

Voices of Feminism Oral History Project
Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College
Northampton, MA

BARBARA J. LOVE

Interviewed by

KELLY ANDERSON

March 6, 2008
Danbury, Connecticut

This interview was made possible
with generous support from the Ford Foundation.

© Sophia Smith Collection 2008

Narrator

Barbara J. Love (b. 1937) was raised in New Jersey, graduated from Syracuse University in 1959, and worked as a business magazine editor for most of her professional career. She is an activist and writer, co-author with Sidney Abbott of *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman* (1972) and editor of *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975* (2006).

Interviewer

Kelly Anderson (b.1969) is an educator, historian, and community activist. She has an M.A. in women's history from Sarah Lawrence College and is a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. History at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Abstract

In this oral history, Love reflects on her childhood and family of origin, her introduction to lesbian life and politics, and her activism in the 1970s. This interview pays particular attention to the National Organization for Women, the Houston conference in 1977, Radicalesbians, and her published writings.

Restrictions

None

Format

Interview recorded on miniDV using Sony Digital Camcorder DSR-PDX10. Two 60-minute tapes.

Transcript

Transcribed by Susan Kurka. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Sheila Flaherty-Jones.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Video Recording

Bibliography: Love, Barbara. Interview by Kelly Anderson. Video recording, March 6, 2008. Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection. **Footnote:** Barbara Love, interview by Kelly Anderson, video recording, March 6, 2008, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, tape 2.

Transcript

Bibliography: Love, Barbara. Interview by Kelly Anderson. Transcript of video recording, March 6, 2008. Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection. **Footnote:** Barbara Love, interview by Kelly Anderson, transcript of video recording, March 6, 2008, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, pp. 23-24.

Voices of Feminism Oral History Project
Sophia Smith Collection
Smith College
Northampton, MA

Transcript of interview conducted March 6, 2008, with:

BARBARA LOVE
Danbury, Connecticut

by: KELLY ANDERSON

ANDERSON: This is Kelly Anderson with Barbara Love, at her home in Danbury, Connecticut, on March sixth, doing a taping for Voices of Feminism, which we had to reschedule from the fall. I'm glad that we were able to fit it in, finally. So I know that mostly we're going to talk about your lesbian feminism — for shorthand — I know it's not so simple — starting in the early 70s. I do want to hear a little bit about your family background, because I don't know much about it. I just know that you were born in New Jersey —

LOVE: That sounds good.

ANDERSON: — had a couple of brothers. Mom stayed at home but was community involved; dad was in hosiery. That's kind of all I know, so if you could fill in —

LOVE: Oh, that's quite a bit.

ANDERSON: If you could fill in a little bit about what your childhood was like and where your parents were from.

LOVE: My mother was — she goes back to England, not the Mayflower. She kept saying, "No, no, no, the poor people came on the Mayflower"; that they came some other way. I don't know. Anyway, we do have something. I went to the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] and studied it. They have information back to Colonel [John] Ashley, who did the declaration of independence for Massachusetts [the Sheffield Declaration], which was before the nation, and my family goes back there. So that's my mother's side. She was born in Binghamton, [New York], from a pretty well-to-do family, although she was an only child, so she wanted to have more than one child, so that's why there are three of us.

My father is from Denmark. He came over here by himself when he was 22, and always worked for himself as an entrepreneur, and told fantastic stories. We still are talking about what's real and what

isn't real, because he was a great storyteller. He had all these — you know, he started selling pots and pans door to door, and he broke his leg and was on crutches, and he said he sold so many that, when he got better, he kept the crutches. That was one of the stories he had. He had so many stories.

He was a hosiery manufacturer. He imported and exported, and made things — firemen boot linings. He owned a part of a Russian shrimp boat. He was an interesting guy. In the war, he was an underground agent. He spoke Danish, of course — being Dane — and English, and he was under a disguise and working the Radio Free Europe for a while. He was decorated by the king of Denmark for his work during the war. Of course, my mother said he wasn't like he said he was. She said he was playing golf and having a wonderful time in England. But according to him, he was — you know, had shrapnel, and it was dangerous, and so on. So anyway, different stories. So that's my parents.

I have two brothers: an older brother who is in business, and a younger brother who hasn't worked for a long time, and he's very Christian Right, although he loves me anyway, which is great. My older brother — he's Right. My whole family is Republican, very far right Republican, and that's worse than anything — worse than being a lesbian, worse than being a feminist. I'm banished, really, from a lot of it because of my politics. First Democrat they ever saw, you know (chuckles), or wanted to know — didn't want to know, actually.

I have a couple of nieces who have had to sort of struggle against their father to see me and understand me and be in contact with me. They're pretty good, but it's been hard for them because they are still wanting to please their parents, who don't talk to me about it — my older brother and his wife. So that's it in a nutshell.

ANDERSON: What were your parents' politics growing up? What was talked about? What did you understand about politics?

LOVE: Oh, they were — What were their politics? They weren't like mine. I knew that from a very early age — very, very early — because I was always doing things they disapproved of, always hanging out with people from the other side of the tracks, not going out with any guys from the country club. I would go out with Catholics and Jews and all kinds of people that, you know — I could understand what their problems were, but they didn't like many people. I stayed in my room for most of my childhood (laughs), and I wasn't comfortable in my own house, really, not at all. It was just too restricted. And their thinking about people walking through the neighborhood: What are they doing here? I didn't know then I was gay, but they were saying things that I didn't like about gay people. I didn't even talk very much because, you know, this was traditional back then.

It was the older brother that mattered, and they were always asking his opinions and always concerned about what he did, and never

5:00

concerned about what I did. So I grew up thinking I was not being listened to, and I still think I'm not being listened to, even today. These things stick with you. A lot of things that I saw were wrong, and they bothered me, but I didn't quite have a context for them or anybody to share them with. I just knew that I was not important, and he was. And if he was driving a milk truck and I was going to Europe, the talk was all about the milk truck, you know? (laughs) It wasn't about Europe. And I thought, This is not right.

But that's the way it always was. And we grew up differently because of that — the three kids — because of the way we were treated as kids. I could see that. My brother was king, and he believes he's king, and he is king. And my younger brother — they kind of made fun of him. What should I say? He's got a lot of problems with his ego, and I think that's why he's now a minister, actually, because he can tell me I'm not going to heaven, and I tell him, "Tony, you're not going to make that decision." (laughs) But it gives him some sense of authority, I think, being a minister, a lay minister with nursing homes and things.

So I'm in touch with my younger brother, and not my older brother at all. And my nieces a little bit, sort of by e-mail, that's about it. Although I did a big fund-raiser for my niece's [daughter, Sara, who has] Rett Syndrome, which is a terrible disease. [Ingrid, my niece, and Sara came to the event.] Ingrid was very happy about that. I try to be supportive.

ANDERSON: You were raised with pretty traditional gender messages then.

LOVE: Oh, absolutely. I got the message. The one thing I was very good at — I wasn't interested in boys, really, and I wasn't interested in doing what the girls were doing, which was watching the boys play football. I thought, Why watch? Do something yourself. I got into swimming, and every day after school, I was on the swim team. So I was doing things for myself instead of watching the football games and going out for soda. So I was kind of in my own world at that time, and that was respected because I was swimming champion and selected [by the newspaper] as the [best] girl athlete of the town for years and years.

So yeah, I got the messages. But my swimming was not considered important by anybody in my family, just me. They'd say, Did you win? I'd say no. Well then, it doesn't matter. But, you know, it does matter. If you just do better, that's what matters. And you do better than you did the last time, and you're very excited. But they didn't have that understanding of what I was doing. My father always said I was chasing a carrot. Well, that's the fun of it, though you never get there. It's the camaraderie, it's exciting, it's healthy. And I still swim today, six days a week. I was a competitive swimmer back then, when I was young. First swimmer in New Jersey to break a minute for the 100-yard freestyle — that was when I was 12. Here I am, 71 last week, and I'm still competing and having fun swimming.

ANDERSON: Were you good in school? And did they encourage you academically?

LOVE: No, they didn't particularly care too much, although my mother wanted to send me to Emma Willard. Sometimes I think I should have done that. I would have been in the class with Jane Fonda, and that would have been nice. But I said no, I didn't want to leave my swim team and my coach. And so I chose swimming over that, and that was fine.

10:00

ANDERSON: And you grew up in New Jersey, right? You were talking about a suburban town in New Jersey.

LOVE: Yeah, Ridgewood, New Jersey. It was a commuting town to New York. I was born in Glen Ridge, and moved to [Ridgewood] when I was about three, and lived there most of my childhood.

ANDERSON: So you did all of high school and everything out there?

LOVE: [Kindergarten through] high school, Ridgewood High School, yes, yes.

ANDERSON: That's a public school?

LOVE: Yeah, and it was a good public school. It was a very good public school. In fact, my friends went on to all the best places, including Smith, Vassar, Wellesley. And I went to Purdue. They said, What's Purdue? I said, "Purdue has the best swimming team in the country. That's why I want to go to Purdue." And I did, and that's where we — I was on a world-record-breaking relay team for swimming. After a while, I decided that I couldn't stay in college just to swim, so I decided I wanted to be a journalist. I was an editor of the Purdue *Exponent*, and decided I wanted to be in journalism, so I transferred to Syracuse University to study journalism in my junior and senior year.

ANDERSON: Okay. And was that a struggle in your family context, for you to be going to college?

LOVE: Well, no, it was all right that I went to college. It was much more important where [Douglas, my older brother] went, and he went to [The] Lawrenceville [School]. But they did give me the opportunity to go to Emma Willard, which is — you know, that's a good place. It just didn't matter as much as what he did. And he wasn't doing that well in school until he went to Lawrenceville, and then, of course, now he's a genius. He always told me how smart he was, and I thought, Yeah, right, right, right. But now, actually, in the world that I've been in, I've met people from *Barron's* magazine and a vice president from Wells Fargo, who say he is brilliant. So I think, Oh well, maybe he's right. (laughs)

ANDERSON: It doesn't mean you and your other brother aren't, too.

