for, in a sense, the wrong reasons. And I don’t think that it had any great—it didn’t make the anti-abortion people, you know, love us any more anyway. I mean, it wouldn’t have worked. So—

**McFarlane**

But you see it as very instrumental in the Medicaid expansions during the late eighties.

**Richards**

Yes, I think so. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, AGI did some very important research there that showed how important Medicaid was as a funder of prenatal care and childbirth services. And Medicaid now subsidizes four in ten births in the United States. I mean, it’s really a huge thing. But, you know, the first statistic on that came from us, so.
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<tr>
<th>McFarlane</th>
<th>Um, you got a new title in ’88.</th>
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<td>Richards</td>
<td>Yeah, what was that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>McFarlane</td>
<td>Vice president for public policy.</td>
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<td>Richards</td>
<td>(laughs) I think there are two things—maybe two things to be said about that. One thing to be said for sure, which is that all of these title changes, you know, ratify what’s already happened, to a certain extent. I mean, it’s not like you get a new title and you get a new job, it’s that you’ve been doing a new job and then, you know, at X time you get—</td>
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<tr>
<td>McFarlane</td>
<td>You need a title.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richards</td>
<td>—the title that recognizes what your job is. And I think that the change in the job, for me—not just this one, but, let me think—my evolution here has really been—I mean, in two ways: in the public policy arena, from spending my time doing advocacy. There was a time when I went to the Hill all the time. I never go to the Hill anymore, and I stopped going to the Hill, you know, a long time ago, and became more of a behind-the-scenes coordinator, strategist, working with the people. And as our own staff has gotten to be more professional and capable, I’ve been allowed to think more broadly about policy development in this issue. And we’ve been blessed, as you may know, with a very stable staff in our Washington office. Our two top people in this office have been here for, each of them, twenty-five years.</td>
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<td>McFarlane</td>
<td>Wow.</td>
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<td>Richards</td>
<td>So, you know, this is a very, very seasoned staff. And there are now, I would say, four people, you know, the four senior people in the Washington office are those two and then two other women who’ve both been here probably</td>
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about seven years by now. One is a lawyer, the other’s a masters in religion. Susan Cohen is a masters in public health, and Rachel [Benson Gold]’s a master in public policy. I mean, it’s a very capable and smart staff. I’ve always felt enormously blessed to be able to have this and to be able to move out of the day to day, to step back and to help them, in a way, and to help bring the stuff together so that hopefully the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

McFarlane Um, does that mean that after becoming vice president you spent more time in New York, or more board meetings, and—

Richards (laughs) Yeah, well, yes. I mean, becoming vice president forces you to be on the management team, which does involve going to the management meetings. And now I’m on the senior management team, because the three top people in the Institute are considered the senior management team. So, obviously my—and I think in my career here the final title, um, change, adjustment, whatever, is when I was made senior vice president, and I still carry the vice president for public policy title. And there was, you know, internal discussion about it being not senior vice president for public policy, but senior vice president—you know, they’re two functions—so I’m supposed to still be in leading our public policy effort, but I’m also [supposed] to be a senior manager of the Institute and have a fully institutional view.

McFarlane Uh-huh.

Richards Which I think, after all these years, I probably do.

McFarlane Yeah, I mean, you certainly have been here longer than anybody now and
Richards

McFarlane

Richards

McFarlane

Richards

McFarlane

Richards

McFarlane

Richards

you’re—

One other.

Who’s been?

Pat Donovan.

Okay, yeah.

Yeah, Pat came in 1972, so she’s, you know, been here, I don’t know, three years before me.

Now when George H. Bush came in—

Mm-hmm.

—what did you expect?

I think we expected that things would moderate from the excesses of the Reagan years, or what, you know, to us were the excesses of the Reagan years. And in the main, we were disappointed. I think by that time he had taken the pledge. And I think there was a persistent feeling, not just at the Institute or even in the field, but generally, that Bush was—Bush One—was more moderate than Reagan but that he had signed on to the team and was going to stick with the policies—which he certainly did. I mean, the Mexico City Policy was continued during his presidency. The gag rule [and its] twin, the so-called squeal rule, the parental-notification requirement and the no talking about abortion, no counseling on abortion—these were the two big attacks on the integrity of family planning service delivery in the United States. And the first one was in the early part of the Reagan administration. The gag rule wasn’t formally promulgated until the last year of the Reagan administration, but it was continued and litigated all through the Bush
administration, because it wasn’t until the fall of 1992 that there was a final
Supreme Court ruling on that. So that permeated his entire career.

**McFarlane**

So that was really more of the same, the Bush—

**Richards**

It was more of the same. It really was more of the same. And it wasn’t until
Clinton came in that there was a moment, you know—I mean, there was this
perception that things were about to change, and then, historically speaking,
things move very fast, because he had—you know, at the end of his first
term, the Republicans took control of the House for the first time since the
1950s, and his second term was much more embattled, so the good times,
really lasted through just the first four years of the Clinton administration.

Meanwhile on abortion, if we can go back to abortion for a minute—

**McFarlane**

Okay, yeah.

**Richards**

—in the late eighties, in 1989, there was an important Supreme Court
decision in a case that carries the name of *Webster v. Reproductive Health
Services*, where the Supreme Court, basically, in its opinion, signaled the
possibility that they would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. And there was a strong, um,
fear that this was almost inevitable. This is the case, I think, in which, you
know, Justice Blackmun said that *Roe* hangs by a thread and a chill wind
blows—something like that, I mean, some very rhetorical statement that said,
you know, things could be really dire.

So there was a lot of attention to the abortion issue as the eighties turned
in—at the end of the Bush administration. And then there was the Supreme
Court decision in 1992, right before the election, where the court upheld
what are called the essential holdings of *Roe*, surprising everybody.
McFarlane: That surprised you?

Richards: Yes. And I think it surprised the anti-abortion people and it surprised the pro-choice people, and I think nobody expected that the Supreme Court can be very smart sometimes (McFarlane laughs). And um, you know, what they did was they allowed more restrictions on abortion by technically changing the standard of review for state laws. And that was expected. That’s what everybody expected, that either the court was going to overturn *Roe v. Wade* outright or it was going to say to the states, You can do more to restrict. They did the, you know, you can restrict more part, but nobody really expected that they would accompany that by this sort of ringing reendorsement of, you know, what it called, you know, the central holding of *Roe*. So it kind of went in both directions in a very crafty way. And in a certain way, it sort of—politically, it sort of took the wind out of the sails of the pro-choice side that had been kind of prepping the country and prepping the press for, you know, defeat, and then all of a sudden the press is all writing stories saying the Supreme Court reaffirmed *Roe v. Wade*. And they sort of did, but they sort of didn’t at the same time.

But it inspired a lot of agitation in Congress in that period between 1989 and 1992 around a law called the Freedom of Choice Act, which was cooked up by, you know, “our side,” quote-unquote, to establish in federal law the parameters of *Roe v. Wade* in case the Supreme Court struck *Roe v. Wade* down. And the reason I’m bringing it up is because it caused an interesting division in the pro-choice movement—

*Tape 2, side 2, ends; tape 3 begins.*
McFarlane Division in the pro-choice movement.
Richards Yeah, because this Freedom of Choice Act was going to sort of put the holdings of Roe v. Wade into federal law. And there were two big questions about whether this law would—one was whether this law would overturn the Hyde Amendment and whether it would deal with the issue of federal funding of abortion, and the other was whether it would deal with all these restrictions that had been allowed under Roe v. Wade, in terms of parental notification or consent, which the Supreme Court had—in other words, the Supreme Court, from 1973 on, even during the period when Roe v. Wade was clearly the law of the land, allowed the cut-off of Medicaid funds, saying that that was not a part of Roe v. Wade, and also allowing states to impose parental notification and consent requirements.

So when the pro-choice side decided to write a law that would enshrine Roe v. Wade into federal law, the question was, would it protect teenagers and would it protect poor women’s access? And the law didn’t, which caused—I mean, it was never a law, it was a bill—but it caused, particularly on the funding side, [it] caused a real, internal discussion between those who thought it was more important to have a federal bill to enshrine the right to abortion in federal law, and those who said, you know, it’s a right for middle-class people, but what we really should be doing, [is we] should be spending our time and our political capital trying to restore Medicaid funding.

And that battle continued into the the first year of the Clinton administration, because of course, the Clinton election, combined with the 1992 Supreme Court decision reaffirming Roe v. Wade kind of turned the
politics on their heels, because suddenly the perception was, you know, there’s the first pro-choice president in U.S. history, and the Supreme Court had just reaffirmed Roe, so the question now was, why are we spending our time—the internal question in the movement—was why are we spending our time continuing to hawk this bill, rather than spending our time on fighting for poor women’s rights. And that’s a division, I think, in the movement, that has been there from the very beginning and persists to today, about, what’s this really about?

McFarlane Where do you think AGI is on that?

