

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women's Herstory Project

Personal Experiences

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MARTHA KATZ

Interviewed

by

Danna Bozick

on

September 27, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: MARTHA KATZ

INTERVIEWER: Danna Bozick

SUBJECT: therapist, changes in life, early ideas,
feminist ideas

DATE: September 27, 1987

B: This is an interview with Martha Katz on Women's Herstory for the Women's Resource Center in conjunction with the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. This interview is being conducted at 2220 Selma on the north side of Youngstown on Monday, September 27, 1987, at approximately 11:15 in the morning.

Martha, I was wondering if we could go back to the beginning of your work history. Maybe you can tell me a little bit about the first job that you had.

K: The first job that I had was after high school. I wanted to work during high school, but my parents would not let me. They wanted me to go to summer school and do other things instead. The first job I had was in a drugstore in Charlottesville, Virginia in the Summer of 1959.

B: Was that right after you graduated when you got your first job?

K: Yes.

B: What did you do?

K: I worked in the cosmetics department. At first, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I had always been a drugstore junkie. I always loved drugstores. It was tedious and tiresome and it was not very intellectually challenging, to put it mildly. I worked there about three months. That was it. It was a summer job, a temporary job.

B: How about that first paycheck though? Do you remember that?

- K: I do remember it. I was appalled at how small it was. I was wondering how I was going to make it last. I had been raised in a kind of unreal world about money. I did not know about the world of work. I am the first woman in my family who has ever worked full-time.
- B: That is interesting.
- K: Yes. I was raised to be a hothouse flower more or less.
- B: Is it of the southern variety?
- K: Yes. All of the women in my family are educated, but none have worked outside of the home with the exception of my sister who worked part-time. Work for women was not something that I saw as a child. My mother's friends did not work. My mother did not work. There were no role models except for a spinster great aunt who worked in the Federal Women's Reformatory in Alderson, West Virginia.
- B: What was the goal, to find a husband?
- K: The goal was to get educated and find a husband and go to college just in case, God forbid, you should ever have to support yourself. I had trouble with that even as a youngster, though I could not have articulated that. I lived in a very rarified atmosphere that was so completely different from living in this area.
- B: So you were not really encouraged to get a career or to see yourself.
- K: No. You were encouraged to see yourself . . . I was raised to be someone's wife and mother. That was the role that I was raised to fill. I knew somewhere deep inside that that was not all that I wanted to do. I wanted to teach high school English. I had a passionate love for literature as a kid. I wanted to do that. I was not sure how I was going to manage that with all the other things that were laid on me.
- B: Can you pinpoint somewhere along the line where you decided to break away from the tradition?
- K: Yes. I married a man who was not of our ethnic persuasion at just barely nineteen. I broke away in that way. I left the south. I left my family. I left the religious upbringing that I had. We moved away. I think that was an impulsive choice, but a choice nonetheless to get away from that atmosphere.
- B: By making this radical move at a very young age, you were able to in that way make the break.
- K: Yes, but it took a long time, many, many years for that

to happen. My parents were very disturbed that I had married without finishing college. I continued to take classes all along when the babies were little and as they grew up. I was almost always in school taking a class or so at a time. We moved all over the country. My husband was a young physician in training. We moved all over for his training and also spent two years in the army. I continued to go to school. One of the things that radicalized me was that I saw my husband working very, very hard. I have never seen anybody work as hard as he did. I wanted to help him out. One of my goals in going to school was to have a profession in which I could help out and make things better for him. I told him that one time. He laughed at me and said, "I can't afford to have you work."

B: I am not sure that I understand that because in his income tax bracket it would be okay.

K: That was one of the points at which I knew that my marriage was coming to an end.

B: For you it was a matter of personal desire to help and he did not see it that way.

K: I am not sure how he saw it. I think he meant that I could not make enough money to make any difference. It was dismissing. A lot of things happened in that period of time. I picked up a book by Doris Lessing in the library accidentally. I picked up her first book about Africa. This was a novel. Mary Turner, I think, was the protagonist's name. I cannot think of the name of the book now. I read the book. I loved it so much that I went to the library and got the Golden Notebook. I had never talked to a feminist before. I did not know what a feminist was. This was when I was still married. I had no idea about anything about women's rights. I was oblivious. I lived in a cocoon. I read that book. It disturbed me incredibly because I knew that I could no longer continue to live the way that I had lived. I went to school then more seriously at YSU to work toward a degree so I could really work for me, for my satisfaction as well as money.