- LOVE: Oh, I don't know. (laughter)
- ANDERSON: So what was college like for you? What years were you in college?
- LOVE: Let's see, '55 to '59. I graduated in '59.
- ANDERSON: '55 to '59, okay. Oh yeah, graduate school was '71, wasn't it?
- LOVE: Graduate school came a little bit later, quite a bit later, when I was in New York, getting a degree in psychology.
- ANDERSON: Right. So you were in college in the late 50s.
- LOVE: Yes, '55 to '59.
- ANDERSON: You get into civil rights. (overlapping dialogue)
- LOVE: Well, not — yeah.
- ANDERSON: Well, in the national news, (overlapping dialogue) post-*Brown [v. Board of Education of Topeka]*.
- LOVE: Yeah, but I was so involved in what I was doing. Later I found out all about [Eugene] McCarthy and these horrible things that were going on. And then I had my career — Oh, I went to Europe for two years. It was a great experience. I lived in [Italy] from '59 to '61, in Florence, Italy — mostly in Florence [though I started out in Rome]. And then I taught English and math in Florence at [Miss Barry's] American school for a year, and then came back [to the U.S.]
- ANDERSON: How did that open up your world view?
- LOVE: Oh, a lot, because, you know, everything — At this time in history, in school, it was so narrow in terms of the people. You associated with your own class. You know, if it was an upperclassman by one year, it was a big deal or something. [In Italy] I met people from all over the world who spoke different languages, had different politics, and were poor and rich, you know, Communists and princesses. It was amazing. We just all got together and had these wonderful parties, and the Americans would be in their jeans, and the Italians would be in their taffeta dresses and rhinestones, and we'd have Africans there in their beautiful dress. A lot of people couldn't speak the same language, and it was just terrific. We had no money. We had cheap red wine, bread, and cheese, and survived somehow. It was a wonderful time, and a wonderful opening-up of my thinking and horizons. It was great.
- It was a terrific thing to do, and I encourage my nieces to do that. My youngest niece is doing that. I said, "Look, see the world before you get encumbered by mortgages and pets and partners, and

whatever.” And she is. She’s running all over the world. So that’s great.

ANDERSON: So when you came back from that, what did you think you were going to do, now that it’s the early 60s?

LOVE: Well, I knew I was going to be a journalist, and that’s what I wanted to be. I started out where there were places for women, like *McCall’s*. I was on my third interview at *McCall’s*, and I thought, Oh, I don’t really want to write about those things. I had been introduced to someone at Syracuse — to business journalism, and my father was a businessman, and I was kind of comfortable with that idea. So I met this guy — it was a job opening at the *New York Lumber Trade Journal*, a long cry from *McCall’s*. Kind of an old curmudgeon type, probably drank a lot, and he said, “I need someone to do everything: circulation, production, editorial, and sales. And you can start Monday.” I said, “Okay, I’ll take it.” So that was my first job back here. I could hardly survive on what I was paid, but I learned a lot and took it from there. And my whole life I’ve been in business-magazine journalism.

15:00

ANDERSON: And you went back to New York City after Europe?

LOVE: I went back to New York City.

ANDERSON: So the 60s in New York City.

LOVE: Yeah, back to New York City. So that was my first job back here.

ANDERSON: And, you know, jumping — well, it’s not too far ahead, but jumping up to graduate school, I want to talk about that. But I want to make sure first that something else isn’t happening that we’re missing. Does lesbianism or feminism start to enter the picture? Before we get into the New School stuff. Which comes first?

LOVE: Well, it was there, but it wasn’t spoken about with anybody. Somebody in my sorority I was interested in, but nobody ever knew it. I was going to see a school psychologist about it — or psychiatrist, whatever they had — and my father had a heart attack, and I couldn’t make the appointment. And I’m very glad I didn’t because people were being thrown out of school for that, for being lesbians.

ANDERSON: Did you know about lesbian relationships on the campus?

LOVE: No, no. I found out much later that a couple of women in my sorority, just a door down, were lesbians, but I didn’t find that out until much, much later. Like others, I thought I was the only one; I’d invented it, or something. You know, we all thought that (chuckles), and we laugh about it. I didn’t see any books about it, or anything positive, or

anything at all, actually. I identified with — what was it? Oh gosh, it was the criminal aspect of it, and the hiding and the guilt. It was really terrible. It was very painful.

I had an experience when I was in Europe, with kind of a wild woman from [Oregon] who was hitchhiking all over Europe and working in a cheese factory and doing roadwork. She was a language student at Oregon, and that was the first time I was ever with anybody. And I knew that was for me.

ANDERSON: It sounds like you knew that about yourself before that.

LOVE: Oh, I knew that, but I hadn't had any experiences, or anything like that, until this woman, Molly. I met her in France again after I had met her in Italy, and, you know, had a relationship — well, it was one time. She said, "It's not for me." And I said, "It is for me." (laughs)

ANDERSON: So it confirmed what you already felt like you knew about yourself.

LOVE: Yeah, yeah. It was a defining moment, so to speak.

ANDERSON: And was it terrifying?

LOVE: No, it was wonderful.

ANDERSON: It was wonderful.

LOVE: Yeah, yeah, it felt good. I mean, I still — Well, they didn't have a name for it at that time. I don't know, this had to be 1961. It was years before liberation of any kind. But I knew then. And then when I came back, I had some relationships. I was ready for the women's movement, I was ready for gay liberation. I was, like, just right there, really ripe for it and charged up.

ANDERSON: Before the women's movement and gay liberation, how did you find other women? Did you go to the bars, DOB [Daughters of Bilitis]? What were the 60s like for you?

LOVE: Well, there were the bars, and there was DOB. I did go to a couple of DOB meetings. I found them very depressing. People — just their first names — in basements, and they kind of hid their lives. Oh, I didn't like it, really.

I did go to bars and, you know, they were being arrested at that time, and that was also kind of depressing. And I was going out with guys then, too. I mean, I was trying to figure out who I was for a while there, and that was my front, so to speak. But at night I would go to the bars. After my date let me off at midnight or something, I'd get into my jeans and go down to Sea Colony and lean against the jukebox all night

20:00

and watch. (laughs) I didn't dare do anything. But it was kind of exciting.

And I had a couple of relationships out of that, important relationships. I did have a lover who was so proud of our relationship that she told everybody. It was very hard for me. I couldn't take her anywhere; she'd tell people that she's in love with me. I thought, Oh my God, oh my God, you can't say that! This was before gay liberation. And she took me to her family — she was Irish, all of them — and danced with me, and she insisted I buy her a ring. Oh God, that was very, very difficult. And [made me promise] that I never, never deny that I loved her. This was awfully hard on me. We're talking 1966. She was something else. She was way ahead of her time, way ahead of her time. She was just really out there. She was killed in an auto accident in '67.

ANDERSON: Oh, I'm sorry.

LOVE: We were only together a year, but it was a learning experience for me. Gay pride came a couple of years later, but [Celia] was there, ahead of the movement.

ANDERSON: How did you fit in, in terms of the pressure around butch/femme? How did you find that? Did you not find that that was a pressure?

LOVE: Oh, it was. Oh yes, I had to be one or the other.

ANDERSON: Does that sit well with you?

LOVE: No, no. I could never figure it out. I tried. I tried to be — I figured, Okay, I have to be one or the other. They always asked me what I was. So in the bars I decided, Okay, I'll be femme. And then I was dancing with somebody who asked me to dance, and I was talking about swimming and holding a world record, and she pushed me back and she said, "You're no femme." I thought, Well, I guess not. Okay, so I'll try being a butch. So I tried being a butch, and then I asked someone to dance and said, "Well, you'll have to lead." (laughs) You're no butch, [she said.] I said [to myself], "Oh well, I failed at that one, too. Forget it." So they figured I was a policewoman, that's what I had to be. If I wasn't butch or femme, I was a policewoman. Okay, fine, whatever. It just didn't make any sense to me.

Of course, in the women's movement, then, we tried to eliminate all that and tried to be equals, and that wasn't a problem anymore in the women's movement. The women that were there were treating each other as neither. We wanted to eliminate that role-playing.

ANDERSON: So would you say you had a sense of community in the 60s around lesbianism, or was it a date here and a bar here? Did you have friends that were —

LOVE: No, not in the bars, not until the women's movement. I joined NOW [National Organization for Women] in late '66 or early '67, not too long after it started, four to five months after it started. I didn't really know about it, but through my job, I was interviewing Long John Nebel, who had a radio show on WOR. And Pat Carbine was on that show, and she was with one of the women's magazines. I found out a lot more about Pat Carbine later, but at that interview, I didn't think she stood up for herself very well against the men that she was talking about. I said that at dinner to Long John Nebel, and he said, "You sound like a feminist." And I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, you should go see" — oh I'm sorry, [I don't remember] who he sent me to. And then that woman sent me to Muriel Fox, who was one of the founders of NOW. And then she sent me to my friend Dolores Alexander, and I joined NOW. I didn't know about NOW [until then], and Long John Nebel said, "You're a feminist. You'd better join this group." So I did.

And my first assignment from Dolores was to make chicken for a board meeting at Betty Friedan's [apartment], and I thought, I didn't join the women's movement to cook. I mean, oh God. That was the first thing I ever did, was cook dinner for Betty Friedan and her group. Dolores is still a very good friend of mine. I talk to her regularly. [Dolores died two months later and Barbara brought her ashes back to Southold, Long Island from Florida.]

ANDERSON: So she was director at the time when you went?

LOVE: Yes, she was executive director of national [NOW], but you know her story. I mean, that was difficult for her, accused of being a lesbian when she wasn't. Later she was. She was a friend of mine, and so was Ivy Bottini. I was supportive of Ivy. And then that whole lesbian purge thing — although people will say today, on the other side, Oh, there was no purge, Ivy just didn't win the election.

25:00

ANDERSON: What's your memory of it?

LOVE: Well, there was very definitely a purge to get her out. The other group came up with a whole slate of other officers that they put forward, and they packed the meeting with people that no one had ever seen before. Ivy was very popular, too. She's a lesbian, but she was pretty quiet about it. In fact, I remember that she was asked to speak at a rally because they didn't want a lesbian at a rally. They wanted somebody who they were sure was not a lesbian, and, of course, Ivy was kind of matronly looking, she had four children, she was married, and she lived in the suburbs — she was perfect. Well, she was a lesbian, (laughs) and they didn't know it. They thought, We'll get someone that's not a lesbian. Well, they couldn't.

ANDERSON: Doesn't look like a lesbian, is what they meant to say.

LOVE: They couldn't, yes. That was kind of an inside joke. Where was I? I was on Ivy's side, and I saw what was happening to her, and I supported her. There were a couple of lesbians that were actually feeding the other side our names, which is kind of a Freudian thing, I guess — identification with the aggressor. They were lesbians, but they were helping the enemy.