Richards I think AGI has been about access to services from the beginning. And these were not public things where people signed on to, but just, you know, in closed-door things—we always, and I always, was on the Medicaid side. I mean, I’ve always felt, and I’ve said at public meetings or whatever, that I think that we have forgotten to a certain extent why we thought it was important to legalize abortion in the first place. And that was because, you know, middle-class and rich women have always been able to obtain abortions when the chips were down, and that’s bad that they had to, be humiliated and, you know, go through hoops and everything, but this was always about equalizing access. So that the failure to—I mean, I’ve always said that if I had one wish for the movement, it’d be that before I die we would restore Medicaid funding for poor women, you know, because I think that’s really the heart and soul of the movement, or should be, rather than simply obsessing about the legal right.

McFarlane What’s driving you personally here with that? I mean—
Richards: Um, well, I don’t know—

McFarlane: So then you’re saying—

Richards: —having never been on Medicaid myself.

McFarlane: Yeah. I mean is it—

Richards: I think that goes back to my—I think that probably goes back to my earliest upbringing about social justice and social injustice and all, and a, you know, fundamental concern for disadvantaged people in this—people of minorities and low-income people. And so those feelings of mine fit very well into the Institute’s view of things, because we are—I’ve already said earlier that the Institute didn’t really have a population-control approach to these issues. I think, again, Jeannie and Fred from the very beginning, the sort of philosophy was, if we give individual people the education and the services they need, most people will make decisions that are in their own best interest, and, you know, the macro decisions will take care of themselves if you worry about the micro—rather than trying to impose macro goals on people. So the individual disparity focus has just, you know, permeated my career.

McFarlane: Does the board—you have diverse boards for the Institute—does the board always reflect that position, or is that a position you have to convince people of, or—

Richards: That goes to kind of a larger discussion, or a separate discussion of how the board of the Institute works, and what kinds of decisions it makes. I mean, the board doesn’t take positions on individual pieces of legislation, or that kind of stuff. I think it has always been in our mission statement, and it’s always been in our strategic plan, a kind of stated special concern for
disadvantaged groups for equalizing access. I mean, I think that it’s just a
strong part of our mission. And I think that is taken for granted and has
never really been challenged. There have been times where we were in those
discussions, around 1990, in the early part of the Clinton administration,
about whether we should be concentrating on funding for poor women or,
you know, enshrining the right. That never had to be a board discussion.

But one of the issues that was most branded an Institute issue, in the
nineties, was the issue of contraceptive insurance coverage, because in the
beginning of the Clinton administration, when there was going to be national
health insurance, we did this ground-breaking study that showed that
contraceptives were not particularly well-covered under health insurance—
and put out the first numbers about that all. And it just showed that it was
completely arbitrary and capricious, different kinds of plans did or didn’t, and
it really didn’t have anything to do with insurance companies’ attitudes
toward reproductive health. I mean, it basically was that insurance companies
didn’t have a concept of reproductive health. You know, things were covered
either because they were a surgical service, so abortion was covered and
sterilization was covered, but insurance companies didn’t cover preventive
services much. So they didn’t cover birth control and, you know, it was sort
of arbitrary and capricious. So—and that was very, very influential.

And when the Clinton national health insurance went down in 1994, the
drive for contraceptive insurance coverage kind of took off as a separate
thing and has been a very successful decade-long campaign that has resulted
in real gains, and we’ve always been involved in that and have been a central
player in that, but that has—at least we had some discussions about that, because that is dealing with the population that at least has health insurance. So, you know, contraceptive insurance coverage is essentially a quote-unquote “middle-class issue” in comparison to others. And we did have that discussion on the appropriateness of that.

And I think what we decided was A, that our concern for contraceptive insurance coverage had to be paired with a redoubled effort to take care of Title X and the clinic system and all that kind of stuff, and B, that there was such overriding benefit to be gained by finally enshrining contraception as basic health care, as opposed to something that wasn’t worthy of insurance coverage. That sort of trumped the fact that it was a quote-unquote “middle-class issue.” But I think that’s an example of how serious we have traditionally been about making sure that our focus is on access and disparities and looking after people and groups that fall through the cracks.

McFarlane That helps.

_Tape 3, side 1, ends; side 2 is blank; tape 4 begins._

McFarlane This is Deborah McFarlane about to do the second interview with Cory Richards in Washington, D.C. (pause in tape)

—[ending up with the 1992 election of Clinton yesterday. And talking about what a breath of fresh air he was after—or perceived to be—after the Reagan/Bush years. Did you see it that way? Did Clinton go as far as you wanted him to, or—

Richards When Clinton was elected, there was a lot of attention to the fact that this was the first pro-choice president in the country’s history. And after the
Reagan/Bush period, you know, twelve years of conservative Republican quote-unquote “rule,” I think progressives across the spectrum of issues had very high hopes, which were ultimately and inevitably to be dashed, both because the president was not as quote-unquote “liberal” as people thought or hoped, and because one election doesn’t change public opinion and public sentiment in the country.

And that’s something that I learned over the course of, you know, growing up and having more experience and observing more, and becoming a little bit wiser. And I guess the significance of that is to say that the issues that I’ve worked on throughout my life have been controversial issues, because they go to the core of matters that people care deeply about. Talked about this a little bit before, you know, the beginnings of life and the starting of a family. People’s religions are involved and philosophies are involved and deep attitudes about what’s right and what’s wrong in the world. So the fact that a new president came in didn’t really fundamentally change the controversial nature of the issue.

So in that sense, it really was inevitable that we were going to be disappointed—although it was still remarkable when on his very first day in office, he issued, I think, six different executive orders, that I won’t be able to remember now, but basically, you know, he repealed the domestic gag rule and he repealed the Mexico City Policy and told the FDA that it should look again at mifepristone [RU 486] and, you know, take appropriate action based on science, not politics and that sort of thing. So it was a very heady time.

And he came in in 1993 and one of the biggest issues of the election was the
perceived health care crisis at the time—terrible problem of the extent of lack of insurance in the country—which is, as we sit here now, in 2005, you know, we face, in some sense, very similar statistics and the same kinds of problems. But there was a real feeling that this time there really was going to be national health insurance. We, the country—

McFarlane Did you think so?

Richards Well, I was a little less—I had become quite skeptical by that point in my career, kind of in both directions. I mean, in 1980 when President Reagan came in, everybody said there was going to be a constitutional amendment to ban abortion. And, you know, NARAL said that. All the pro-choice organizations said that. I remember sitting in the office with Jeannie and my colleagues, and we looked at the make-up of the Senate and we said, you know, this is not going to happen. There is no way that there is a two-thirds majority in the United States Senate for a constitutional amendment to ban abortion. But nonetheless, that kind of went out as the article of faith. It was the politically correct thing to say, and people believed it, and people organized themselves around it. NARAL—I was on the board of NARAL at the time—changed its whole way of operating, and began targeting certain states and withdrawing resources from other states based on the assumption that there was going to be a constitutional amendment passed through the Congress, and therefore there needed to be organizing in specific states to block ratification at the state level, which was an organizing structure based on a completely false premise. So even as a relatively young person at the time, I was sort of watching this and seeing that these assumptions about
policy change are, you know, are not necessarily correct.

But so, going back to national health insurance, when I first came to AGI in the middle 1970s, the country had just gone through a little flirtation over national health insurance, and in fact we had somebody hired on the staff whose job was to come in, because, you know, national health insurance was quote “right around the corner.” So, we sort of joked about this a little bit during the 1992 election, and actually the couple years leading up to that there was a lot of agitation around national health insurance, and I think I was pretty aware of how entrenched the political interests against a national health insurance scheme are in the United States.

But, nonetheless, it also seemed like the best chance ever, and we were all pulling for it. And of course that raised the big issue of whether—in the presumed basic benefit package that every American would be entitled to under a national health insurance scheme of some kind—raised the question of whether contraceptive services and STD services and abortion services would be covered under that basic benefit package. And I think I already mentioned that the Institute made an enormous, ground-breaking, contribution to that debate, through the first study that looked at how reproductive health services were or were not covered under private health insurance, which I subsequently have always pointed to as one of the few really clear examples of how research can have a direct impact on the policy process. You know, this is something that’s very hard to scientifically prove, you know, that research can make change, but when this study came out and showed that—everybody thought that abortion, because it was controversial,
was not going to be covered, but that contraception would be covered. And when we came out with a study that showed exactly the opposite, that abortion was well-covered because it was a surgical service, not because insurance companies liked abortion, and that contraception was not covered, this really caused enormous interest and concern. And most, if not all, of the major pending plans at the time were rewritten to include contraceptives in their basic benefit package. So that was, you know, an enormously enjoyable moment in our movement’s history and in the Institute’s history, and then, you know, my history, even though I didn’t do the study per se, but it was a great to see that kind of impact.

McFarlane Did you think that—I mean, did you anticipate the results? Did you have a pretty good idea of what they would be?