B: You had gone to college through the years?

K: Right.

B: Had you been studying in some particular area?

K: Yes, in English. I had been working toward an English degree.

B: So you were working on that earlier dream of being a high school literature teacher.

K: Yes. The second job I had incidentally was one that one of my English teachers at the University of Virginia had asked me to do, a comparative reading of Hawthorne's The Marble Fawn, for him. He was a Hawthorne scholar. I went to the Rare Books Library and I had to read two identical copies--first editions--looking for discrepancies. I found one discrepancy in this whole, long tedious book. My teacher was wildly excited. I could remember that I liked the job. I enjoyed that job because I had been chosen for that out of class. I liked that. I enjoyed reading it. It was tedious too. I felt like I was doing something in the name of scholarship. Then I pursued that goal. At YSU I took a psychology class and I thought--I want to do that too; I want to do that very much. I finished both degrees and tried to get a job right after college. There were no jobs at the bachelor's level. Then I got an assistantship in the English department. I decided not to take that either because what I really wanted to do was to be a therapist. I got into the counseling program here at Youngstown State. I got an assistantship at the Counseling Center. I was part of that program. That was my third work experience and the most wonderful and meaningful work experience that someone could have today. I knew then that that was what I wanted to do and be.

B: What did you do as part of your assistantship?

K: I did everything. I saw individual clients. I did marital work. I did group therapy. I was encouraged to generate some stuff. I started a women's group, a women's support group. I started a women's assertiveness group. It was absolutely wonderful. It was such a good experience.

B: It sounds like you must have been doing some homework and extra reading on the side.

K: All of the time. I always have been a voracious and omnivorous reader. I have learned more about what I am trying to do from that and from colleagues and mentors than from anything that I learned in school.

B: Did you feel at any point that there were any barriers to you along the way?

K: Yes, myself.

B: Was there a struggle going on?

K: Always. First of all, I never believed that I was intelligent at all or really believed that I had anything to give. It took a long time and many years for me to feel that I really had something to offer in the world of work, that I had something that someone would actually pay money

for me to do. I was astonished that I got paid for doing something at the counseling center which I liked doing. I thought--Wow you are really getting away with something, but when they found out about you, are you in trouble! That took a long time. Part of that is that it is a woman's thing, feeling inferior and inept. Part of it was my family background that women are not to be involved in the world of work so much. We are to be more retiring and more in the background and be more behind some man rather than putting ourselves out on the front lines. It's a continuing struggle in some ways.

- B: It seems like you have gone past that struggle now. Do you think that it was an accumulation of good experiences that helped you feel good about yourself as far as work?
- K: Yes, I think so. I think that was one [part of it] that took many years. It took a long time. I have been out of graduate school now for eleven years. It was a very gradual process of feeling good about the vocation that I had chosen, feeling good about my ability to do it. It took a long time. I had a very serious car accident six and a half years ago which has been the most grave challenge that I have had in my life and I have met it well. I am satisfied with the way that I have met it. It also has helped me feel more capable and competent to deal with other things. It made me a better therapist. I don't think that there is any question that it has made me a much better therapist. Even though I have not been able to work full-time since the accident for very much of the time, I feel that I have a lot more to give as a result of having lived through and [am] still living through that experience. It has also given me tremendous confidence. I can model for other people that you can go through very difficult times and survive them. You can find ways to cope with them.
- B: Could you tell me a little bit about the job that you do now? You talk about giving and tell me about the job.
- K: I work at Trumbull County Mental Health Center. I am on sick leave at the present time. I do all kinds of therapy. I do individual counseling. I do marital counseling. I do family therapy which I particularly love and have lots of training in. I do group therapy. I have an adolescent group. I love working with adolescents. I have a lot of adolescent clients. I do a men's and women's young adult support group. I also do a lot of speaking in the community which I really like to do. I have made AIDS a particular area of interest and expertise for myself. I belong to the Trumbull County AIDS task force and I am going to continue to serve on it even though I am on sick leave. That is a very strong interest of mine. I am interested in counseling AIDS patients and their families when that need arises. That is something

that I would very much like to do.

B: Why do you feel drawn to that?