So in my mind, it was [a purge], but I don't talk about it much anymore, because I realize that, now I'm meeting a lot of young people, and they think the movement — the second wave — was anti-lesbian, and that's not true. I mean, because of my particular position, which was really trying to fight for lesbian identity and respect and place in the movement, and an understanding of our relationship to the movement, it was very big in my life, and so that's important for me. And it was important in NOW because NOW was a problem for a while. But then the whole society was. You know, we were still sick in the eyes of the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association. So NOW was no different.

But there were other groups, many other groups, where it was okay, and we even had our own groups — Radicalesbians, and many gay organizations. And [the anti-lesbian attitude in NOW] was only for a couple of years. In 1971 it was resolved at the national NOW, thanks to people on the West Coast who knew about us. We were their heroes and they were our heroes. Arlie Scott, particularly, who introduced the resolution in NOW that lesbianism was a feminist issue. That was a year after the purge — I'll call it a purge — in New York. So that was a short period of history. And we're talking at least up to '75, and you're going to '80 in the second wave.

So I don't like the movement being characterized as anti-lesbian, even though that was my particular — one of my two major contributions in life was to make that change happen. To be a force for change, to push the board of directors of national NOW, to interrupt every meeting I could to make a scene, to be a troublemaker everywhere on behalf of lesbians, and usually on the front line. I wasn't the person that was in the boardrooms. I was the person that would, you know, form caucuses and organize, and things like that. Even in the American Psychological Association. I remember at the eastern regional convention, I took the mike, and when they were talking about the gay issues and what was wrong with us, and I'd say, "What caused you to be a heterosexual?" And this, that, and the other thing. I mean, I like really was just stomping out there.

That was really one of my major things: to push NOW in every way, and confront Friedan publicly everywhere, because she did [say terrible things about lesbians]— and there's no doubt about it, she even admitted it. The problem was, she wasn't the women's movement, but the press thought she was the women's movement. So the press always said, Well, Betty Friedan — And so it was Betty Friedan, it wasn't the women's movement, that was recorded in most of history. When she

30:00

wrote in her — I think it was her ten-year retrospective, that lesbians were infiltrators, seducers, and blackmailers, that's what people thought the women's movement thought. And she was so far out of [sync with the rest of the women's movement] at that time. The movement had gone so far in another direction that even New York NOW was trying to expel her from the movement, or something. I don't know. And it was terrible because [the press] didn't talk to other people. The press always wanted [Betty].

Then Kate Millett spoke a bit, but even Kate Millett was — for a while there, she was married and having trouble saying she was a lesbian. She said she was a bisexual, and then that got in the press and *Time* magazine, and they killed her for being bisexual. She didn't even say she was a lesbian. So, I mean, it was very tough on her. And when *Sexual Politics* [was published], it was — I remember how tough it was. She was wearing dark glasses at her event, and she had been up all night because the Radicalesbians had [also] attacked her because she wouldn't say she was a lesbian. And yet the rest of society was attacking her. I mean, it was a very difficult place to be. A very difficult place to be at that time for people, when the Radicalesbians were being so out and so proud and so pushy, and threatening to out people, and all kinds of stuff like that. I think that was hard.

But anyway, I've lost where I'm at now. Where am I?

ANDERSON: Well, I want to pick up on two things. I want to talk about Radicalesbians and NOW some more, but I want to just back up to the one thing you were saying about young women, and just clarify, for my own understanding, what you were talking about: how you were saying that there's all this understanding of the second wave being anti-lesbian, and you were trying to counter that with some other information. Is it because you want younger women, or younger lesbians, to think better of feminism? Or do you think that they just misunderstand the history?

LOVE: Well, they definitely misunderstand the history. There are so many nuances and timelines. And also, as I say, who the spokespeople were and who history is focusing on, and not what was really going on. That's the case with the lesbian thing. Friedan carried this on for quite a few years, until 1977 when, at the Houston National Women's Conference, she supposedly apologized. It's taken historically by most people that she apologized. That's not quite right, and I got the wording of exactly what she said recently. It wasn't exactly an apology.

ANDERSON: What did she say?

LOVE: What she was saying was — she endorsed our resolution for lesbian rights at the convention, and that was like, okay, taken as an apology. But she was really — and her words were, to set the record straight, that the ERA [equal rights amendment], which was everything, and one of the reasons she wanted to keep us down, down, down, down, and quiet,

would not help lesbians. So she wanted to make the point that you can be for the ERA because it's not going to help lesbians, and so lesbians deserve their rights. She said it a little differently, but that's really the point she was trying to make. [See appendix 1 for Betty's exact words.] It wasn't an apology, but that's okay. Historically it's taken as an apology. And she did change her mind, and she didn't say bad things [about us later in her life].

In the end, I was looking at larger issues and realizing that you could make a point that that was something that was legitimate: if it was hurting the ERA, to keep us down. That wasn't my point, and I resented it, but looking at the bigger picture, I can understand it and appreciate her larger contributions, and admire her and forgive her. I gave a tribute to her at the last [VFA] dinner in her honor, and was very sincere. So she did change in many ways, and that was fine, that was fine.

So yeah, I don't want it to be remembered that way because that was largely a misperception of what was going on, largely due to the media and her being the spokesperson that they took. I think that's true with a lot of things I hear today: that we were anti-sex, and that we hated men, and that we weren't interested in anybody but ourselves. What are some of the other stereotypes?

35:00

ANDERSON: It's a horrible misconception.

LOVE: They're wrong, they're wrong, they're wrong, they're wrong. But, you know, I can understand [the perception] that we weren't interested in women and families. I see how all these things came about, and they're misunderstandings. And part of it is because we had to overcompensate for things that were going on then. For example, we didn't do very much with women and children and child care, which is too bad because that is huge, huge, huge unfinished business in the women's movement — huge. I can get to that. But remember, we were trying to get women out of the household into the world, into business, into politics, into changing the world. So that was what we were trying to do. And perhaps we overcompensated because we didn't say, Okay, it's all right to remain home with your children, which it is, of course. But we were trying to push people in another direction. And then later it got some balance and had come back and, yes, you can do either. It's a choice, and that's wonderful now, it's a choice.

I think for a while, some women were feeling guilty staying at home with their children. In fact, my mother wouldn't call herself a housewife; she was a club woman. She would say, "I'm not a housewife, I'm a club woman." Because I think we even instilled some guilt in them, and that was not good. But to have to understand the history and where we were coming from — Because people were feeling guilty about going out into the world, and we had to say, No, that's a good thing. "A woman's house is in the White House," as Bella [Abzug] would say. So if you understand that, the historical context, you get a different view of it.

And the part about sex? Again, we were not recognized for our brains or our ability. We were only sex objects at that time, and, you know, it would always be what our clothes were like, what our hair was like, what our boobs were like, and not what we were thinking and anything that we did. It was like, they didn't do that for a man, and you'd say, What does he look like? What does it matter? So we were fighting in a place where women's potential and brains, knowledge, ambitions, respect in the world, were not there. And so we did not want to emphasize our sexuality because that's all we were. That's all we were was sex objects; we weren't anything else. So, again, we had to go overboard to say, Look, I want you to look at what's in my head, not my body. Now if that's interpreted as we weren't interested in sex, that's not true; we had plenty of sex — lots of it — and good times. But we did not want to be sex objects. Now you could say, looking at a picture today, women want to be sex objects, but that's okay because they are recognized for their brains and their talents, too. We didn't have that. So once more, we had to overcompensate for that to get seen as legitimate people in the work force and the political world, and so on. So you see, if you look at it that way, you understand it better.

Anti-men, no. There were a couple of people that were anti-men, but the people in the women's movement, even the lesbians — they weren't anti-men, they were just pro-women. No, that was not true. As far as being interested in other movements, that's wrong too, because so many of the women came from the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the environmental movement later. No, we were interested in the world, but still —

And black women too, but we didn't understand — First of all, the black women had their own world that was different. And men made it hard for them to join us, because they were — you know, the men wanted them to be in the black movement, to support them. They were called on to support the black men, and they wanted to do that, and they felt they should do that. And that wasn't what we were doing, because we didn't have to support the white men, that's for sure. We had to try to bring them down a notch, you know, because they were stepping on us. So it was very different. And the same thing with the Chicana movement.

Also there's poverty, of course, in the black movement. It was more working class. They had those issues that were not the white middle-class issues, where a lot of us came from. And how to find them, how to relate to them. We'd be at conferences like the Hilton in Beverly Hills, and like, where are the black women? Well, the black women — where were they? They were the maids in the hotel. They weren't with us because they couldn't afford to be there. Some people knew how to reach out to them, and they went to their churches. Like in Dallas, of all places, the NOW chapter — they started going to the churches and getting involved in their issues. I think it took a while because our issues weren't the same. The ERA was very threatening to them because [the black women] would lose their "privileges" [at work.

40:00

Actually they were more like barriers to promotion.] And even abortion — what were they interested in abortion? They'd been sterilized. They were interested in the right to have children, not to abort their children.

So there were a lot of differences. And it took a while to figure out where our common ground was, and unite. And I think that's been done today, much more coming together. I think that's great. But, again, there are reasons why there [are misperceptions]; there are reasons for all this. They don't understand the nuances maybe, and maybe I'm helping with that — I hope.

ANDERSON: Absolutely. Yeah, it's really helpful to hear your thinking about it at the time. Do you also, then, feel like the allegation that NOW didn't make enough overtures towards women of color, or was too middle class, too upper class — do you feel like those are unfair? Or are you just trying to explain why it is that you had a hard time making those alliances?

LOVE: I think maybe it was, but also there was a reluctance. It went both ways. There was a reluctance to join us because of these issues that I just discussed, and so we didn't serve them well. But then again, they weren't terribly interested in joining us. Even today, when I did this book, *Feminists Who Changed America*, which is the reason why you're talking to me, I guess — one of the reasons.

ANDERSON: One of them.

LOVE: I had a lot of trouble getting them to buy into this. And some black women, Chicana women, [now collectively called women of color] didn't, but many did. It was a hard sell to get them to see themselves as feminists and part of this movement. I had to really — I had a special committee of about 16 people helping me on it, and I have a lot of connections. And it was a hard sell, getting them to be part of [the Pioneer Feminist Project, which resulted in the book.]

ANDERSON: Well, it's such a contested word, and I'm sure you're finding that with young women these days, too.

LOVE: Oh, they don't like the word *feminist*, yeah.

ANDERSON: Right.

LOVE: Well, they don't want any labels.

ANDERSON: So there's very few. It's a small club that still identify as feminist.