Richards To some extent. I mean, I was struck by how capricious the coverage was at the time, under different kinds of plans. But when the numbers came in, it made sense that what was covered or not covered was based on sort of insurance paradigms about, you know, things being covered because they happened in a hospital or not, or physician services being covered or surgery being covered—that kind of stuff. It really had nothing to do—it was striking that there—and this is also something that I’ve thought about a lot since and is still worth thinking about, that the term reproductive health services, that concept, it was striking to me that that concept is an inside the field concept, that nobody outside us had any idea what that meant.

And when you talked to insurance companies and said, Why don’t you cover reproductive health services? it’s like, Huh? You know, this was not
really on the radar screen, which is really a cautionary tale for all of us in terms of when we throw around these words. When we say family planning, and we think that people understand what family planning means, when some people think that means contraception, some people think that means planning for a family. You know, when we say reproductive health services, I think most people think prenatal care. They think about, you know, services around having a baby. A lot of people hear, politically hear, reproductive health—or they hear abortion. So, you know, I’m digressing a bit—

McFarlane  
No.

Richards  
—but I think it’s really important that we be aware of our language and be mindful of who we’re trying to communicate to, and that the people we’re trying to communicate to don’t live, eat, and breathe these issues all the time, and we need to make it clear what we’re talking about.

McFarlane  
I think this is a good opportunity to maybe talk about the terms in the field. Reproductive health, family planning, birth control, population—and now sexual and reproductive health. Maybe you could talk about your understanding of these and where you think this is going—particularly with reference to the international scene.

Richards  
Yeah. Well, I mean, the first thing to say about that is that, as we sit here in 2005, that the convergence we talked about politically, earlier, of domestic and international politics—that, you know, along with forces as disparate as the internet and all that kind of stuff, has really made these issues global. And even though there are vast differences between highly industrialized, you know, the rich countries, and the poor countries of the South—the countries
we used to call the third world countries, or whatever—and I think, at least in my worldview, there are much more similarities than differences in terms of the fundamental problems that people face. And I think one of the things that we know now or are beginning to concentrate more on now is that the world isn’t just divided into rich countries and poor countries—that there are rich and poor in all countries, and that the disparity between the rich and poor in all countries is getting wider, including in the United States. And that’s really an important way of thinking about our issues and moving into the future.

But when I first came in to this field, there was a sharp break between domestic concerns and international concerns, and the term on the domestic side was family planning. This was the family planning field. And on the international side, the global umbrella term was population. And I think most people, when they heard population, heard population control—that that was the problem. The problem was too much population. And therefore the population needed to be controlled.

It’s interesting in a political sense, or in a policy sense, that the Title X program, which is the domestic family planning program, and the international family planning program, the law that authorizes the USAID program—those laws were created at about the same time, but through different processes, and they had different assumptions behind them. The international program was about bringing down population growth rates. And it was about motivating people to have smaller families for that purpose.

The domestic program, which came out of slightly different politics, was
not, was definitely not, a population reduction program, for, you know, a couple of big reasons. One was because the U.S. population was already—I mean, family size in the United States by the sixties, was already “in control,” quote-unquote. And this was also the time of the civil rights movement, and a lot of concern about treatment of minorities and, you know, minority populations, so—and there was a lot, there was some hostility at the time to the notion of family planning being used to control populations that were, you know, “not desired,” in the United States, quote-unquote. And a lot of people inside the field who were totally liberal, completely well meaning, you know, civil rights advocates, had difficulty understanding this, because this was not what it was about at all, to us.

But I think we need to remember this was also right around the time of a very famous case, of the Relf sisters. And, you know, there is a long history of forced sterilization of black and poor people in the United States that is real. And, in any case, there was much more consciousness of that, I think, in the development of the Title X program, so the Title X program was always about getting individual family planning services to people to improve their health, and to improve their—to either avoid welfare dependency or to help them get off welfare dependency through controlling their own personal family size.

So that difference between family planning and population kind of was, you know, in my thinking from the beginning, and since most of my early work, was around the domestic side, that sort of infused my thinking from the beginning. As abortion became legal and there was more abortion around
the country, then there also was a desire in those early years, the seventies and still later, to separate family planning from abortion, so that contraceptive services programs wouldn’t be tainted by the politics of abortion. I think we’ve talked about—

McFarlane  Mm-hmm.

Richards —you know, but really, by the time I came in here in 1975, ’76, that was already proving to be impossible. But I think that’s, to some extent, why the term family planning stuck. My old boss, Jeannie Rosoff, would tell a story of the top government relations guy from the March of Dimes—which is an organization that always had kind of an arm’s-distance, you know, relationship with family planning because it was a little bit controversial—called her up and said, “Jeannie, what’s the euphemism for family planning?” And she said, (laughs) she had to say, “Oh you idiot! Family planning is the euphemism.” (McFarlane laughs) You know, family planning in that sense was a euphemism for contraception. But in any case, moving into time, reproductive health became the vogue term.

McFarlane  When did that happen? In your mind.

Richards  Let me see. That’s a good question. I think by the—in the eighties, reproductive health was the term. And then family planning—

McFarlane  Was it different?

Richards  —reproductive health. Well, I think we—

McFarlane  Or was it just more acceptable in the Reagan years?

Richards  No, I’m thinking more that these were the terms that the people inside the field were struggling—not to be more politically salable. I don’t think that the
move to reproductive health was designed to sound less controversial. In fact, it just created more problems because it raised the question as to whether abortion was included in that term. But I think, you know, largely due to advocacy from feminists and feminist health advocates—I mean, these people have always been advocating for a broader concept of reproductive health, rather than a single-minded concept on contraception for the purpose of fertility control and population control. So I think there was some of that.

And this is the long lead up to the Cairo population conference in 1994, which really represented the, I think—what’s the term?—sort of the ratification of changes in conceptualizing the problems that we’re dealing with, or what the field is and should be called, from population or family planning to what became then sexual and reproductive health. Which, you know, there’s been a gradual attempt to broaden the scope of the field in a way that I think takes it away from the notion that this is really about population control.

McFarlane Were you in Cairo?

Richards Yes, I was in Cairo.

McFarlane In what capacity?

Richards I was in the most observer (laughs) capacity you could get. So I was there to kind of, you know, report on it for AGI—to be there to analyze what was going on and to report on that.

McFarlane Did it surprise you, or did you take sides—I mean, mentally?

Richards Well, I was more involved—actually the politics that were going on at the
conference itself were not the politics that I was just talking about inside the movement—

McFarlane  Uh-huh.

Richards —inside the field. Those politics—that happened in the years leading up to it. The politics that were happening at the conference itself were between the progressive approach—you know, the Scandinavian, to caricature it, the Scandinavian and at that point U.S. approach—versus the Vatican approach to issues of population development, sex, the whole package of issues. I mean, that’s what was going on at the conference. Leading up to the conference for years was this sort of behind-the-scenes debate between—again to caricature this—between the feminists and the population controllers. I mean, that was an historic discussion.

And I was fortunate to be included in some really important brainstorming sessions that were sponsored by Laura Chason(?), who is a member of the Rockefeller family, and a family therapist, and she and her husband, Dick Chason(?) from Harvard, ran, at their beautiful summer home in Chappaquiddick, for several summers—I don’t know that they continue to do this—but in various fields that they’re concerned about. And their concerns range far and wide. They’ve brought together people within a particular field, but with divergent views around that field, with facilitators that come from a—not an organizational development facilitation background, but a family therapy kind of facilitation background, to talk through these issues, to try to come to greater understanding, you know, if not actual consensus.
So, leading up to Cairo, there were lots of discussions about, you know, whether the problem that the world faced was the problem of too much population and rapid population growth, and the solution was population control, or whether the problem was that individual people, mostly women, were not recognized for their centrality in the health of families and communities and the relationship of that to development—and whether a micro approach to meeting the perceived needs of individual people would take care of the macro problem, or whether a macro approach was, you know, necessary. And there have been lots of discussions, and discussions continue to this very day about whether these approaches are inconsistent, incompatible with each other, or compatible or whatever. But in any case, I think that, for that moment anyway—and it remains to be seen for how long this will hold, you know, whether it’s a permanent change—but I think that the Cairo conference represented a triumph of the feminist approach to the framing of the problem. And—

McFarlane
Do you, or did you have an opinion?

Richards
Yeah, I must—well, I mean, just—not to joke about this, but I’m a Gemini person, so I’m constantly warring within myself between, you know, the two extremes, and I think, you know, through my entire career it almost is like, whichever group I’m with, you know, I’m rooting for the other group, you know (McFarlane laughs) until I’m with the other group, and then I’m rooting for the one. So to some extent—I mean, I’ve been variously outraged by what I thought was the excessive distrust of hormonal contraceptive methods by feminist health people and all that kind of stuff, but essentially, I
think that I personally was always more comfortable with the micro
approach, you know, what’s labeled the feminist approach, then with the
population control approach. And I have been persuaded, although I could
be unpersuaded. I became persuaded that, when policy makers impose macro
targets, that programs reflect that and that creates the potential of—again, to
caricature this—a short path to sterilization abuse, kind of thing.