K: I am not sure. Early in my schooling and in my career I was very interested in death and dying and counseling dying patients. At that time, there was no hospice here. There was nothing going on in that area here at all. I do not think that Dr. Hotchkiss even had a class on death and dying at that time. There was nothing to do here in that area. I put that on the back burner. In a way that is reviving an old interest of mine. I always like working with people who are in extreme circumstances. I loved working at the Doris Burdman Home where I worked for seven or eight years with seriously mentally ill people. I really liked that. I miss that. I would like to be able to do that part of my work time.

B: What sorts of problems or situations would you typically work with in a job doing that?

K: Everything imaginable. Child abuse, incest, kids on drugs, marital problems, severe depression, and everything that you could think of short of psychosis which goes to one of our other departments. We deal with a mixed bag. I think that is really exciting and interesting.

B: I heard you saying back in the beginning that you were interested in helping your husband. Now I hear you talking about your job as being a position where helping is very important. Do you think that that is a particular area that seems like maybe you have been drawn along the way to helping people?

K: There is no question about that. More important than me helping them is me giving them counsel so that they can help themselves. That is absolutely crucial. I am not doing them any favors at all if I do everything for them. I see my role as helping them to find what is best and strongest in themselves so they can go on about their business and their lives, not to depend on me to do it for them. I feel really strongly about this with women. I love working with women and helping women to empower themselves. I use my literature background a lot with that. I give my clients poetry and literature to read. Some of them have responded incredibly. A number of my black women clients were not aware that there were some black women poets. They have been really excited by that. I do not think that the fields are unrelated at all. There is a lot of cross-fertilization for me.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about what you mean by "to empower themselves"?

- K: It is a given to me that whenever anyone comes to the mental health center that they have low self-esteem. That is a given. I do not have to look at a diagnosis or ask them anything else. I know that is there. I think for women in our culture that is a real problem still. I think that women need to know that they are not alone. Other women are going through many of the same kinds of struggles that they are. They do not have to be abused, oppressed, or beaten down. They can speak up for themselves. They can take care of themselves. They can support themselves. They can take care of their children. They do not have to have a man or anybody else to take care of them.
- B: Do you think that these sorts of issues play into the types of jobs that women choose?
- K: Absolutely. Nurses, teachers, and a vast majority of therapists are women. Absolutely. They are the nurturing jobs, the so-called pink collar jobs, the big tit jobs. You are going to just give and give and give until there is not a drop left. That is something that I and every other woman that I know who is a therapist has to struggle against all the time. That is, you must not give yourself away. I think that this is also true in the nursing profession. Nurses work very hard yet their status and pay are so low in comparison to doctors. Without them, the medical system could not function at all and yet they are treated very badly. Social workers, as a class and counselors, are paid less than teachers. Working conditions are often very difficult.
- B: Do you think that is why some of those are called burnout?
- K: There is absolutely no question about it.
- B: Do you think that if you had been encouraged at some point along the way that you might have chosen some different sort of field if you had felt that is was open to you?
- K: I have. I cannot think of anything else that I would rather be doing. I absolutely love what I do. I feel so incredibly lucky to have ended up here. This does not mean that I always necessarily want to work in that particular kind of a setting, but I really like very much what I do. I also have an antique jewelry business on the side. That is for fun and play. It's like playing dress-up.
- B: Do you sell?
- K: Yes.
- B: By party?

K: No. I either sell some from my home or I have taken stuff to New York and sold it to a dealer there.

B: Do you go to auctions?

K: I go to flea markets mostly and sometimes garage sales. It is like a disease that I have decided to turn into a little money-making thing. That is fun. I have a lot of other interests besides work at home. I do not like to talk about it that much. I have a lot of other things that I do that I am interested in. I cannot think of anything else that I would rather do for a living at this point. It is very satisfying. It is wonderful for me to see people who are able to go out and function and deal with their lives and take care of themselves. A lot of people call me up after a year or two and tell me how things are going. I really like that.

B: That must make you feel good.

K: It does very much. I thought of other things, but I cannot think of anything that I would love the way I do this.

B: What about your training as you went along the way? It sounds like you have continued to go to workshops.

K: I go to workshops. I read a whole lot. I read a lot of different things, but I do read about my field a lot too.

B: Do you think that is important to keep?

K: Absolutely.

B: Self-educating, is that what you would call that?