LOVE: Yeah, I know. Well, I still — I'm going to hold that banner: feminist, feminist, feminist. But yeah, they don't like the word *feminist*; they don't want any labels at all. Because, again, they're more fluid. Well, that's fine, you can be fluid because, you know, they're not

embarrassed. See, again, it's different. You couldn't be fluid then. If you had a sexual relationship, you were a lesbian, and you were an outcast, and you're not in my family anymore, and you're not in this sorority, you're not in this college. You're on the streets, baby. Well, now you can be fluid — what the heck, nobody cares, it's great. You know, that's liberation. But see, we didn't have liberation, so, you know. And it took courage to identify yourself as a lesbian.

ANDERSON: Right.

LOVE: A lot of courage, because it meant, immediately, that your whole life was different and you were in danger, you really were. No, you don't have that today.

ANDERSON: No. I don't think people understand the courage and the risks.

LOVE: Oh, there were risks. I came out really by mistake.

ANDERSON: Really?

LOVE: Yeah. It wasn't a big courageous act.

ANDERSON: What happened?

LOVE: I was defending Kate Millett for being attacked for being bisexual. I was one of the people putting together a big press conference, and I got all the feminists in the world to sort of speak up that Kate is still our national hero. She had been on the cover of *Time* magazine just before that, and then she was discredited in *Time* magazine, [which said] that the movement would desert her. I forget how she was discredited, but it was something to that extent. And we said no, no, no. So we had everybody there, the usual — Gloria Steinem and Ti-Grace Atkinson, and some others. Actually, Wilma Scott Heide, who was president of national NOW, sent a telegram to that conference. It was great, it was great. We had a lot of press coverage. I was one of the organizers, and I got up there to speak, and I was rambling on about I don't even know what — street people or something irrelevant, I have no idea. But somewhere in there, I said, "I am a lesbian."

Well, I don't know, I didn't think it was much of a big deal. I wasn't the focus of the press conference at all. But then I saw *NBC Nightly News* close-up on me [saying] "I am a lesbian." Oh my God, I guess I'm out! (laughs) So yeah, I was. And from then on I figured, Okay, I'm out, live with it. Then David Suskind asked me to be on his show, on TV, but we couldn't find anybody else to go with me on the show for a few months. Then we got a couple other people, and one worked for a bank, who went on television with a pseudonym, which is kind of strange, to be on television with a pseudonym. But she got fired

45:00

from her job. And another woman was a Girl Scout leader, and she got fired. So yeah, it was pretty risky.

ANDERSON: And how could you take that risk? Were you at graduate school? Or were you not worried about your job at that time?

LOVE: Let's see. At that moment, I don't think I had a job.

ANDERSON: There you go! (laughs)

LOVE: So you couldn't fire me. I think I was writing *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman*, and was not working at that time. [But it was a bit of a problem when I tried to get back into business journalism.]

ANDERSON: Okay. Does Radicalesbians come before starting to write *Sappho*, or is it all kind of around the same time?

LOVE: Radicalesbians came before. I got involved with that — it wasn't Radicalesbians at first. It was just the first time I knew there was an option other than NOW, where I was in hiding, and so were other people. I mean, I'd go, but I didn't identify myself. Rita Mae Brown came to a meeting and talked about being a lesbian — and lesbian this and lesbian that. And I thought, Wow, wow, wow! This had to be '67. And she was wearing some see-through blouse and a Phi Beta Kappa key. I don't know what that was all about. And I said, "I want to talk to you about this." I said, "Can we get together after the meeting?" She said sure, and I said, "Well, come on over to my place," or something. I just wanted to talk about this and see, you know, I had no idea then. I mean, it wasn't an attraction or anything. I just wanted to, like — somebody I could talk with and was involved with the women's movement — talking to us at NOW — and, oh my God.

So she came [over to my apartment a few days later]. She came with flowers and her military jacket, and I thought, Wow. Of course, I had a partner there at the apartment, but that was okay. We talked, and we got something going with groups. She had been in some other radical groups that I wasn't involved in — I was only involved in NOW — and she wanted to get together [lesbians from various groups] at her apartment. Lesbians — from Redstockings, Gay Liberation Front, actually, and NOW, and so on — and invited me. There were about 24 of us, and we got into three different groups of eight for CR [consciousness raising].

ANDERSON: Oh, right.

LOVE: And that was sort of the beginning of it all. It was quite a while later we called ourselves Radicalesbians. A lot of us were involved in Gay Liberation Front. In fact, I was involved in Gay Liberation Front from the beginning, but then the women broke off into another group which

was called Radicalesbians, and I went with them. But then I didn't agree with the Radicalesbians. They were too radical for me.

ANDERSON: Over what?

LOVE: Well, they didn't think you should relate to the overground press, and I thought, How are you going to change the world with *Rat*? *Rat* was the newspaper of choice and that they wrote for, and that was very revolutionary, and I wasn't revolutionary enough to write for *Rat*. I was working at CBS at the time. I was, like, very confused politically. I was an executive at CBS, as a matter of fact. Anyway, I had my hair dyed, and I had secretaries, and all this stuff. But then I would come downtown and put my combat boots on, and it's like — Anyway, it was very hard.

So the Radicalesbians didn't want to relate to the overground movement, and I thought, You've got to reach people. And so we were secretly writing this book, Sidney [Abbott] and I. We didn't tell anybody we were writing this book. My God, you could have been killed by the Radicalesbians. So we were writing this book for the overground press. And that's one of the reasons Kate was chastised too, because she was — *Sexual Politics* was a book, and, my God, it was making money, too. Oh my God, that's even worse. (laughs)

50:00

ANDERSON: No leaders, no money.

LOVE: No money, poor, poor. So I didn't like that. You know, they had these sort of doctrines, or I don't know what they were. You didn't want to relate to men in the movement, and I did. I thought I wanted to relate to men. I had no problem with that, I thought they were great allies in the women's movement and gay movement. What was another one that I didn't like? Well, you had to be in CR. Well, that's okay, I was in some CR. Let's see, it was anti-men — and anti-women's movement. You couldn't be in the women's movement. These were doctrines.

So I left with a small group of people. There were about 40 people in Radicalesbians, more or less, and I left with about five of us, and went back to re-form Gay Liberation Front Women, under entirely different goals, which some people don't understand, because if they see this GLF Women, then they see what I wrote, it's entirely different from what the GLF Women which became Radicalesbians was.

ANDERSON: God, okay.

LOVE: It was, we want to relate to the women's group, we want to relate to men, we want to relate to the press. And they say, We don't understand this. They do if they talk to me.

So we went back and formed a group. I left Radicalesbians. It didn't work for me, although I was in the group for — we were both in the group for about a year or two years, in CR. It was just as I say: I

was not really radical, I was not really a reformist, and I still have these problems today. I mean, nobody trusts me. Well, what can you say? (laughs) Just like I didn't know if I was butch or femme, you know. Am I a radical, or am I — I relate to everybody, and that's one reason I was able to do this book, because I did relate to everybody.

ANDERSON: So did being part of GLF again — did that work? Were you happy at GLF?

LOVE: Well, that didn't last too long — a year or so. And, you know, we had our debates on whether — about the same thing that was going on. GLF was also very radical and revolutionary. Some people went to Cuba, and things like that, which was great, but I was not part of that group. No, we did some things there, but not a whole lot. I really didn't accomplish very much, I can't say —

But GLF, which formed right after Stonewall, was an interesting organization to be involved with immediately, because every gay person in the world from every sect — the street people and the executives, and black and white, and transsexual. At that time, that was pretty wild, that we were all together. Everything was chosen by lot when I joined there. Like, you know, the treasurer — Well, guess who got the treasurer's lot? A transsexual who was a well-known thief. (laughs) A straight person, a thief. And this one guy, Bob Kohler, who recently died, bless his heart — he was really like a father figure in the group. He said, "Barbara, would you help and just be like a co-treasurer, and help?" I said fine, and so I kept the money. We kept cash, all cash, in my apartment. (laughs)

Marsha, she was the [treasurer and a street transvestite] — she came to my house. We'd give money away to anybody. If people lost their coat, we'd buy them a coat. If people were arrested, we'd get them out of jail. We were very generous. So Marsha came to my apartment, and said she needed some money from the treasury, which was all in a box. It wasn't even in a bank because we needed it for getting people out of jail, so we needed it. So she said, "Well, I need to get my friend out of jail." And I said, "What for?" She said, "Stealing a pocketbook from a woman." And I thought, Wait a minute. I have a conflict here. This is a problem. This isn't feminist. I mean, I'm supposed to give you money to [free someone who stole] a woman's pocketbook? I think I did it, but I felt very conflicted. It was an interesting group.

55:00

ANDERSON: I bet.

LOVE: In that group, white men were at the bottom, and then white women were second to the bottom, and then blacks were higher, and the transsexuals and transvestites were at the top, politically, in this group. And so they were the important people, and as you got down, we were near the bottom. And they were more women than we were because they chose to be women. So they were more important women than we

were. It was a really, really interesting time, really interesting time — the Gay Liberation Front.

ANDERSON: Yeah, it sounds like it, it sounds like it. I'm going to have to pause the tape right there, okay?

LOVE: Okay.

55:40

END TAPE 1

TAPE 2

ANDERSON: All right.

LOVE: Did you see what time it was when you were in there?

ANDERSON: I didn't, but I'm sure we're fine. We'll just do this hour. Do you want to check? Do you feel nervous about it?

LOVE: Yeah, let me just check to see. (break in recording)

ANDERSON: All right, even though it's more interesting perhaps. Well, it's always intertwined, isn't it?

LOVE: Yeah, it is.

ANDERSON: My advisor was Blanche Cook for my PhD, and one of the greatest contributions I think she made to our understanding of women in politics is how intertwined our personal lives and our political lives always are. And so that brings me to the first book you did with –

LOVE: Sidney Abbot.

ANDERSON: *Sappho*, which was with your first long-term love, or at least that's how you've described her on paper to me.

LOVE: Did I? Long term? Well, I don't know how long term it was.

ANDERSON: Well, I said significant partnerships, and Sidney was the first that you put down.

LOVE: It was significant, very significant in terms of our political work together. We were joined very much in our early work at GLF and Radicalesbians, and everything else that we did. In fact, we were known so much together that one time I came to a dance without her, and somebody yelled out, "Oh, here come Barbara and Sidney without Sidney." (laughs) I thought that was a riot, because we were, like, always together, during important years, including writing the book *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman*, which wasn't easy to do. I wouldn't recommend writing a book with somebody else.

ANDERSON: Yeah, how did that work as a process?