**McFarlane**  Can you go far enough to say no demographic targets?

**Richards**  Well, I want to, but I rarely can find myself going far enough on one extreme
of almost anything to, you know, take the most extreme position. And I
remember having a, to me, very important conversation, in San Francisco—

*Tape 4, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.*

**McFarlane**  So, and you had this conversation.

**Richards**  Yes, it was in the bar, the top of the Mark Hopkins hotel, and I was there in
San Francisco for a NFPRHA meeting with my—I was with my dear,
\[\text{McFarlane laughs}\]

\[\text{McFarlane laughs}\]

\[\text{Richards laughs}\]

\[\text{Richards laughs}\]

wonderful, closest friend, Leslie Laurie (sp?), who is a very important person
in our field, an important provider of services, and the first board chair of
NFPRHA. But anyway, we were there, and we were there with my aunt,

Tillie Olsen, who was a pioneering feminist author and a really, kind of an
icon of academic feminists and who’s written a bit about contraception and,
you know, a little bit about abortion, and very, very—I’d always thought, you
know, an extremely leftwing person, and I mentioned very early on in this
interview that, you know, my mom didn’t get a scholarship because her older
sister was such a hellion in school, and this (McFarlane laughs) woman who
was a Communist and she was, you know, just really, like, bad, in Omaha.
And it’s just wonderful, she’s still with us as we speak at age ninety-three.

But in any case, I was struck by her sort of defending the China one-child policy, and saying that sometimes you know, things are so bad—that China had no choice, that China’s survival was dependent on this. And this was, I mean, hearing this was just outrageous to me. It went against everything that I, you know, thought was right. So that, I think, pulls me back from the notion of saying, you know, no demographic targets ever. But I do think that if governments stayed out of individual decision making about childbearing and facilitated people’s ability to make decisions for themselves, they—I mean, in other words, if China had had good contraception programs all along, the problem might not have had their population problems.

And I think that demographic targets have been used throughout history in both directions in ways that are very damaging to individual people, whether it’s forcing women or coercing women to have more children so that countries can have big enough armies, you know, or telling them that they should have fewer children for somebody else’s good, for the greater good. I think if more attention was paid to what they perceive as being in their own interest, then the greater good might take care of itself. That’s my personal philosophy, by and large. And so that, I think, makes me more comfortable with the feminist approach to these issues, except when they’re, you know, expressed in very extreme ways. Then I sort of get off that bus a little bit.

McFarlane  So you can really see different perspectives.

Richards  Yeah.
McFarlane: But back to the terms.

Richards: Mm-hmm.

McFarlane: Sexual and reproductive health. What does that mean to you? Or what does it mean to the field?

Richards: Okay, um—what it means to me is a term that’s too long. (laughs) That’s the main thing I think about this field. I mean, you try to go to a cocktail party and you say, you know, I work in the field of sexual and reproductive health—by the time you get to that (McFarlane laughs) the person’s already over at the bar. So—but being more serious in thinking about—I mean, this is something that I’m thinking about right now and my institution is thinking about right now, and I think sexual and reproductive health—and it’s even worse, because, you know, the really politically correct now say that the field or the area of work is sexual and reproductive health and rights. So it’s a lot of stuff. And I think that that is correct in terms of what needs to be encompassed in order for people to be able to take care of themselves in this area of their lives. There needs to be reproductive rights and sexual rights and reproductive health and sexual health.

To me, moving forward, the term that I think we should use as a field is sexual health. To me, that’s the broadest umbrella term, and I use that term “health” in a broad way, in the kind of World Health Organization view of health, meaning really well-being, not, you know, the absence of disease, or not, you know, it’s not a medical term. But I do think that ultimately what we should be working for is a sexually healthy world, or a world in which people can be sexually healthy, and that that encompasses reproductive health and
reproductive rights and— I think that’s pretty much everything.

**McFarlane**

Could your board go there with you?

**Richards**

Well, we’re talking about it right now.

**McFarlane**

Okay.

**Richards**

And we’ll see. I mean, I think there’s a reasonable chance, and it’s something that personally I’m advocating for, and I hope that the Institute goes in this direction because I want the Institute to remain, you know, a little bit on the cutting edge of things. When we were founded in the 1960s, we were on the cutting edge, and the Institute has always perceived of itself as looking around the next corner. And this is hard to reconcile with being a real institution. And the Institute is now, you know, it’s forty years old. We have got seventy employees now. In New York and in Washington, we’ve got—working, conducting research in several countries around the world, as well as in the United States. I mean, we’re an institution, and it’s a constant challenge to keep us moving forward, looking forward, and thinking forward.

And so I would hope that we would be not the laggards in moving into sexual health as our banner, but would push for that.

And the other reason that I think this is important is that if this field of ours is going to have relevance in the twenty-first century, we have to stop thinking in kind of 1960s ways. And I do feel, and I’ve felt for a long time now, that across our issues—and we’re sort of stuck in a 1960s way of thinking of the problems. I think about this a lot with regard to the abortion issue and how the abortion issue is being fought. And we’re faced with all these young people who grew up completely in the time of legal abortion
who do not see the world the way people of my age and the way people older
than me see it, and I think we really risk irrelevance if we don’t tap into
cconcerns that they’re feeling and somehow tie our historical interests around
problems that remain real problems, but tie them to the interests of young
people. And I don’t know whether the concept of sexual health will do it, but
I know, or believe, that reproductive rights is not enough to really capture
young people. And it won’t be, going in the future. It’s an antiquated way of
conceiving the issues. I also think that we’ve gone through a period of time
and are continuing in a period of time where there’s greater attention to
“bringing men into the equation,” quote-unquote. And that means different
things to different people.

McFarlane  There is greater attention or will be?

Richards  Well, I think there has been, in the last decade or so— I mean, I think there’s
been mounting attention to this, some of it coming from—this is my
characterization here, obviously—some of it coming from women who
grudgingly admit that they can’t get where they want to go without more
cooperation from these men. So it’s like bring men into that. There’s, I think,
also some more pressure from, right now, some more pressure from the
right, from the conservatives, to have more attention to the problems of men
and to bring men in more. And then there are some people who actually
think that it would be better that not all relationships between men and
women are oppositional relations, that a lot of couples are trying to, you
know, cooperate with each other in some way. And so the notion of
legitimately bringing men into, or giving some attention to men in this, is
important. But I don’t think we’re ever going to get men into this around the notion of men’s reproductive health (McFarlane laughs)—which, I have to say, I mean, my institution has just, in the immediate past period, put out two major pieces of work, taking years and years of work, around men, that has tried, I think, to squeeze men into this paradigm of, you know, we have to give attention to the sexual and reproductive health needs of men. And we try—you know, we’re talking about that men have unintended pregnancies too. I mean, it just doesn’t flow trippingly off the tongue, so to speak, but I do think that sexual health is a concept that embraces men and women, and—

**McFarlane** Would it embrace gay and lesbian people?

**Richards** Ah—yes, I think it definitely would. One of the things that bothers me a little in discussions within my own field, is that when people hear sexual health or sexual rights, they immediately jump to this about, you know, gays and lesbians, which I think is unfortunate, because it isn’t necessarily about that. But I think progressive people in our field are understanding that, you know, there are large numbers of gays and lesbians and that they have sexual health issues, and certainly the AIDS pandemic has helped people understand that. And there also is plenty of evidence that gay men and lesbian women interact sexually at different points in their lives with heterosexual men and women, and so there are ample reasons, it seems to me, to include gay men and lesbians underneath the umbrella of striving for a more sexually healthy world.

**McFarlane** Do you think your institution can go there? Can your board go there? It
hasn’t been an emphasis thus far, to my knowledge.

Richards  
No. That’s right. And I don’t sense philosophical opposition or political squeamishness around thinking more about the sexual health needs and problems of non-heterosexual people, but I think we probably would—I don’t—I don’t know. I mean, I think part of it is that there is a specialty already, to a certain extent. I mean, there are organizations that are concerned about that.

McFarlane  
Such as SIECUS [Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States]?

Richards  
No, I mean, there are, you know, gay and lesbian organizations already.

McFarlane  
So—oh, okay.