K: Absolutely. One of the nice things about working in a mental health center is you have a lot of colleagues. In our place you learn a lot from colleagues if you are open to that. I like that a whole lot. The people that I work with are real open about sharing things that they know. That is one of the greatest things about working with a group of people like that. That is very important.

B: I know one thing that I would like to go back to if you do not mind. You said that you had a car accident. You have only been able to work part-time. That has really been a disruption to your career and your work.

K: Absolutely.

B: How is that working for you?

K: It has been devastating, except that I have been told

all along that the condition I have is going to get better. I have been operating under the assumption that this is a temporary aberration. Just recently I have begun to understand that it may not be temporary. This may be it. I may have to deal with this forever. I am not sure of that yet. I can still be an effective worker not working forty hours a week. There is nothing magical about that number.

B: Is your agency in agreement with that?

K: The agency has let me work thirty hours for a long time. In fact, they hired me at sixteen, then allowed me to add on hours as I felt able to do so. They are fine with me working thirty hours or even twenty indefinitely. They have been very good about that. That is not a problem.

B: That is wonderful to have that cooperation and understanding.

K: They have been really terrific.

B: They must value the work that you do there.

K: I feel that they do. They have told me that they do.

B: Do you get paid when you go out and talk to groups in the community? Are you able to take that as work time?

K: Yes, that is work time. We get compensatory time if it is beyond our work week. In fact, the agency is going to start charging for doing that. The agency will get the money on some of those things.

B: What sorts of things would you go out and talk about?

K: For three years, I have gone down to YSU at the team survival workshop down there and talked to them about sexual issues. I really have enjoyed that a lot. You have one hour to make a presentation. You have to hit them hard and hit them fast. I like that a lot. I talk a lot about sexual issues with adolescents. I have done a lot of speaking about AIDS this year. Basically, I am comfortable talking about anything that I know about and have worked with. I enjoy that very much.

B: Did you get special training in those areas of sexuality?

K: I have in sexuality. I have had some special workshops. I taught sex education at the Doris Burdman Home, which was really an interesting experience.

B: Now this is a halfway house . . .

K: This is a halfway house for severely mentally disabled people.

B: Is it trying to prepare them to return to the community?

K: Yes. A lot of them had never really had any adequate sex education at all. Because of their illness, they were functioning at an adolescent level. We approached it using an adolescent textbook and very basic kinds of terminology. We wanted them to be able to deal responsibly with their sexuality. That was one of the things that we did. That was a very valuable experience. I think one of the most important functions of a therapist is to educate, and to help people explore their resources and what their options are. For a lot of people that is the most therapeutic thing that you can do. They do not know where to turn. A lot of people do not know any of the options that they have.

B: In a way, you have combined some of your early dreams. You are getting the literature in there and you are helping to educate people. How about the one-to-one contact? Is that something that has particularly drawn you to therapy rather than, say, classroom teaching?

K: I really like that. It is different with each person. That is the thing that I enjoy about my job is that it is not routine at all. Each client presents a different challenge. I get a little nervous each time a new client comes in. It is like stage fright. You never know exactly what is going to be presented or what is going to happen. Each experience is totally different. It is never boring. There is a one-to-one relationship. A long-term therapy with somebody is entirely different from . . .

B: Do you do long-term?

K: We do. I have seen people over a period of years. Some people may graduate to a group setting. They may work one-to-one for awhile then they might want to or I feel that they need to go into a group. They may not be seen individually after they begin group therapy or they may continue to be seen individually at the same time. There are so many things that happen. There are so many different kinds of groups that we have at our agency to refer them to, not just my group. We have assertiveness training; we have cognitive depression groups; we have all kinds of stuff going on. I like that too, that there are many choices and many places for people to get help.

B: Do you ever feel that you just have to know everything? When you have this new client coming in and you are there sort of as the expert or the helper, the person that they are looking for help from, do you ever feel that sort of pressure?