LOVE: Not well. (laughs) We decided sort of on an outline, and she'd take a chapter and I'd take a chapter, and we'd write it by ourselves, and then give it to the other person to rewrite. Of course, this went on and on and on, as long you could imagine, you know, writing, and then back and forth. Certain things — we'd say, No, that's got to stay, and the other

one would say, No, it's going. It was a little bit hard. We were writing on the eleventh floor of the building — we had a little room up there separate from the apartment — and [the manuscript] got thrown out the window once. (laughs) And then another time, the dog ate much of it. So, you know, there was a lot of work being done on that.

ANDERSON: So you kept rewriting and rewriting.

LOVE: Sasha ate one, yeah — one of the versions. But we finally got it pretty much to our liking, and I'm very proud of that book.

ANDERSON: What was the origin? How did the two of you cook this up? You said, Gee, there's nothing to read out here? Or did you have a point that you wanted to make?

LOVE: I think we were so high on our newfound identity and pride and understanding, which was just totally taking over our minds and our lives, just talking and thinking. We were in a very important CR group I had formed. Well, let's see, we started it — we were definitely still with Radicalesbians when we started it — the book — but we continued when we left, because, as I told you, that was against our thinking or politics. So then I decided — and I'm just going to digress a little bit. I decided that we ought to have a CR group that had more — what should I say? — expanded thinking and other kinds of approaches to feminism and the world. So I had a group; it was my idea. The first group had us from Radicalesbians, people from Gay Liberation Front, people from Columbia Women's Liberation, people from DOB, and anybody that wanted to join.

So what happened was, everybody said, I am going to join your CR group. Because we were open to everybody and not just Radicalesbians. And what happened was, we said, We have no room, but we'll have another group. And there were 28 groups. Everybody wanted to join, so we said, Okay, you can be the next group, and here's someone to help you start it. So that was great.

So these CR groups for lesbians definitely was where we were exploring all these ideas. And it just made us realize that somehow or other, we've got to explain to my mother (laughs) and the world what we're going through, and how we're moving from oppression to liberation. That's not easy to explain in a few words. It took a book and a lot more to discuss the various facets of this. So it's sort of psychological and sociological — the book.

I was also, at the time, getting my master's degree in psychology, so some of that was coming in there, too. Then I was going out with somebody, Linda Clarke, who later went with Kate Millett. She was a very interesting person. She was going to save the planet at the time, but she hasn't done that, but she's a good person still. So anyway, she was a big reader, Linda Clarke, and I was having a relationship — well, I wasn't at this moment, but anyway, I did later.

5:00

She got me reading Gandhi and Erik Erikson, and all that, so there are some of those ideas of the power of the individual in there, too. But the whole thing was to take through how terrible it was, and how you could change the world and rethink and redo yourself. And in the end, lesbians come out as heroes. We're not there yet, we're not — But my thinking was, we're ahead still there. We're maybe never going to get there but —

I remember in 1974, at an American Psychological [Association] conference in Chicago, I was on a panel, and I did a paper called "Lesbians as Role Models for Healthy Adult Women." In our minds, we were pretty ahead of the time. In fact, that wouldn't even be acceptable today. (laughs) And I don't think it's as meaningful today because women don't have the oppressed roles that they had then. At that time it was appropriate because women were like children more, in the way they were treated, and that's not true today. So it doesn't mean anything today, but at that time it had some meaning.

So it was really an effort by both of us to kind of capture this excitement and revelation that we were truly not only acceptable but heroes. We were so excited, we had to capture this and explain it. I mean, we were doing outrageous things. I mean, I was. I mean, kissing at intersections, and doing all these things. I had matches on my table that were, like, lesbian symbols, and my mother came and visited me, and she said, "Darling, do you have to do that? Isn't that a little too much?" I mean, you know, we were full of ourselves.

I think the book — I know — reached a lot of people who weren't having this experience that we were having. And then some people — like one of my favorite people, who inspired me through her music, Margie Adam. Oh, I love Margie Adam, and I remember listening to — over and over again — "The Unicorn Song." Do you know "The Unicorn Song"?

ANDERSON: Mm-hmm. She just sang it at our conference in September.

LOVE: Oh yes, she did. And I was up there and spent some time with her. That song is for all people who are like outcasts, or trying to feel good about themselves. "My best friend lives inside of me." Remember that part? So I loved Margie Adam even though I didn't know her. I had all her records and everything. And then we talked about the book, *Feminists Who Changed America*, and she was so excited to hear from me. She had memorized passages from my book. She says it's because of me that she's doing all these wonderful songs for women. She said that, and I said, "That's a little much, Margie." I mean, it wasn't me. I mean, come on. But we have a mutual thing.

ANDERSON: Oh, that's great.

LOVE: And because of her, I drew a lot of inspiration from music. Music played an important role, certainly, for the lesbian community, because

most of them were lesbians. And other women don't know what we're talking about. Or even now they're like, I don't know, the women's music — what is that? And yet it was so inspirational. It still is, but it's gotten a little broader audience. On the other hand, it's still limited.

So I realized it had an incredible effect on people to just see a book. It was the first nonfiction book with a positive view of lesbian lifestyle, and even beat Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's book by about six months. Theirs was quite different, and it came out of DOB, and we didn't, but their book is terribly important. Their lives are terribly important.

Anyway, we did this book, and I'm very proud of it. And I realize that certain people — they tell me their stories of how it helped them in their lives, and I realize it's an accomplishment. I couldn't even understand at the time how important it was. One woman told me she took it to court every day when she was fighting for custody of her son. He was a young boy — he was about seven — and he wanted to be with his mother so much. And the court wouldn't let him testify because he was too young. And her older son testified against her because her ex-husband bought him a car. Of course, she was the perfect mother, she was a Girl Scout leader, she was a nurse, she loved this kid. And she lost her child. And she said just sort of for support she read — every day she brought the book with her to court. And it's like, oh God, this is amazing. She eventually lost everything: all her money with the lawyers, her lover, and her car was repossessed. A horrible ending, but it meant so much to her. I mean, I heard these stories.

10:00

ANDERSON: Do you still hear them? Do people still tell you stories about finding the book?

LOVE: My partner Donna Smith and I were at a party in Westchester, and a lot of people I didn't know. They were mostly her friends; she's from Westchester. Some woman came up to me, a nice looking woman, and said, I'm so-and-so, what's your name? I said, "Barbara Love." And she said, "*The Barbara Love? The Barbara Love?*" I said, "What do you mean?" "Did you write *Sappho*?" Of course my friends are like, What the hell? This woman is, like, gaga-eyed, and she falls to the ground, and she kisses my feet. I'm like, Oh please, please. And then she went around the whole party: Do you know who this is? Do you know who this is? Yeah, she's Barbara Love, she's my friend. What's the big deal? She said, "No, no — " Anyway, that kind of shocked me.

ANDERSON: So it still happens.

LOVE: Yeah, occasionally.

ANDERSON: Yeah, 35 years later.

LOVE: Old timers who knew at the time, or younger, who read that book and they're coming out — Of course, remember, I was 30 or something. I wish I could say — something like that, I can't remember. But yeah, it meant a lot to a lot of people, and I think it's probably the greatest accomplishment of my life and always will be. Although this other book, [*Feminists Who Changed America*] which is very different, means a lot to a lot of people.

ANDERSON: Right, it does, and I want to talk about that, but I don't want to do that yet. In my rereading of the book, I was struck by all the anonymity. Right?

LOVE: Oh yeah.

ANDERSON: So I'm trying to piece together — I'm thinking, Well, how much of this is Barbara's story, how much of this is Sidney's story, how much is it culled from other people?

LOVE: Well, that's interesting.

ANDERSON: So how autobiographical is it? And how did you figure out what to include?

LOVE: Well, there were little anecdotes spread through there, and they were ours, but we chose not to identify ourselves at all in the book. I don't know, that was part of the attitude at the time, too. It would have felt too egotistical, I guess, to put in our own stories. It wasn't a biography; it was more an analysis. There was only one chapter where people were involved, and that was a very different chapter for the whole book because it wasn't analytical at all, it was a history of NOW — the chapter "The Mirage," it's called, "Mirage." To protect people — because this was still a time when jobs would be in jeopardy, and so on — we just used titles. But then years later, everybody that we did that to — mostly Dolores Alexander and Ivy Bottini — said, You can use our names. But we never rewrote the book. It's still the way it was originally. We didn't rewrite it ever.

ANDERSON: Yeah. And there's some people — they are identified by names. Not around the NOW and lesbian stuff, but every once in a while there is a name. Kate Millett, I think — something about the bisexuality. So there are some things that are in there.

LOVE: That was out there in *Time* magazine. That was out there.

ANDERSON: Because it was public, yeah. But then mostly anonymity, which certainly reflects the time.

LOVE: Yeah. Later on they said, You can use our names, but I didn't go back and rewrite it.

ANDERSON: I was just more trying to think how much of this is your story, particularly the first half: this is what it used to be like before liberation.

LOVE: Well, that was sort of everybody's story. You know, we all were together at the bars, and we all were feeling bad, and that was sort of everybody's story.

ANDERSON: But yours too.

LOVE: Yeah, sure.

ANDERSON: How did your family react to the book?

LOVE: Well, the book I don't think is — I think that they reacted when they found out I was a lesbian.

ANDERSON: On the news? Was that how they found out?

LOVE: No, they didn't find that out on the news for some reason. Maybe they didn't watch *NBC Nightly News*. They didn't find out then. I don't know. That was in November of — whatever it was. I can't remember. Nineteen-seventy, or something.

15:00

At Christmastime, I always went out to New Jersey and had sort of a Christmas Eve event with dinner, and opened some gifts. That was a big thing because in Denmark, [my father's homeland,] they did some more in the evening, and a ritual where we threw glasses in the fire and drank whatever. So I told them I wasn't going to be there for Christmas Eve, and that was a big deal, more than Christmas Day. I came out very late in the evening, and they didn't know at that time, I guess, because when they did find out I was a lesbian, I wasn't invited around for eleven years. So they didn't know at that point. And when I came in that night, I had wax all over me because I was with a group then, Quakers, and I was the grand marshal and one of the organizers of this group, which was Nonviolent Solutions to Gay Liberation, with the Quaker church [and we had candles with us when we marched.] That's where I met Linda Clarke, who was this big influence on me.