Richards  
And the Institute has always, in a certain sense, tried to fill in the cracks. I mean, you know, we’re a small organization, relatively speaking. We can’t do everything. In other words, I don’t really—and also, organizations do have historical reputations and areas of expertise that they’re recognized in—all that kind of stuff. So it would seem to me to make sense that at least for a long time into the future, that the Institute’s work would be focused on heterosexual people and focused on the intersection of sexual health and reproductive matters. Because that’s just been—that’s our core. And one of the things that has made the Institute, I think, a really strong institution that I’ve personally cared about a lot is that we expand carefully from our core. And this kind of goes, again, a little bit against the sort of notion of being out there on the cutting edge, you know. But—

McFarlane  
There’s other tension.
Richards: Yeah, it really is definitely a tension. I mean, I think it’s important for an organization like ours to keep the core and to relate expansions back to the core, as opposed to just, you know, getting into the concerns of menopausal women, or, you know, geriatric sex. Not saying, you know, never to either of those things, but I think that our new initiatives have always been around the core, gradually expanding. And I think that’s made us stronger and healthier and more stable as an organization.

McFarlane: I think this is an interesting discussion we started here with terms. It’s an interesting discussion, given—I don’t know if it’s a growing conservativism, but it’s certainly a growing conservative power in this area. You know, I’m thinking about saying sexual health now in the world of abstinence only. Is that a consideration for the Institute, or for you?

Richards: Well, it’s a consideration, but for me it’s also more of a reason to do it than it is a reason not to do it. Because I think we have to challenge what is, you know, now quickly becoming the entrenched orthodoxy around abstinence and this kind of stuff. And I think we have to challenge it forcefully. And, to me also, what I like about having the term sexual in our descriptor of what the field is, is that I think it reminds us that it is the sexual part. It is the fact that people want and need to express themselves sexually that creates the problems that we’re trying to address.

I mean, after all, if you want to avoid a sexually transmitted disease, and you don’t want to have a baby when you’re a teenager, and you don’t want to have more children than you want—I mean, the right wing is absolutely correct—the answer is simply not to have sex. And if that were a practical
answer or a desirable answer, then we wouldn’t need to exist at all. And I think, you know, Margaret Sanger knew that, and the early pioneers knew that: the reason to have family planning, the reason to have contraception, was not just so that people could control their childbearing, but so that people could have sex and control their childbearing. So I think, you know, in a certain way, we have as a field, as we became more and more the establishment in the second half of the twentieth century, we sanitized ourselves more and more and removed ourselves more and more from the sex part. You know, we walked into the sort of gotcha situation where the right wing says, You’re right, just don’t have sex. You know, if you take the sex part out, there are no problems.

Well, we know that this isn’t true, but I think we have to, in a sense, remind people that this isn’t true, and the first people we may need to remind are ourselves. So that goes into my thinking, too, about what we need to do and how we need to position ourselves a little bit differently going into the future. And I think young people may understand, may tap into that a little bit more.

McFarlane Now, the right wing does a lot of focus groups.
Richards Mm-hmm.
McFarlane Do you?
Richards Well, not of that kind, actually. It’s a very interesting question. We really have not done focus groups specifically around the notion of positioning or messaging. I mean, to digress a little bit, our field has spent huge amounts of money in polling and public opinion research and focus groups, primarily
around abortion, but not exclusively. And, to me, one of my big disappointments in my colleagues is how we tend to look at the information and see in it what we want to see and not see in it what is uncomfortable for us, and therefore I think really have a warped sense of where the country is on our issues.

And I think the notion that this fundamentally is a pro-choice country, implying that the country agrees with our programmatic agenda is, I think, completely wrong. And it’s not so much that things have gotten worse—although there’s some slight, you know, fluctuation in the polls over time—but basically I think the polling has shown all along, I mean since before Roe v. Wade, that the country is not comfortable with abortion, the notion of abortion being a crime or being, you know, not available at all. But, you know, the country does not like abortion. Majorities in this country consider abortion to be murder. They think it should happen under certain circumstances, but they think it is definitely a negative thing. It is a choice of last resort, whatever you want to call it. It is a necessary evil, to use the most explosive term.

And I’m not suggesting that we ourselves go to the country with language like that, but I think it may behoove us a little bit more to more deeply internalize the fact that the abortion issue, which has become so central politically to our field is really not something that Americans like, or I think ever will like, or maybe should be, you know, asked to like. I mean, it should be there when people need it, but maybe we should stop trying to say, you know, it’s a great thing, it’s a moral choice—you know, all this kind of
stuff, all the things that may be true, but I’m just not sure it serves us. So that’s my little rant on the, you know, look at the polling.

McFarlane Well, you’re absolutely correct, if you look at the polls. But where are you personally? When did you first find out about abortion and how have you thought about it?

Richards Well, you know, this is interesting. It is possible, although I can’t quite believe it, but it is possible that I never thought about abortion until Roe v. Wade. I mean, I remember when I was working on the Hill in 1973 in Congressman Kyros’s office, and, you know, picking up the Washington Post, and seeing on the front page that the court had ruled in Roe v. Wade. I think I was more aware of the fact that it was the day that Lyndon Johnson died—you know, I remember that, and I don’t really think I had thought about it [abortion], you know, much before. But—

McFarlane You didn’t know anybody in college or high school?

Richards No, I really didn’t, not that had an abortion. But it never occurred to me that I was anything other than pro-choice.

McFarlane Uh-huh.

Richards And I mean, I don’t quite understand how that happened, except that it must be part of my, you know, broader sort of progressive politics that came from my upbringing. I asked my mother later if she’d ever had an abortion, you know, and she said no and then we talked about how we could have been all three and a half years apart—

McFarlane Willpower.

Richards —you know, in the forties. There must have been diaphragms. I think there
were—yeah. But it was, you know, careful use of what was available. But also I didn’t put all of these things together, you know, at the time. In retrospect I’ve put all this stuff together, because—I think I said earlier that my career development has seemed accidental to me, in a certain way, that I’ve sort of just fallen into stuff that I have found myself able to be interested in. But looking back on it, there’s a little more reason to it than that. But one of the events that fits into this is that my older sister had a pregnancy when she was in high school. So this was right around—I guess it would be right around 1961, ’62, somewhere right around in there. So this was before legal abortion. And I also was—you know, she was seventeen then—I was about fourteen. So I was not—I was a fourteen-year-old boy, you know, let’s just say that.

**Tape 4 ends; tape 5, side 1, begins.**

But looking back on it, the story is staggering to me—that this is the way the world was, that this happened in my family. I mean, this was a girl who was, you know, in love with her boyfriend. The parents on both sides were dead-set against this, you know, inter-religious relationship. So they went off and were having sex, and my sister got pregnant. And what happened was—I mean, I guess this is what happened, but, you know, she went full term, went essentially to Council Bluffs, you know, across the river, ten miles away. Had the baby in a home for unwed mothers. Got married like two days before having the baby, to legitimize the baby, then went and gave up the baby for adoption anyway, and then immediately turned around and got divorced, because there was no sense that these people were going to be allowed to be married.
So, I mean, this threw together all of the sick social conventions at the
time, and it was around, you know, a real person. But as I say, it’s really only
in retrospect that I realize the horror of this, the horror of this. And—so this
obviously had to affect me and my views of stuff, but there was never any
talk about abortion. And years later, I said to my mother, you know, “Would
you have ever considered an abortion?” And she looked at me like I was
crazy and she said, “Of course!” But my sister had denied the pregnancy until
it was too late—until it was well into the second trimester, you know, when
abortion was not available. So, obviously, I realized later that women have
been thinking about abortion since time immemorial, you know—

McFarlane  Yeah.

Richards  —and in my own family. So, while I wasn’t really thinking about that when I
was in—that wasn’t affecting my politics directly, you know, when I was in
high school—when I was prompted to think about abortion, which was
probably from a headline in the newspaper, I mean, it just never occurred to
me that anybody could be not pro-choice.

McFarlane  Yeah.

Richards  So.

McFarlane  Did it mark your sister or—

Richards  I think in some fundamental way—well, definitely, I mean, it really did—I
mean, she did, she moved away, she moved away from Omaha and was kind
of sent to live with an aunt and uncle in upstate New York, where she then
turned around and got married to a guy. She was at this point eighteen,
maybe nineteen, now. I mean, she did graduate from high school and, you
know, married right after to this young guy who had just gotten divorced and had three small children, who were living, you know, with his wife. And during the honeymoon, the [ex-] wife committed suicide, so my sister inherited a new husband and three children under the age of five. You know, nineteen years old. And also, I mean, just to complete the story, I think something hormonally, endocrinologically happened with that first pregnancy, and she never really was—she had been like, you know, this athletic horse [and] she never really was particularly healthy after that. Plus, she had a really tough life, raising these three kids. They went on and had two more, so there were five children. And she had a freak blood clot that killed her when she was forty-five years old. So, you know, not a happy story. Really not a happy story.

McFarlane More like a sad story.

Richards So, yeah. So, all of that had to be rolling around in there, you know, in my head and heart somewhere.

McFarlane Um, the rise of the right wing in ’94. Did you see it coming?

Richards The rise of the right wing in ’94. In ’94 was the—

McFarlane Hundred and fourth—

Richards That, that’s when the Republicans took over the House and the—

McFarlane Yeah.