- K: No, that is impossible. I have come to feel--this may be a cop-out, but I really feel this way--that the most healing thing about therapy is the relationship the client has with the therapist. The therapist has a healing personality in that he or she can accept the person and can listen to them. It does not mean that you have to agree with them, or that you are not going to confront them or get really ticked off with them, but basically, you like them and respect them as a human being. For many people, that is the first relationship like that they have ever had where someone is not jumping all over them or somebody is listening to them or someone has respect for them just simply because they exist as a person and like them. There are very few clients that I do not like. If I do not like somebody, I make sure that I refer them to someone else after a couple of sessions because that is a real tip to me that I should not work with them. That very rarely happens, but when it does, I will not work with them.
- B: Do you think that it is something personal in you that is in some way reacting? I had wondered, perhaps, working with the rapists or with the child abusers.
- K: I worked with child abusers and that is difficult for me because I have also worked with victims. I have three women clients on my caseload who were sexually abused by their mothers, which the literature says is almost nonexistent. I had three of them this Spring. It is mind boggling to me. Sometimes I have difficulty with child abusers or incest perpetrators because they say they were doing it for the person's own good and the person wanted that. I have some difficulty with that, we all do. Interestingly, our agency started a group for male perpetrators of incest that is run by two men. That has been very helpful. They are going to have a woman therapist in there too. We are all working on that issue because incest has become much more open recently and victims are seeking help. There are some people that are difficult to work with. I have worked with people with other sexual perversions. It has not been that disturbing, but whenever I deal with somebody like that I always have someone I can talk to about it because we all have feelings about clients. We all have the so-called counter transference feelings. You have to deal with them. You cannot ignore them. You must deal with them.
- B: Is that built in to your job where you can release for yourself?
- K: It is in some ways, but some of us formed a group to particularly deal with that and took some time to do that for ourselves. We had a Monday morning two-hour group where we did just those things.
- B: Within the agency or just . . .

- K: We actually took some agency time. I am not sure if we are going to be able to do that now because there have been some administrative changes, but we went over to St. Joe's Hospital right across from us. We would go over there for two hours. We talked about cases for two hours. A lot of what we talked about was our own personal reactions to what was going on with our clients.
- B: Was that sort of taking care of yourselves?
- K: Absolutely. That was exactly what it was. That is essential. You cannot work as a therapist unless you are willing to take care of yourself. I wouldn't want to go to a therapist who didn't take care of himself or herself.
- B: Do you have children?
- K: I have two children.
- B: Were you working at any period along the way when you had your children still at home?
- K: I was.
- B: Are they at home now?
- K: No. They are grown and are away now. Both are at graduate school. When they were adolescents, I started at the counseling center and then moved on to a full-time job at the Burdman home. That was a very difficult period because I felt that they were too young to be left completely on their own. I had to get a child care person here. I felt torn to ribbons all the time about that. I really did.
- B: Did you feel guilt?
- K: I felt a lot of guilt, yes. In fact, I wanted to go away to graduate school out of town. I really wanted to work on a doctorate, but I felt like I could not do that at that particular point because the kids really needed me to be around and needed more supervision.
- B: Did you have problems finding a child care person?
- K: I had two good people at various times. They did a pretty decent job. Then the kids got old enough where they could be on their own a lot. We really split up chores around here. At that time I had the children take over the laundry completely. They had to be responsible for that. They had to get lunches if they wanted to. We had a schedule for cooking. We took turns cooking. If somebody did not want to cook, they had to provide the meal

somehow. They had to pay for a pizza or whatever. We had a lot of family meetings. It was not pleasant all of the time either.

B: How did they react to that sort of structure?

K: Not really well, but my daughter responded better than my son. It was a real tough time. A lot of times we were at each other's throats, particularly my son. He just did not want to hear about it. I look back and it was a nightmare. Fortunately, I was in the CR group at that time which really helped me a whole lot.

B: Would you explain what the CR group is?

K: It is a consciousness raising group. We met for close to two years. It was all women. We met every single week down at Womanspace which was a storefront center on Elm Street when that was there. We talked about how we were going to survive all of this, how we were going to do everything that we needed to do, and how we could support each other. We did.

B: You feel that it helped you get through, having other people to talk to?

K: I know it helped me a whole lot. I did not have any friends at that time who had children exactly that age, but even though they did not, they were tremendously supportive. It helped. That was very important. Plus I was involved in the feminist movement around here at that time. There was much more going on. I was physically well too. I was involved in getting abortion rights when we used to have marches and parades. We went to Akron when they were trying to close down the clinic in Akron. There was a lot of stuff going on politically around here at that time, ten to thirteen years ago.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about what that means, the feminist movement?