So I came [to my parents' house], and [Douglas, my older brother] said, "Well, where were you? You weren't here. Where were you?" I said, "Well, I was on a march for gay liberation with the Quakers through the Village." A big march. There were about 500 people there, pretty good size, and then we had food. Because I realized that I would not have a home at Christmas Eve if they had known I was a lesbian — and it was true after that — but I realized a lot of people already didn't. They were people that were homeless at Christmas

because they couldn't relate to [their families]. And so we had that dinner afterwards. It was very nice, it was sort of a potluck dinner.

So anyway, I was still invited home, but I didn't want to go. So I went and I told my older brother, [Douglas,] the one I mentioned earlier who doesn't like my politics and didn't want me around. My father didn't either. Anyway, I told him I was a lesbian, and he said, "You're on a sinking ship. You better get off." He couldn't use the word *lesbian*. That was too much. So I said, "Douglas, you don't understand. I *am* the ship." (laughs) I thought that was pretty good. Anyway, I was persona non grata after that.

So that — they heard about that before the book. I don't even know — We weren't even talking for eleven years, so how would I know what they thought about the book? It was interesting. My stepsister went to Skidmore, and she had to read the book in her course. Her mother didn't want me in the state of New Jersey, but her daughter had to read the book. (chuckles) So that was good.

ANDERSON: But your mother came around, right?

LOVE: My mother actually came around. They were divorced, so she was someplace else, and she was very, very, very good to me. It took her a year by herself. And that's why I was one of the founders of Parents of Gays [now PFLAG, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays], with Morty Manford and his mother, because we realized our parents had nobody to talk to. My mother was all alone. She wasn't going to talk to her husband [about it], she wasn't going to talk to her kids, she wasn't going to talk to her neighbors. Come on, they should talk to each other. That was it. So that was the founding of that, and now they're — I don't know — I think they were up to 1,600 chapters.

ANDERSON: Oh, that's amazing.

LOVE: And it's such a liberating experience for parents, because they quickly learn that they didn't do anything wrong, and that their kids are wonderful. Some of these parents of gays are awesome. I mean, they're just so proud of their kids. In fact, I met somebody up here, the Rolnicks up in Connecticut, Jean and Jerry Rolnick, in Parents of Gays. They have a daughter in San Francisco, and the mother told me, she said, "Every time I meet somebody and they say, 'Do you have any children?'" She would say, "Yes, I have a lesbian daughter out in California." And they'd say, "Oh, you didn't have to tell me that." And she'd say, "Yes, I do, I do." So these are the parents who are good, right-on.

ANDERSON: So it just took your mom a year, and then you were close again?

LOVE: It took my mom a year, and then she said — I told her about the march — it was the second gay pride march — and that we were going to

20:00

march — Morty and his mother and myself — and she said, “I’m going to march too.” And she did. It was wonderful because the women were like, Oh, I wish you were my mother, I wish you were my mother! It was just — oh, it was wonderful. My mother felt so good about that. And I did too. She was great.

ANDERSON: So did she stay connected intimately with the rest of your life?

LOVE: No. She lived on the shore, and she couldn’t come to our meetings in New York, it was just too much for her. But she kept the book on her coffee table. No, it wasn’t that book. She had *Our Right to Love*, which I had a chapter in, on matriarchy [“The Answer Is Matriarchy,” coauthored with Elizabeth Shanklin] — that was another thing — that was in there, and *Our Right to Love*, or something. I always thought that was kind of brave because I thought they made a mistake in the book by — it was a very good book, by Ginny Vida, but it did have in there some pictures of some explicit sexual behavior among women. I thought that was not good — for my mother to have that on her coffee table. I didn’t think that was so good.

ANDERSON: But your mother thought that was all right? (laughs)

LOVE: Well, I thought I’d rather have us just cheering and happy, you know? But I did give it to my mother, and she was happy to have it.

ANDERSON: So the book — you talked about how it was received, the origins of it, the impact on your family. How did you guys find a publisher? Was it hard?

LOVE: Yeah, it was hard. But a company called Stein & Day had done a book by Pete Fisher, on men, on gay liberation, and we had a friend who was connected somehow with Stein & Day, a woman named Nath Rockhill [a leader in the gay movement], and she got them interested, got them to take it, and that was very good. So we had a friend and she helped us. And they were great to take it on.

We didn’t like the cover they proposed — Sidney was more adamant than I was — and we came up with another cover. We did want a certain image: of a strong woman in dungarees, with a lyre, and big, strong bold type. I think I have (gets up to find the book) — Here, this one. (holds up book) We wanted this cover, and we got it: *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman* (written in large type on the book’s cover). We got it. But of course they dumped it as soon as they could, and put on this icky cover of these two little femme types, with rings, with this script type. (holds up paperback copy of the book with a different cover) They did this like (roars with disgust) — that’s what they did.

ANDERSON: Yeah, yeah.

- LOVE: Because authors don't have control of their covers, you know?
- ANDERSON: Right.
- LOVE: Unfortunately. And sometimes even the title.
- ANDERSON: Who picked the title?
- LOVE: Well, we did. It was our title, and they took that title, but I know some authors that have gotten screwed by titles that didn't really reflect their book in the way they wanted to. But anyway. That's how the book got out there.
- ANDERSON: And did it catapult you into a different leadership or visibility position within the movement?
- LOVE: No, not really. They never did any advertising. That book has never been advertised, and it's still in print — amazing. It was word of mouth, really big-time word of mouth. People were really kind of afraid to buy it.
- ANDERSON: Sure.
- LOVE: *A Liberated View of Lesbianism?* My God, that word was out there. Ooh, I cannot buy this book. I'd better hide it, you know. But that was on there: *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman: A Liberated View of Lesbianism*. No, I don't think it — I didn't feel — I know it had an impact on people I didn't even know, but among the people I did know, I don't know that they were very impressed. All the people I know are authors anyway. (laughs)
- ANDERSON: Right. You probably got some more visibility in the movement because of that.
- LOVE: Yeah, a little bit. Sidney did a tour of the country. I didn't. I was working at the time. I was on a couple of shows. I was on Barbara Walters, and that was still, you know, a little scary being out there in the media. (telephone rings) Oh, I guess I didn't unplug it. (pause in recording)
- ANDERSON: You were just saying that you were on a couple of shows.
- LOVE: Oh, I was talking about Barbara Walters. And I thought, Oh my gosh, now I'm going to get stoned, and whatever. You know, I was fearful still, a little bit, but I did it. Somebody on a bus recognized me, and I thought, Oh boy. She said, "Didn't I see you? Were you on the Barbara Walters show this morning?" I said, "Yeah, I was. What did you think

25:00

of it?" She said, "I thought you should have had a haircut." (laughs) I thought, Oh great, that's what people pay attention to.

ANDERSON: Right. Well, at least she wasn't going to beat you up. (laughs)

LOVE: It was funny.

ANDERSON: So let's talk about Houston before we talk about your last book. I want to know what it was like, how you ended up going, writing the lesbian plank, all of the –

LOVE: Houston. Well, you know, I was only half there. I was a delegate, first of all, appointed by Jean O'Leary. Actually it wasn't Jean O'Leary, it was Midge Costanza, but Jean O'Leary was telling Midge Costanza to do it because I didn't know Midge Costanza. Sidney had run for that, and I tried to help her get elected to be a delegate from New York State, and she didn't make it. So I felt really bad that I was appointed by Jean O'Leary, she wanted me to be there, so I was a New York State delegate, and that was fine.

I wasn't in any of the leadership roles out there. As a matter of fact, I was really torn, because I was with this woman, [my partner] named Elizabeth Shanklin, and we had been doing things in matriarchy together, which was always a conflict. We had a newspaper and we had these ideas — and that's a whole other thing — which were very revolutionary, for a nurturing society. It was wonderful stuff. I still think it's needed today, but she's not carrying it on.

So we were out there together, Liz and I, and living together in Houston, and we were having meetings on the street with matriarchists who wanted to meet us there. So I was in this [IWY convention], and she was out there, and at night we weren't with the people organizing. So I didn't have much of a role. It was very, very strange how things happened there. I did call the question on the lesbian issue. I said, "I'm a proud lesbian from the state of New York, and I call the question." Which was heartbreaking to Eleanor Holmes Norton, who was right behind me and said, "Wait a minute. I'm going to speak." I said, "No, I've been told to call the question, so I did."

I wasn't going to the organizing meetings. I went to some of the big meetings where all the lesbians were, that were on the balcony, and all the lesbians, some of the other delegates — they weren't like the core four or five people, like Charlotte Bunch and some of the key people. I was not one of those people because I was, like, so ambivalent. And at night, I was unavailable; I was with Liz.

So I was going to these meetings, and they'd talk about the balloons [we would let loose] when [our resolution was] passed. I said, "Well, how is it going to pass? I mean, balloons, you know — where's the strategy here?" Charlotte wasn't at these meetings, and I thought, It's not happening here, this is not where it's at, forget it. So I was kind of alone there, and I said, "I'm just going to sit down [in the auditorium]

and talk about the lesbian issue [when our resolution is introduced]. I don't know a thing that's going on, but I'm going to get to speak. So I'm going to go sit down by a microphone, and when the lesbian issue comes up" — there were, like, 26 planks. We were 13 or something — "I'm going to speak, that we need our rights."

So I just went and left these people who were — like, this is monkey business. I sat by myself, about an hour early to get by a mike, because the mike was, like, as close to me as this pillow. You know, I sat right here, and the mike was right there, and I thought, I'm going to get the mike when I want it, to talk about the lesbian thing. So I'm sitting there all by myself; I'm the only person in the hall. Some woman came up to me and said, "That seat's reserved." I said, "I'm the only person in here. This is for thousands of people. What are you talking about?" She said, "That's reserved." I said, "No." She said, "You have to move." And I said no. We were the only two people in there. So I don't know what the hell is going on. I said, "There's nothing here that says reserved, and I want to be here." She said, "What do you want to be there for?" I said, "Well, I want to talk for the lesbian issue." And she said, "Oh, then you're" — whatever it was, pro-plank or — I forget what we called ourselves. Well, yeah, yeah. And she said, "You can stay there. I'll tell you what to do." Oh. What's going on here?

30:00

Well, apparently, you know, they had some control of the microphones. (laughs) I was the first to the microphone every single time, and they said, We'll tell you who's to speak. So I did this for a while, and then they sent me to another microphone and told me, On this poverty issue, so-and-so is supposed to speak. So so-and-so would come to me, and of course this was this line of other people that never got to speak unless I let them speak, but this was happening all over the place. So I sort of fell into this strategy, and I was there after Betty Friedan spoke. And then I was told, Barbara, you're to call the question. I said, "Okay, I'm taking my orders, I'm just a little cog in this big wheel." Anyway, it was quite interesting. I had my matriarchy t-shirt on when I called the question, so I was, again, mixed-up and confused in my identity. I keep this mixed-up identity with me all the time.