Richards Oh, absolutely, yes. I think I’ve seen this coming, you know, really for ten, twelve years before that. I mean, that’s what I meant to say earlier, that, you know, there’s much more controversy around these issues than we would like to believe. And I don’t think that the right wing does now, or really ever did,
speak to where people—well, let me say this, let me say it in a different way. Just as I don’t think that the majority of the country really support the policy positions of the pro-choice side—you know, unrestricted abortion, no parental consent, funding, all that kind of stuff—I don’t think that the country really supports the policy positions of the right wing either. But the rhetoric, kind of the philosophical positioning, clearly taps in to people’s feelings that the world is sort of out of control, that there are too many forces out there that are making parents not able to, you know, raise their kids according to their values, and all that kind of stuff. And of course this is, you know, being very carefully manipulated exactly to bring out those feelings.

And we’ve seen this in a larger sense, the way President Bush and his allies have been able to use fear as a motivating tool around building support for, you know, the Iraq war, and everything else. I mean, it’s a real industry around how to use fear to make people behave in strange ways, which I think explains why, in this last election and historically, people vote in ways that are contradictory to their “best interests,” quote-unquote. I mean, you know, we’re always wondering, why do, you know, lower-middle-class working people continue to vote for Republicans who impose policies that only make their lives harder? And I think the answer is because they’re convinced by these same people that, you know, the world is so dangerous and their communities are so dangerous, and they’re going to control things better. That’s why that sort of counterintuitive voting behavior happens.

But in any case, I think it’s real. It’s always been real. And there’s a lot of
talk now about, you know, the war of values in the country and the red states and the blue states are, you know, in a war of ideas. And the way I'm thinking of it at the moment is that I think we really are in a war of ideas, and it's a war of ideas that I think we're going to need to win all over again. And this goes back to what I said earlier about our assumptions that people understand what we mean when we use terms that—you know, that sort of thing.

I think that to some extent, the benefits of child spacing and fertility control—the benefits are so ingrained in people that people don't recognize them anymore. And instead what they recognize is this sort of inevitable downside, that there are more teenagers having sex, that there's more births out of wedlock—all that kind of stuff. But they don't feel the benefits any more. So I think we really need to reeducate people as to why family planning is important, why contraceptive services programs are important, why contraceptives should be covered under insurance and should be available to people—and the same thing on abortion, to be sure. You know, why is this important? Because I think the perception is—going back to what I said earlier—that we just think abortion is great, and abortion is an end in itself and everybody should just support it, as opposed to, you know, abortion is an unattractive or worse means to an end that is just better than the other alternative. But I think we're going to have to go through that work again, in an educational sense. And I think our movement needs to retool for that, and I'm not sure we are. Because I think so much of our leadership is still thinking of it in the same way and thinking—
And I sort of remember when I was growing up and my parents, who were in the World War II generation, were always talking about, you know, anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism is here and all that kind of stuff. And of course now, as an adult I realize, you know, they’re absolutely right. It’s there. It’s always right around the corner. It could come back. All that kind of stuff. But when I was growing up, as an American kid, it was like, Get over it (McFarlane laughs), you know, this is your battle. This isn’t my battle. And I think they felt that if they just lectured me louder and shouted at me more about, you know, the reality of anti-Semitism and the potential, I would realize that the sky could fall.

And I think that’s what we are still doing around abortion. We say, you know, What’s the matter with these young people that they don’t get it? And if we just hammer them harder with the same messages about coat hangers and all that kind of stuff they will, you know, they will get it. Well, I think they’re not going to get it because the world is different, so we’ve got to find new ways. And no, I don’t know—

McFarlane How to do it.

Richards I don’t really know how to do it, except I think that part of it is to, without, in a policy sense, abandoning abortion, we have to find a way to make the central thing that we are fighting for not be abortion. And that’s the difference. Because I think in the sixties and the seventies, abortion was the organizing principle, the rallying—organizing principle, if you will. I mean, it became symbolic of reproductive control. And it was right for its time. And it worked in its time. But I don’t think that’s where we’re going into the
future. And I don’t think that’s what young—and I think there’s plenty of polling and focus group research around this. This is not what young people—this is not what young women think that they are fighting for. They think they’ve already got that, you know, and want to be fighting for something else. And that goes back to, again, whether some concept of sexual health in a broader sense is more something that people would say, Yes, this is not what we have, and we want that. And certainly, with all of the conservative opposition to the notion that people have a right to have sex, except under very, you know, restricted circumstances, I think that might work. That’s the best I can come up with at the moment.

McFarlane Do you think disparities would appeal to young people?

Richards Yes, I think disparities always appeal to young people. Definitely.

McFarlane Um, the Clinton years: was there anything you want to comment on the Clinton years and your role in policy? Certainly domestic family planning wasn’t at the forefront of their agenda.

Richards No, I think at the beginning, you know—I mean, Clinton had two terms, obviously. The second term was when the House switched over to Republican control for the first time in fifty years, something like that. And the administration had to go, you know, really on to the defensive. I mean, the time for moving boldly into the future was over. It was four lousy years there. And national health insurance basically was it—that was the big chance to move forward. And as I said earlier, I mean, I think it did—in our narrow field, I mean—I think it did jumpstart the contraceptive coverage campaign, so in that sense there was a something proactive that came out of it even
though there was no national health insurance, the real thing, the real deal went down.

The second term—in our field, I think what was significant more was that the Clinton administration made the decision to really buy into quote-unquote “welfare reform,” you know, which really was a radical welfare overhaul. And inside this massive effort to radically restructure the welfare system was the beginning of the abstinence-only money. And that’s where the Congress created this new program where the states would get a chunk of money every year—a considerable chunk of money every year—outside the regular appropriations process. I mean, it would be an automatic allocation every year to run these very, very restrictive abstinence education programs that either could not talk about contraception at all, or could talk about contraception in the negative way, but could not in any way do anything that would be counter to the notion that abstinence is, you know, the appropriate way of behaving outside of marriage.

And this was relatively small, and it is now a huge amount of money every year. And we know, from Guttmacher research, even before the welfare money really kicked in that the percentage of teachers who were teaching an abstinence-only curriculum has exploded. And the proportion of school districts around the country that mandate an abstinence-only curriculum is very high. It was a third in—in the late nineties, before the welfare money really kicked in, you know, up to a half in the South. So I think that turned out to be a big, strategic decision that really—I mean, you know, Clinton, his strength and his—the upside and the downside is that he
did, in fact, govern from the middle, not from the left end of the spectrum. And I think that, you know, in our sense, that had a really negative implication.

And then with the Bush people coming in and really taking this bull by the horns and really running with it, there was nothing grudging about it at all. So you add to that the so-called faith-based initiative, the notion that we should be giving government money to religious organizations without forcing them to, quote, “lose their religious character,” which means they can behave in ways that they would behave religiously, even if it’s discriminatorily. I mean, I think there’s been a big sea change.

The other major change, I think, historically, which has been growing for many years, but we’re only kind of really beginning to recognize it now, is that the conservatives used to be hostile to government and hostile to government programs, and to be advocates of small government, and especially small federal government and devolving resources and authority to the states. And now we have ten years in which the Republicans and the conservatives and the social conservatives have been in control at the federal level of all three, you know, branches of—I mean, the Senate, the House, and the administration. And it certainly seems clear to me that, just as, you know, Bill Clinton said at one point, “The era of big government is over,” I think they’re saying in a certain way, The era of small government is over. And now that they’re in power, and they see the potential of them being in power for a long time, they want to exercise that power. So I think in ways that will become clearer and clearer, there’s a beginning of a sort of a repeal
of the new federalism of devolution, of the notion of giving money and power to the states. And there’s more a reabsorption of money and power into the central federal government, now that they’re in charge of that. And you can see that through the No Child Left Behind bill, which was a major power shift from the states to the federal government. I mean, I think the abstinence-only program is a less public example of that.

But in the 1996 legislation, the money went out to the states through the state maternal and child health programs, and the rightwing sponsors over the, you know, first few years of looking at that, didn’t think that the maternal and child health directors of the states were, you know, ideologically pure enough, so they’ve now centralized that program, you know, inside HHS. So I think that’s an interesting shift. But the world is constantly interesting.

**McFarlane**  
And you think, at this point, the politics of the national and international, at least in our country, are pretty much the same, in terms of reproductive health.

**Richards**  
You mean that one isn’t better than the other or—

**McFarlane**  
Or that you’ve got—

**Richards**  
—really different.

**McFarlane**  
—the same groups.

**Richards**  
Oh yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. All these groups are—everybody’s thinking globally now, you know. We certainly—

**McFarlane**  
The same groups that are for or against—

**Richards**  
Yes. And the money is going around globally. The issues are the same. And
it’s all converged. Globally—I think the difference is that in the United States we can—our government is the government that we have to worry about. In the global sphere the issues are the same, but the balance of power isn’t exactly the same, because as much as the United States is and insists on telling everybody [that it] is the, you know, predominant power in the world, there are countervailing forces. And it seems clear that a lot of the rest of the world is not on board with where the U.S. government is on these social issues. And they’re being quite willing to challenge the U.S. So, I think that’s something to watch and participate in and, you know, egg on, to the extent that that’s possible.