K: It means to me that women are no longer content to be defined by their gender. Women are saying, "Yes, I am a woman. I may be anatomically and chemically different in some ways from a man, but that does not preclude me from doing whatever I want to do and can do." I think that we still have a very long way to go. I think we have not come nearly as far as I would have hoped we would come. I think that children and the adolescents that I work with at the mental health center are still very much into their old traditional sexual roles. I feel discouraged about it at times. I think that we have to press on. I feel really out of it because I have been ill. I have been sick for

so long that basically what I have done was work and rest so I could work again. My knowledge of what is going on politically is really secondhand; it is from reading, listening, and watching. It seems to me that there has been a backlash. Men are behaving differently. I think that a lot of men are not willing to listen to it. They do not want to hear it. Women are crumbling because they do not want to be alone. They are fearful about the statistics that if you do not marry by such and such an age you are going to be alone forever. Some women still think that is a fate worse than death.

B: They did come out with a second . . .

K: I saw that. I think that this country is so politically conservative right now. I think there has been a tremendous retrograde movement in all forward looking social movements in the last twenty years. I think racism and anti-Semitism are more prevalent. I think anti-women feelings are there too, very much so. It is depressing.

B: Do you think that the feminist movement has something to offer to men? Do you think that there is something that they would gain by it?

K: Absolutely, but I think that most of them do not know that. It is very difficult to convince them of that.

B: What sorts of things might they gain?

K: I think they would gain much better relationships with their children. I think they would gain much more intimate relationships with their wives. I think women have a much greater capacity for intimacy. I am not saying that this is genetic. I am saying that this is maybe cultural. We know how to talk to each other. We know how to get our needs met with other women. Men do not know how to do that. Men turn to the only person in their life which is usually a woman or a male lover and get all of their emotional needs met. Here again is the woman putting out, putting out, giving out goodies, and maybe not getting it back from them. I think men have that to learn. I think men need to learn about their feminine side without being so terrified about it. A lot of men are horrified of finding out about their feminine side. It scares them to death. Most of the men that I encounter either in my work or privately are homophobic as hell.

B: What does homophobic mean?

K: They are terrified that any tenderness that they would show towards another man or any emotional intimacy would

be misinterpreted as being homosexual. They are real fearful of that.

B: What are you saying, that we both have both sides within us?

K: I certainly think so. I think that we all have a capacity for doing things which have been assigned to either gender. Women can be tough, strong, ferocious, assertive, aggressive, and powerful, all the things that men are supposed to be. I think that men most certainly have the capacity to be tender, gentle, nurturing, sensitive, and all of those things that have been forced on to us. I think that is where we have to go with all of this. I feel that we are going to be lost in some way if we do not go in that direction.

B: Would that mean a lot more options for everyone?

K: This is my feeling. There are a whole lot more options. This means that each side is going to give up some of its power. Men are going to have to give up their power in always being right, as being maybe the primary breadwinner, and the person who has all kinds of power in the relationship. The woman has a certain power in this relationship. That is the power to nurture. You must never underestimate that. The warmth giver, the love giver, the soother, the smoother, the appeaser has a very powerful position. Both men and women must be willing to give up some of that. Women have to stop always rushing in to smooth things over, to make nice, and to make things right. Men need to always stop having to jump in and be right and have an answer for everything. We both have to back off.

B: I was wondering how you see things working for your children. I can see having some really good ideas that I think I hear that you are trying to put into practice with teaching them sort of equally as they were teen-agers.

K: They are both products of the culture.

B: Are you saying that there were outside influences?

K: Absolutely. There were apparent influences plus their father. Their relationship with their father was different than mine. I do not want to go into that a whole lot. The kids are both feminists. They both have gotten involved in some relationships which are living out a lot of the old struggles that we all have. Interestingly, my son has chosen a female profession. He is in social work school. My daughter has just begun law school which is now becoming a female profession, but traditionally is not. They are both real aware of all these issues. We are always talking about it. We talk about them a lot. My daughter very bitterly resented my feminism when she was an adolescent.

My son did too. They wanted me to be like everybody else's mom. She said that it was only when she was in college that she began to appreciate it. She said it has made life harder for her in some significant ways. She says that is the only way to be now.

B: Why is it harder?

K: She was not willing to be the traditional sorority sweetie at the University of Virginia which in many ways is a very old-style school.

B: She went back to some roots there, back to the South.

K: She did. There are a lot of traditional folks down there. It is very much a fraternity and sorority kind of thing. People really get into the old sex roles or perhaps more accurately, never got out of them.