So I didn't have much of a role, but I was sitting with Dolores, and I hope she talked about going up and talking to Betty about speaking. I hope she explained that, because that was like — I was sitting with Dolores, and she said she was going to talk to Betty about speaking on the lesbian issue, and I said, "Dolores, you are nuts! She hates it, she is not going to speak." I'm like, "What are you, crazy?" And she said, "I know Betty, I understand her." I don't know whether she ever talked about this, but she did know Betty, and she knew how to work it out. And so when it happened, I was like, Whoa. But then I look back, and I see the thinking that went on in terms of, she could support the issue if it wasn't going to hurt the ERA, and that's what it was. It was not an apology though.

But anyway, that's what happened out there. I did not have a significant role in all this big stuff, but I did have kind of a funny little role. (laughs)

ANDERSON: And you were simultaneously working on this matriarchy stuff.

LOVE: Yeah. We were selling newspapers –

ANDERSON: You were doing a newspaper?

LOVE: – signing up people. We had a newspaper called the *Matriarchist*, and we put out a lot of issues and distributed them in conferences and whatever. I was the cofounder, with Elizabeth Shanklin, of the Matriarchist Foundation, which now, when I see organizations of the period — and they're up in the New York Public Library or this — and they put all this — and they'd always have the *Matriarchist*, and I think, Wow, that was just Liz and I and a few friends.

ANDERSON: And what did the foundation do?

LOVE: Well, we had a big conference that was very good called "Forum on the Future," which was a really big deal. As a matter of fact, I want to get the tapes to the Sophia Smith Collection.

ANDERSON: Yeah, good.

LOVE: We had everybody speaking on the future there. We had Flo Kennedy and Ti-Grace and Robin Morgan and — I don't know. We had Susan Brown, and everybody you could think of. Even Midge Costanza [an advisor to President Jimmy Carter at the time] was there. Midge wasn't coming. I called the White House, and I said, "We're having this forum on the future where all these feminists are going to speak, and it's going to be a big event." It was a big event, and Elizabeth and I planned it. And I was told [Costanza] has another engagement on that day, and she is not coming. So then Jean O'Leary, who was a speaker — she called me and said, "Is Midge coming?" I said, "No, she can't come. I've already checked the White House, and they said she has another engagement." Jean said, "She'll be there." I said, "Jean, she's not going to be there, she's got another engagement." I said, "And we're doing the program tonight, with who's going to be speaking." She said, "Well, put her on as speaking." I said, "I can't do that, she's not coming." "Yes, she'll be there. I guarantee it." So anyway, Midge Costanza's office called the next day: Midge will be there. (laughs) So I thought, Okay. Well, all right. Who's running this White House?

So we did that: we did a conference, we did newspapers, we wrote a couple of chapters in books on mothering — and I think that's one up here (indicating the bookcase) — and *Our Right to Love*, and did some panels and things like that. We did some good work, and I was all

for it and mesmerized by these ideas, which I still think are brilliant in terms of a society that was nurturing, which is what we need because we have a death culture now with everything. But people didn't understand it because they thought matriarchy was just women being the same oppressive, horrible people that patriarchy has been, and it's not. I mean, from Liz's point of view, it's entirely different: it's the nurturers, it's just the opposite. But nobody saw that, or could understand it, and people would say, You have to use another word. And [Liz would] say, "I can't use another word."

So anyway, I got into this, and I was speaking about it, and then I was asked, as a lesbian, to speak at a group in New Jersey, but I was totally into matriarchy. Liz said, "Why don't you speak on matriarchy?" And I said, "Sure, but I feel uncomfortable speaking on matriarchy. You know, you're the one who — I'm really following your lead, and I think it's wonderful, and I'm like a disciple." I wasn't like — So then she said, "Well, then I should speak." I said, "Fine, but they want me to speak. They don't want you to speak." She said, "Well, I want to be there." I said, "I feel very uncomfortable with you being there." I said, "I'll give credit to you for everything, but they want me to speak." So anyway, that caused a big uproar. She accused me of stealing matriarchy. I said, "Forget it. I'm never going to do it again, forget it." It was terrible. Of course it was terrible because the lesbians did not want to hear about matriarchy. It was the worst speech I ever gave, and it was like, Get rid of this woman. (laughs) So anyway, it was colorful, not very meaningful.

ANDERSON: So in the 1980s and '90s, did you stay really connected to the women's movement, the gay movement?

LOVE: No, I didn't. I was into my career mostly, and didn't do much else. I was trying to earn a living and prepare for my retirement, and whatever. So no, I didn't do much for quite a while in those years.

And then it was about ten years ago now that I thought — One of my friends said to me, "Oh, I did this, and I did that, and nobody will remember." And I thought, Yeah, nobody will remember what you did, or what anybody else did. I started thinking about it: who's going to be remembered in history? And I thought, Well, the authors will be remembered. They will certainly remember Kate Millett and Betty Friedan. I said, "You know, they won't even remember who the presidents of NOW were — the presidents of NOW, the women's national organization. Who's going to remember Wilma Scott Heide? Who's going to remember — I mean, Aileen Hernandez, even? They're not going to know these people. My word. What about all the people at the state level — that they were state officers? And what about all these people that didn't even belong to organizations? Who risked their lives to run abortion clinics, or had radical newspapers, or provided sanctuary for women who were treated violently?" I said, "No one's going to

remember them. Somebody ought to do something about that. Maybe I'll do it." So I didn't have a great beginning.

ANDERSON: That is a great beginning.

LOVE: I know, I said, "I'll do it," but then I realized I was incapable of doing it. I started collecting things. I had problems with the technology, and I thought, Oh my God, I need to learn how to do a database. So I went to some seminar on databases and thought, Oh my God, technology is like — Database, they said, yes, it's easy, it's just like filing. And I thought, I don't know how to file, I'm out of here. (laughs) It was so true, so I left that. Anyway, I couldn't get anybody to help me. The only person I got to help me at first was some woman who — all she wanted was a free lunch, and she didn't really want to do anything. Terrible. It just was beyond me.

ANDERSON: It was a huge research task.

LOVE: It was. I got some very nice woman who didn't know me at all, from NOW, who agreed to input. I gave her a portable computer and she input a lot of stuff that I did have. Jacqui Ceballos from Veteran Feminists of America gave me her handwritten lists; she didn't even have them in a computer. So she was putting these in. But that wasn't enough, and I was kind of depressed for a little while there — about two years.

And then I got a call from Muriel Fox Aronson, who, interestingly enough — I did another book that we didn't even mention, called *Foremost Women in Communications*, which was in 1970. I was at CBS at the time, and that was a professional book, because no women were recognized in the professions at that time for what they were doing. So that was an important book, and Muriel had been my mentor. She got all these people to be on my advisory board, people that I'd never heard of, and they let me use their names and their pictures — people like Arlene Francis and Bess Myerson Grant — big names like that. She got all these people for me, which was wonderful. Barbara Walters was another one. Anyway, until she found out I was a lesbian, and then the thing was over. And then we didn't talk for a long time.

But anyway, sure enough she comes back to be my mentor again [almost four decades later]. I didn't want to answer the phone; she called four times. Donna kept saying, "Muriel called again, Muriel called again." I thought, Well, all right, I had better answer her phone calls. I didn't want to tell her I had done nothing — nothing — on this book. And she said, "Oh no, no, it's wonderful what you're doing, and I want to find you some help. Do you need some help?" I said, "Yeah, I don't have any help at all." She said, "Well, how about Heather Booth?" Heather Booth — she'd help me? And Grace Welch, who I knew was a great organizer on the island [Long Island]; Judith Meuli, who is very famous, one of the founders of the Feminist Majority and an

40:00

organizer — she just recently passed away — an organizer in Los Angeles. And Ginny Watkins, who was a secretary of VFA [Veteran Feminists of America] and an organizer out in Minnesota. “And they’ll all help you,” she said. I thought, Wow, okay. How can I say no? And I got started again.

VFA got behind it in a big way. And it was really with the VFA’s help that it worked, because then they did networking, and we did pioneer — get a pioneer, and it was all networking, and it started gelling from there on. And when the VFA was behind it — we never had a written agreement, nothing legal. We started to do that, and it just wasn’t working, so we just went on goodwill. And it’s been wonderful goodwill ever since. They get some royalties from the book, and they supported it, and I’m thrilled. So I call it a partnership; they sometimes call it their book. I don’t care, it’s fine. It’s our book. I mean, it was all my money and everything, but that’s okay, money is not everything. They provided tremendous resources. And then other things came on board. Muriel got Nancy Cott from Harvard to do the foreword [for the book].

ANDERSON: That’s great.

LOVE: I would have gotten Sara Evans, but anyway. She got Nancy Cott, and Nancy Cott is great.

She stayed with it — Muriel. And then good things started to happen, because then Muriel wrote a letter to get me some money from people. I wasn’t going to do that. I didn’t want it to look like a vanity project, so I was just going to use whatever money I had from my mother, or whatever, to do this. People sent me money, people I’ve never heard of, and big names, like Peg Yorkin. Whoa, wow! Peg Yorkin sent me money? She didn’t even know me. So people believed in the project. So that was great.

And then once we got Nancy Cott at Harvard, and then we had this. Then the next good thing was the University of Illinois Press, but that was, like, 27 publishers I had to go to.

ANDERSON: Wow.

LOVE: Yeah. Feminism is dead. We don’t take directories, we don’t have any money, you need to raise your own money to do it — that was The Feminist Press. They don’t have any money, you have to do it yourself. I thought, Well, what good is that? I’m trying to get a publisher who could –

ANDERSON: Right.

LOVE: So finally, in the end, New York University Press and University of Illinois Press were very interested, and they both sent me contracts, and I thought, Wow, now I even have a choice.

ANDERSON: That's great.

LOVE: They were both — they were very excited. After I chose University of Illinois Press — I chose the night before I had to make the decision, because I had a deadline with them. I think it was NYU who said, You have to tell us by Friday, or something. What I did was, to decide who to go to, I went through the book in my computer, in a search, to see what University of Illinois Press — what people were there that were actually in the book, and there were quite a few. And who was with New York University, and there were hardly any — very, very, very, very few. So that was one thing.