**McFarlane** But you see within that, the same groups or—within this country, the same groups do both national and international?

**Richards** Yeah.

**McFarlane** How, over time—since you’ve been watching this for a long time—how has the advocacy world changed? That’s a big question.

**Richards** That’s a very big question.

**McFarlane** Or, is it denser? Are there more groups out there?

**Richards** Oh, yes, of course. At the national level, I think—I said earlier that when I first came into this field in 1975, at least the core abortion rights group was very small, and I think the same thing could be true for family planning. And on the international side, early on, to the extent there was advocacy, it was mostly—what was called Population Crisis Committee at the time, now Population Action International, was, you know, the advocacy organization. Although we started in the late seventies, as well, doing advocacy around U.S.
foreign policy. And I guess you could analyze that in a way to conclude that the core groups are still pretty tight and still pretty much the same. There are lots of groups that are part of the larger coalitions.

I think—even though this is not what I do—but I think one of the things that’s changed a lot is that the organizing of the constituency has become highly professionalized in ways that I think something’s been lost and gained in that process—by which I mean, in the early days, things were done on the basis of sort of informal telephone trees that are now—that’s all computerized and organizing is now much more of an established industry. Now, all of the organizations and their affiliates out there have public affairs people, lobbyists, who are professional, and they’ve also become very highly political, in the sense of electoral politics. And I think one of the downsides of that is that our issues are much more partisan now. And you could say we did it in response to, you know, the takeover of the Republican Party by the right wing, so the major groups in our field have sort of identified themselves with the Democratic Party. And I can understand the instinct to do that, but I’ve always been opposed to that.

**McFarlane**

This is interesting.

**Richards**

I think if we could win with one party, then it makes sense, but we will never prevail in this battle of ideas, or this war of ideas, whatever, if we only hitch our wagon to one political party, which we are now painfully seeing is not going to be in power forever. I mean, there was a time when it sure seemed like, you know, the Democrats were going to be in charge of the federal government forever. Now the Republicans think they’re going to be in
charge of the federal government forever. We can hope it’s not true, but I think the lesson is, we need to cross over, and that’s going to be very, very hard for us to do, because, you know, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, the big organizations are so identified as being, you know, part of the Democratic Party apparatus. And it’s going to be hard to change that. And the downside to being part of the apparatus is that, you know, when you’re useful to them, you’re useful to them, and when you’re not useful to them, or when it’s useful to the party to look like they’re less beholden to you, then they may behave in that way—

_Tape 5, side 1, ends; side 2 begins._

**McFarlane**

Do you have any ideas for crossing over to the other party, or becoming bipartisan?

**Richards**

Well, I don’t know. In the short term, I don’t know how that’s going to be possible, so long as the really large groups that exercise the, you know, the real power in the field have these political action committees attached to them that basically are so over weighted toward Democrats. I mean, there is going to need to be, in the political sense, a pulling back from that. I mean, I’ll give you one example, which, you know, twenty or thirty years from now, somebody listening to this will completely (laughs), you know, won’t know what I’m talking about at all.

**McFarlane**

(unclear) what he was saying. (laughs)

**Richards**

But even though the election, the national election, has just happened, you know, everybody’s already (laughs) looking forward to the next election. And in Rhode Island, there’s a Republican senator now, Lincoln Chafee, who’s
the son of—digress for a moment—the son of one of those great, towering
moderate Republicans that I talked about earlier, you know, one of the
strongest supporters of our full agenda ever could be. You know, a really
great man. Anyway, his son is in the Senate now. He’s totally pro-choice.
He’s absolutely fine. In the Democratic Party, there has been a lot of
attention to this state, over who would be the candidate, and whether it
would be a pro-choice Democrat or an anti-abortion Democrat, and all that
kind of stuff.

And—let’s see if I can wrap this up—that’s the sort of question in the
political world and it just has always struck me that our organizations, the
Planned Parenthood and NARAL that have PACs, should have said, right
from the get-go, that it doesn’t matter who’s going to be in the Democratic
primary, because we’re going to support Lincoln Chafee. Because, you know,
you dance with the one that brung you, or whatever (laughs), you know,
whatever the term is. And this is somebody who’s proved himself, and why
in the world would he not, automatically, get the endorsement?

And the answer can only be because, even though the PACs on our side
say that they’re bipartisan, and care about the issue, in reality they’re more
concerned with electing Democrats to the Senate for the very valid reason
that if the Democrats could take control over the Senate, ultimately things
would be, you know, much better. So I understand that, but it certainly flies
in the face of trying to make these issues bipartisan. And it seems to me that
the long-term goal really, the intermediate goal, may be to have the
Democrats take control of the Senate once again, which would make our
lives much easier.

But the long-term goal really should be that there are pro-choice Republicans in the Senate, because, you know, we need—we can’t win just with ourselves. And I think that’s true in the political sphere, in terms of the members of Congress and also in terms of the country. We can’t just talk only to ourselves and activate only ourselves. Because if we could win with ourselves, we would’ve won already, (laughs) you know. We’ve got to reach out, and reaching out is painful because in order to reach out to people, you have to resonate with them where they are, not where you are. Because if you could resonate with them the way you are, you already would’ve resonated with them.

So I think these are some of the challenges facing our movement that we’re beginning to think about. But I think it’s going to be a very painful, painful confrontation. And to some extent I think that our colleagues on the right wing have been more successful in terms of reaching out to middle America, kind of downplaying their extremist tendencies—which of course, we inside the Beltway are people who are politically aware, all know about their extremist tendencies. But the fact of the matter is most Americans don’t know. They don’t read the newspapers, they’re not watching this all the time, you know, so I think a lot of middle America is thinking, Well, these people are, you know—they don’t sound crazy to me. And because these groups, I think, are more conscious of speaking in a way that appeals to, you know, people who are not ideologues—and my experience is that this is not a strength of our movement.
I mean, I’ve gone to coalition meeting after coalition meeting after coalition meeting where we’ve started the meeting talking about the need to reach out, and then I’ve seen this happen over and over and over again. At some point in the meeting, somebody—I’ll name a name, but, I mean, somebody like Ellie Smeal, you know, a true believer—will take the floor and begin to make the speech, and then one by one the other organizations leaders have to retake the pledge—I mean, to prove that they’re as ideologically pure as everybody else. And by the end of the meeting, all the rhetoric about reaching out into the middle is gone, and we’re back again, you know, talking to ourselves.

So to me, the big question—and this is me speaking as a political strategist trying to keep the mission in mind—is whether the goal here is to win or whether the goal is to talk in ways that we are comfortable with ourselves. And I think we’ve repeatedly made the choice, as a movement, to talk to ourselves in ways that make us feel good, rather than to win. And I think the price of winning is going to have to be to reach out and talk, at least in rhetoric, in ways that may make us feel a little bit less comfortable.

McFarlane Can you give me an example of how you’d reach out on an issue?

Richards Well, the example that I alluded to or mentioned to you before is around how we position abortion, or how we allow our—let me put it this way—how we in the advocacy community allow our supporters to position the issue. I mean, just an example of the moment, is that on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade this year, Hilary Clinton went to family planning advocates in New York state, the big statewide organization, where all of the politicians go
on January 22nd annually in New York to pay homage and, you know, bow down and take the pledge. And she gave a speech, which was, I thought, in many ways a beautiful speech and a, you know, perfectly fine speech, the bottom line—one bottom line of which—is that we should be talking much more and acting much more around prevention. And in that speech, she said that she understood how people on the other side feel about abortion and that, in fact, abortion in many cases is a tragedy.

And this has caused enormous uproar inside the movement. Betrayal, you know, this is a terrible thing. Well, I’m not saying that I would counsel our leaders or advocates to go out and be talking about abortion as a tragedy, but I mean, I think that was an attempt—a first attempt, you know, maybe not a particularly perfect attempt—to kind of reach out a little bit and talk about abortion in the way people feel about abortion. And I think we need to—as uncomfortable as that is, I think we’ve got to try to learn how to do that. So that’s an example of what I mean.

McFarlane: Or parental consent for something. For—

Richards: Yeah. Right. I mean, at least we need to say—and this is tricky, because our policy position on parental consent isn’t going to change, but I think we need to at least acknowledge, in a real way, that rank-and-file parents out there don’t see this issue the way we see this issue. And we may understand how, you know, they may be quote-unquote “wrong,” but they’re well motivated.

McFarlane: They want to protect their kids.