B: We were just talking about how you are seeing your ideas as they are affecting your children now that your children are choosing professions and are out on their own establishing relationships.

K: One of the other things that I think is real important that I told my children and often tell my clients is that I do not think that they need to choose a profession for life. I think that it is important not to. I think that it is really good to prepare yourself to make a number of career changes and choices in your life and not to get so locked in to one thing. You couldn't change it. You could not have a lot of flexibility.

B: You are saying that it is all right to change careers and to completely switch fields?

K: Absolutely. In fact, I think that it may be totally desirable. We live a long time.

B: More than once?

K: Sure, however many that it takes.

B: You mean at one time I might decide to be a teacher, then later on I might want to completely change and go into business?

K: Go to medical school or whatever. I think that people need to be flexible like that.

B: You are supposed to decide on your career in your twenties and stick to it so that you can really get far along.

- K: I do not think so. I disagree with that because I really believe that the people who are most successful, and this is not just in terms of career, but psychologically, are those with the most flexibility who always have the most number of options and choices open to them. I think if you lock yourself into one position in a career choice, if you invest a great deal of time . . .
- B: You were just saying that you thought that at any point in your life no matter if you are thirty or forty or fifty or even sixty that you might still decide on a new career and get retrained or whatever it is you need to do.
- K: I would not be a therapist if I did not feel that the human organism has the capacity for change and growth throughout life. It is a mistake to think that we become hardened in stone. We do not have to. I think that the more we are open to new possibilities and creative ways in dealing with whatever life offers us the better that we are going to be. I think the people who despair are people who are backed into a corner and see very few options for themselves. I think one of the things about therapy, about doing therapy, and being a therapist is to help people be able to, as I said before, see options for themselves. I think that goes across the board. I think that is true for raising children. They need to see as many choices as they can.
- B: It sounds like you have been personally really going through that with yourself, not knowing about your health, not knowing how that is going to turn out for you. You may, in effect, need to make some choices for yourself.
- K: Absolutely.
- B: How does that feel?
- K: It feels wonderful. I just recently made the decision that I am taking over the control of my medical care. I have had wonderful doctors and wonderful medical care, but it is my pain and it is my problem inside. I am taking charge of that.
- B: Do you think that we can deal with our own pain?
- K: Yes, for the most part. I think that sometimes you need some help. I think you do need help, but we basically need to take charge of our medical situation. I think most people are passive consumers of medical care. They need to be more aggressive about what it is they want from the medical system.
- B: Do you think we are encouraged to believe that?

- K: No question about it. Yes. The whole medical system is a real patriarchy. We have been taught that doctors are gods. I was raised in a family with a lot of doctors. I was married to one. You basically did not question them. Whatever they said went. I have been a very informed patient these past few years and always have asked a lot of questions. But, I have not been as assertive as I am going to be now. Fortunately, I have a doctor who loves that. He just thinks it is wonderful. He has been my partner in making decisions about my medical care the whole way. He thinks that is absolutely wonderful.
- B: Usually I have found that that is not true.
- K: No. That is truly amazing to me. Some of the other doctors that I dealt with are not pleased. They are just not pleased at all. They don't like uppity patients.
- B: Do you think that is sort of across the board in other areas as well as medical care that we are encouraged not to stand up for ourselves and not to ask questions?
- K: I think in general anybody who considers themselves an expert . . . lots of people do not want to be questioned about their expertise. I experienced that in a lawsuit that I went through. I was to be the passive recipient of my lawyer's expertise. It was real intimidating.
- B: Do you think that women in general tend not to ask questions that perhaps if a man were in a same situation, he would go ahead and ask the questions and feel more comfortable doing so?
- K: I think that the culture points that way. I know a lot of men who are afraid to ask questions too. I think, in general, women are brought up to be nice, and it is not nice to ask questions. It is not nice to say, "Hey what are you doing here? I do not like what you are doing." That is not nice. We are always supposed to be nice and not make waves, not raise Cain, not get anybody mad.
- B: So taking charge is something that we need to learn that just does not come naturally.
- K: I think we do. I think that children should be taught how to solve problems creatively. That is boys and girls. We solve some problems by using some of the sex role behaviors that are taught to us, boys by being real tough and macho, and girls maybe by being seductive or manipulative at times or crying at times. You need to be taught some real straight-forward skills. Those are skills that can be learned. They can be learned very young.