Then I called people who had dealt with both, and telephoned them. I talked to a couple of authors at both, and how they were treated. They were both treated well. And then I went on the Web sites, and I did not like NYU. They didn't have women's studies, they had gender. I didn't like that, I'm sorry. I think gender is a loss for us. I mean, now we're back to men. Look, who was it that said — Gerder Lerner: "We've had 500 years of men. Can't we even have 50 years of women?" No. Gender. We're back to male studies again; that's the big thing. But anyway, forget about that. I have my issues with that.

I'm totally losing track –

45:00

ANDERSON: No, we were talking about the press that you selected and why you selected it.

LOVE: Oh, and then I saw gender studies, and I went on, and there was a woman with a gun. And I thought, Oh no, no, no, forget about that. I told this guy Eric — I told him why I didn't choose them, and he said, "Do we get another chance?" I said, "No, I'm sorry, I made a commitment." I told him about the woman with the gun, and he said, "But that was Jane Fonda." I thought, Oh well. But anyway, there were other reasons.

ANDERSON: How did you decide who to put in the book? Did you have an editorial board that made those decisions collectively, or was that your choice?

LOVE: It was all my choices, because I broadened significantly my definition of the women's movement by including, you know, poets and musicians and sports heroes. I mean, they all contributed to the change in culture, in my mind. So if they sent me something, and they did something — My criteria was that they had to do something for others, not just themselves. So if they were the first policewoman, or the first this or the first this, they didn't get in. That wasn't what I was looking for. I was looking for people who did something to change the world; who at least worked for organizations or wrote things or created something. I think there's only one person that got in there somehow that didn't meet

that criteria, but that was my criteria. They didn't have to do a whole lot, but they had to do something for others.

And it was more complicated than that because sometimes people didn't give me enough information, or I couldn't reach people that should have been in there. But I worked really hard. I went through a lot of books at the time, underlined the people that were in them and tried to find them. So the people that just didn't come in — I really hounded some of them. I even blackmailed some of them. They said, Oh, I'm not writing anything, I don't have time. I have books, and my biographies are in books, and I'm famous, and get it off the Web site, and goodbye. I said, "I'm sorry. The criteria says you have to do this, it has to be your words, and that's the way it is. If you're going to be in this book, you have to —" So then, what I would do is take all the stuff I could find and write up a biography. Because you have symbols in the book saying "approved" or "not approved," so I could put it in as not approved, because I could not [not] have them in. Phyllis Chesler said, "I don't want to be in your book." I said, "Well, you're going to have to be in the book because I can't leave you out."

ANDERSON: And it just says "not approved"?

LOVE: It said "not approved." So I showed her what I was going to say, and like everybody else I did this to, she said, "Oh no, no. You can't say that, that's not right. You've got to say this, you've got to say this, and this is what you've got to do." So in the end, it's approved. In the end, she approved it. And that's what happened a lot.

ANDERSON: And you backed everybody into it.

LOVE: When I said, "Here's what we're going to say about you," they said, Oh no, no, no, and then they would do it. So it worked, really, like a charm. (laughs) That always worked.

I had an assistant for two years who came and did all the clerical work because I said I didn't like to file. I never filed. She always did all the filing. Without her — she kept everything organized, and it was tremendous record keeping, because you can imagine: things coming in, then I had to read them and approve them to go further, then to go to an editor. It then had to be sent back, and then I had to go over it again, and then it had to go to a copy editor to be finished off so that it had the same style as everything else. Then it had to go to the person for approval, then it had to come back, then they had changes they all made, then it had to go back and — oh my God.

ANDERSON: Oh yeah, it's enormous.

LOVE: The record keeping was enormous. How did I get off on this?

ANDERSON: I don't know.

LOVE: This is boring, but it was humongous. And how did I choose them? Well, the ones that lived through the process, and as many as we could find. I feel very badly now for people that we couldn't find, because they deserve to be included. I'm still collecting biographies.

ANDERSON: Oh, you are?

LOVE: They'll be at the Sophia Smith Collection anyway, probably in a different color folder, but there will be an asterisk or something. Hopefully — I'm told by the University of Illinois Press that they'll seamlessly integrate it into an Internet version, which I'm really pushing for, but they don't quite get it, why that's important. They haven't done anything like it before.

50:00

ANDERSON: Yeah, that seems like it would be really important.

LOVE: They haven't done anything like it before. They're doing something like it in the music business, and that's their first little test. And they say they'll do it, but, you know, I could be dead by the time it happens. I think it's important to have on the Internet.

ANDERSON: Yeah, absolutely.

LOVE: And I keep telling them, "Look, it's good for you. You'll sell books, too. Put it on the Internet, and people will have these bios." But I don't know. They said when the book stops selling. I said, "This book will never stop selling. This is a history book. When is it going to stop selling?"

ANDERSON: Right, right. Well, now it will get picked up by courses and everything. So we've just got about ten minutes left. I trust that with the publication of this book, you've been doing much more speaking. I know life has been pretty full.

LOVE: Oh, a lot!

ANDERSON: So tell me what that's been like, and what it's been like for you to —

LOVE: Oh, it's been awesome. It's been wonderful. First of all, I'm not a public speaker. I hate public speaking. I would have failed Public Speaking if I didn't pull some really clever antics at Purdue University where I took it. So I don't like it. The professor said, "Why do you keep your arms at your side? Why don't you move your arms? What's wrong? Did somebody slap you?" He was terrible, my public speaking professor. I said, "Oh, I don't like public speaking." And I always have nightmares before I speak, real nightmares. Like, I lost my speech; I have to go across a railroad track and a train is coming; and I'm

drowning, and I'm holding onto my speech. And I lost it. And where's the room? And this is the wrong day.

ANDERSON: So you're not enjoying this piece of it?

LOVE: No. I am not a good public speaker. But, you know something? I've had to do this, and people say I'm fine. So if people say I'm fine — You know, I'm always amazed. It's because I practice so hard, and I plan so well, and I — you know. It's been kind of my whole thing throughout life: I'm so terrified of not doing it well enough that I do it extremely well.

So I've been speaking around the country. I try not to. I try to get all the other people in the book to speak, and I just say hi and goodbye, you know, if I can do that. But sometimes I've been caught and had to actually speak, and I've done well. We've had events for the book in Cambridge, a really great one at Harvard with a reception at Schlesinger [Library] — that was nice. We had them in Philadelphia — we had a couple of events there. We had a huge event in New York, a huge event in Washington. Helen Thomas spoke at that event; she's delightful. There were three or four hundred people at the one in Washington, New York, and one in Berkeley that was huge. And one in Los Angeles, and then Tucson and then Phoenix and Provincetown and Westport, Connecticut. Quite a few events.

ANDERSON: That's a lot.

LOVE: Yeah, it's a lot. Then we're going to have another one in New York, but that one's not strictly for the book. It's VFA with [Ruth Bader] Ginsburg speaking, and that's going to be great. They want me to sell the book there, so I'll have the book. But the others were strictly book events and really big. Oh, there's another one that's going to be in Chicago, the last big place, and that's partially a book event. It's women's history month — it's in March — and they're doing an oral history project, and I just sent them a couple dozen books because they want to sell the books. So it's part of that event. Every one has been slightly different character, slightly different.

ANDERSON: Yeah, yeah.

LOVE: But the best one of all was in Oakland, where it was a lovefest, and it was a party. Margie Adams sang, and Holly Near sang, and they had a lot of performers. It was a woman's club, a woman's space [the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club], and everybody was signing everybody's books, and somebody was around taking pictures of women kissing women, and they were all doing that. It was like, wow! It was just such good vibes and dancing, and I did speak there.

As a matter of fact, I was great there, I was so turned on. Because just before I went on the stage, I was told by Boo Price, who

owns a women's club — she's a producer — and she said, "You're in show biz now." I'm in show biz now. Wow! So I got on there, and I had my little camera, put together with a Band-Aid, because it was one of these cheap little cameras, and that's all I had. I said, "All of you should be up on the stage, and I should be in the audience. I'm going to take a picture of you." And then I got so carried away with all these singers there, of course, I said, "I'm going to sing." (laughs) But I sang this Danish thing, which was a tribute to Holly and Margie and Boo, and all these people that were doing this event, and it's sort of like, Brava, brava, brava, and I had everybody sing with me. But anyway, that was the coolest event. That was cool. I loved it.

ANDERSON: It sounds great.

LOVE: So anyway, yes, there were all these events. They're kind of winding down now, but they've been very exciting. And I didn't care whether we sold the book or not, because the idea at these events is to get people back together — they get very excited about it — to honor them. And to meet with younger people where we can, and try to keep the energy and the spark going, and the enthusiasm; share experiences and ideas, and move forward. So there are so many other reasons for these events, I don't care if we sell a single book.

ANDERSON: I was thinking that you must have had a lot of interesting conversations across generations, with all of these events about the movement and about feminism.

LOVE: Yes, we have, we've tried to do that. And that's where I picked up these things where they think we're, you know, what I said: that we're not interested in sex, and so on and so on and so on.

ANDERSON: Right.

LOVE: Yeah, I picked it up, and it's hard to deal with because I can't — I don't have the time usually to talk about these nuances in the historical moment — what we were trying to do. I'm glad you provided the space to do that, because I hope some people pick up on that.

ANDERSON: So what's next?

LOVE: Oh, what's next?

ANDERSON: Now that this is wrapping up, or winding down rather — the feminist book tour. What's next?

LOVE: You know, there were some people in that book that are really unknown, that are just like — When my editor and I saw these — Wow, God, this person's led an incredible life! And, Oh my God, no

one's ever heard of — So I might do longer pieces on about 20 of them, or something. I don't know if anybody wants to read them or not, but we're going to have fun writing them. Ann Wallace, who is one of the writers — who is a great writer, and she got so involved in these others. I'm doing it for me, I guess. It might not get published, maybe no one will buy it, but I don't care. I'm having fun writing about these people, and meeting them and going to visit them, and doing the research. It gives meaning to my life, and it's fun. Again, I don't know how it will end up, but I think that's what I want to do next. And play the guitar and swim in the world championships again.

ANDERSON: Great.

LOVE: And live in Florence and live in New Zealand and live in St. Petersburg.

ANDERSON: Okay. (laughter)

LOVE: And have a dog.

ANDERSON: And have a dog, all right.

LOVE: I think that's about it.

ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you. I'm going to turn the tape off now.

58:02

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Susan Kurka, May, 2008
Edited by Sheila Flaherty-Jones, June, 2008

© Sophia Smith Collection 2008