Richards: They want to protect their kids, you know. And it would behoove us to understand that. And in Senator Clinton’s speech, I mean, she didn’t back
away from abortion at all, so it wasn’t, you know, let’s acknowledge abortion as a tragedy and make it illegal. In fact she talked about the world and the evidence from the world that making abortion illegal does not stop abortion. And so this notion that we’re going to stop abortion internationally the way the Bush administration—you know, by making it more illegal, I mean, this is not going to help. So she didn’t back away from abortion but she spoke of it with negative words. But as I say, I think there’s ample evidence that that’s how people feel about it. And I don’t think that’s going to change.

McFarlane How do you see yourself, as Cory Richards here, able to affect that dialogue? How can you—

Richards Well, I think—in small ways, to be sure. Most directly, I think, through the talking that we do, our staff here with our colleagues and other organizations and in closed-door meetings, to some extent in our writing, through the Guttmacher Report. One of the things I’m trying to do increasingly is to move our writing in the Guttmacher Report from stories that focus on, you know, a bill or a piece of legislation to a topic, an idea—to get ideas out on the table, to frame some of these things better. So I think we can do that. I can join forces, to some extent, with others in the field, like, you know, Frances Kissling to some extent, who are trying to make a similar plea inside the movement. That’s probably, you know, the best that I can do.

McFarlane Looking back, what difference has it made that Cory Richards has been in this movement? I mean, what’s your assessment? Honest, no time for—

Richards Mm-hmm. Well, first of all, I would say that, you know, I ain’t dead yet. And I’m not ready to entirely rest on my laurels or wrap up my legacy.
McFarlane

Just because my grant ends.

Richards

(laughs) Yeah, right, exactly. So I try to keep focusing on moving in the future, and maybe some of the things that I’ve talked about may in fact be most important. And we’ve talked about the Institute and sexual health and that sort of thing. I think that, ironically, that even though AGI’s longest and most illustrious presidency to date was under Jeannie, who was a very political person, I think that I’ve actually been more responsible in the recent years since she’s left in helping to nudge AGI away from being an organization that’s dominated by research and a research agenda, developed by researchers, to figuring out a way to involve the end users of research, you know, the advocacy people and our communications people much more genuinely in the germination of ideas and thinking about ideas, and coming up with, then, ideas for research that will enhance the quote-unquote “actionability” of the research, without in any way impinging on the integrity of the research itself—

McFarlane

But asking the question.

Richards

Yes, in the asking of the question. And so one of the things that I’ve pushed for at the Institute that we’re starting to institutionalize, and I can already see that it's sort of bubbling up, is our—we have interdivisional teams around issues that—and we’ve never really had this before—

McFarlane

That’s research and advocacy, too—

Richards

Well, research, advocacy, and communications.

McFarlane

Okay.

Richards

Mostly.
McFarlane: So there are three.

Richards: Yeah. But I think the major—public education, I guess, is the way we should say that. So, for example, there’s been a group that had been meeting around the issues of marriage and family structure and relationships and couples, and that kind of stuff, you know, which is a big interest in the public sphere now, and there’s a lot of money going to marriage promotion. And is this bad, is this good, is this a rightwing plot, is this here to stay? I mean, all this kind of stuff. So we’ve had some people talking about that, and thinking about that, not in the sense of, let’s design a project tomorrow kind of thing, but the pre-project development stuff. And, you know, it’s been very exciting.

And I think it helps people across divisions understand how—I think it’s really useful for advocates to understand how researchers think—I mean, it’s a totally different world view—and vice versa—and to help each side understand the pressures and the constraints that the other people work on. And I’m hoping over time that that will make a real institutional contribution to keeping us relevant and kind of looking forward and not doing the same things over and over again—because that’s what we’ve always done.

McFarlane: That’s very interesting. Is there anything else I should ask you about that I’ve left out?

Richards: Will you come back if I think of something?

McFarlane: Sure. I have a couple of just—

Richards: Mm-hmm.

McFarlane: Do you see yourself as being president of the organization?

Richards: No, I think those days are gone. That’s over. I tried. I tried and failed.
McFarlane: And so you just don’t think—

Richards: So that’s it.

McFarlane: —it’ll happen, or you wouldn’t try again?

Richards: I don’t think it’s going to happen. I think it’s not possible. One of the reasons—and I, you know, it may not be the only reason—but I think I’m really the last person at AGI who doesn’t have an advanced degree of any kind.

McFarlane: And you think that’s the issue?

Richards: I think it’s a big issue.

McFarlane: Hm.

Richards: And I think, even though I think, on some level, it shouldn’t be an issue, I can sort of understand why it is an issue. And I mean, it’s ironic because, as we talked earlier, the founders of the Institute, with the exception of Joy—I don’t even know, does Joy have a Ph.D.?

McFarlane: Uh-uh.

Richards: Okay, well there you go. I mean, you know, none of the founders of the Institute were academically credentialed. But it was an earlier time. And now, I think the Institute’s reputation and stuff just sort of almost demands that. In addition, I really—at this point in my life it’s not something that I really want anyway. But I think my own—and this is ironic to some extent, since I used to be so into, you know, performance and wanting to be a star—I think I’ve suppressed that, in a way that I hope has been worth it, into really spending my time and energy building and working with a staff that I am completely happy to showcase and allow to be recognized people in their
own right. And I think it’s made our institutional effort stronger.

**McFarlane**

Mm-hmm.

**Richards**

It may have come at a price for me, because I’m not as visible, even internally, as I might be under other circumstances. But I can’t do that sort of, you know, academic model or something, where you have everybody else write the paper and then you put your name on it. I just can’t do it. And in fact, I think it is fair to say that in virtually every single *Guttmacher Report* article that goes out—I mean, I’m really deeply involved in what those articles say, and do a lot of editing and sometimes a lot of writing, but none of them carries my name. And that’s fine. I’m actually quite at peace with that.

**McFarlane**

This is a personal question, so—I just want to ask you, do you think being a gay man has given you a special view on this field, or being in this field, or is that just one aspect of many that—

**Richards**

Well, it can’t be irrelevant. I mean, you know, (laughs) in some ways it just can’t be irrelevant. I think that it’s made me—I think it’s helped me stand a little outside and question why we’re doing what we’re doing just a little bit, you know, a little bit more maybe than people for whom this is so completely internalized. I think that’s one thing. I think the other thing is that it has helped me or—it has something to do with seeing a relationship between different groups, and who benefits in this society and all that kind of stuff. What’s the line that, you know, “nobody can be free until everybody’s free,” or—

**McFarlane**

Mm-hmm.
Richards —something like that. I remember when I first took the job, when I was, you know, twenty-five years old and leaving the Hill, thinking, you know—I mean, I had to think about that, right then.

McFarlane Mm-hmm.

Richards Do I care about these issues?

McFarlane Yeah.

Richards Why do I care about these issues? Are these issues relevant to a man, first, and then, you know, to a gay man. And of course, they are, and one of the things that struck me as very interesting when I first started in this, is how there has always been a—it seems to me—quite comfortable relationship between lesbian women and heterosexual women around women’s issues, and around reproductive rights issues, where there’s been no question, it seems to me, why lesbians should be concerned about reproductive rights issues. I mean it’s because—they just seem to be, that that’s just accepted. They’re all women first, I guess, you know. Um, gay men and reproductive health issues is always is more of a—you know, there’s a bigger gulf there. But I think that less has to do with the gay part than the man part, you know (McFarlane laughs) to a certain extent.

McFarlane Yes.

Richards Or the two will come together. But in any case, it just seems to me that—and certainly when we talk about—and maybe that’s why I’ve become so interested, lately, in terms of thinking of these issues as primarily sexual health issues, you know.

McFarlane It’s the unifying—
Richards  
It’s the unifying thing. But I’ve never pushed for the Institute to be have more of a, you know, gay lens on it at all—at all.

McFarlane  
Is there anything else that I should ask or—well, there is one thing I want to ask. What do you say to people in the future, who are in your position or your career? What advice do you give them? (Richards laughs) I mean, you’ve already said you’d like to see the field kind of change its focus a bit, or maybe recognize its real focus.

Richards  
That would be my call to action for the field as a whole. One thing we haven’t talked about that much, we mentioned a little bit, but I think that in some way, making more peace between the men and the women in this field— I mean, it’s related to what I just said about, if we could win by ourselves, you know, with just the people who agree with us, we wouldn’t need anybody on the outside. I think I understand why women have wanted reproductive health and rights to be a woman-controlled thing. It’s the one area that women have been allowed to, you know, in a political sense, control things. But there’s just an inherent limitation in that that I think is going to ultimately boomerang on the field, the movement itself, which is to say, to me, the whole concept of women’s issues is something that I think we should move through as a society, because as long as a certain set of issues are regarded as women’s issues, they will always be secondary, even if male politicians feel that they have to cotton up to that political constituency, kind of thing. But, you know, war and peace are big issues for everybody. The economy is a big issue for everybody. And it seems to me that these issues should be for everybody, too, not just relegated to being women’s issues. I
can end on that.

McFarlane Okay. (Richards laughs) Thank you very much.

*End of interview.*