- B: Once again it sounds like a game for both.
- K: Absolutely. No question about it.
- B: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about what work has meant to you through your life?
- K: Work has been the most significant thing particularly since my accident. It has kept me whole and sane. It is hard for me to even express how important that it has been to me in the last six and a half years. It has really been an anchor. It has been a way, even though I felt very sick, that I knew that I could function and I was going to be okay. Also, it is a real important part of my identity now. It is a part of who I am. Even if I do not do it for a period of time I am still a therapist. That is still a real important part of who I am. It is now a permanent part of my identity. It is not a hat that I take on and off.
- B: How very lucky you are that you are in a profession that you love.
- K: I frequently say that I cannot believe that I chose this profession. I made some other choices in my life that were incredibly stupid, but I think this was a good one. I feel amazed that I actually get paid for doing something that is so pleasurable and so satisfying.
- B: What do you think about how we feel about what we do, how we feel about the work that we do, and how our identity is all really tied in with how we spend our days?
- K: I think unfortunately that the mass majority of people are very unhappy with what they do. In my experience, almost all of the clients that I work with do not like their jobs. A lot of other people that I talk with just are very unhappy. I think particularly people who work in factories and mills and have extraordinarily routine types of jobs have great difficulty finding meaning in their work.
- B: Do you think that is important, finding meaning in your work?
- K: I do. I am not sure how you help people find meaning in something that is boring, except that it is paying the bills for them and providing a life for them. I would challenge them to find things outside of work that provide more meaning for them.
- B: Do you think that workplaces could understand that about their employees and try to address that in the workplace?
- K: I do. I think a place like General Motors addresses it

by pay raises. People get paid very well and have good benefits, but the work is dreadful for most people. Most people dislike it intensely. They have started having some workers circles and things like that experimenting with some of the Japanese techniques at General Motors. Hopefully, they will get more into that when the workers are more directly involved with their work situations. I think that is crucial in any workplace. When workers feel like they have some voice in what is happening, that they matter, their opinions and feelings about their work conditions matter, if you do not feel that, you feel that sense of hopelessness, that sense of despair.

- B: I have heard of businesses that run programs that they call wellness programs. I think that they build in maybe some counseling services.
- K: Yes. Or there is another name for it, Employees Assistance Programs, EAP's. A lot of companies are doing that as well and hiring counselors.
- B: Is that sort of to address the need of . . .
- K: Some of them specifically are to address particular problems like alcohol and drug abuse or marital problems or whatever.
- B: Do you think that those sorts of problems, alcoholism and drug abuse in the workplace, which I understand is in many large corporations, is surfacing, is a really large problem? Do you think that is tied in to dissatisfaction with the workplace?
- K: It is hard to say, but I think a lot of it has to do with boredom. I have talked to guys who worked in the mills. They used to go in and work the night shift at the mills and get smoked up on marijuana and they would stay high the whole night and go sleep somewhere. You might work a little while. Then when the supervisor is gone you might find a place to sleep. You do that. I had clients tell me that out of an eight hour shift at General Motors, they worked three hours routinely. The rest of the time they were on breaks or hiding out from the supervisor. There is basically only three hours of work to do. No wonder we cannot sell any cars in this country. That is not answering your question, but I think that there is tremendous boredom. I think there is a feeling of--What is important about what I am doing? I think that everybody needs to feel that what they are doing has some meaning and importance. That is the essential question--What does this mean? Why am I doing this?
- B: We could apply that to work then?

K: Absolutely, to every area of our lives, but work especially. Work is real important for people now. Women who are in such low-paying pink-collar jobs and remedial jobs have to struggle with that issue.

B: What does pink-collar jobs mean?

K: Well, like secretaries, beauticians, the lower paying jobs that are not professionals.

B: These are typically women's?

K: Yes, a lot of them are in women's fields. Secretaries are a perfect example of that, secretaries or clerical workers. We do not have any male clerical workers in our office. They are all women. They are all grossly underpaid. They work very hard. That is because there is a glut in the market. There are a lot of women who want those jobs. I think that is probably pretty typical everywhere of clerical workers. The preponderance of them are women. The same is with nurses, teachers, social workers, and all of those support jobs.

B: Supporting the important things, is that what that means?

K: Yes.

B: Once again, I guess if other people do not consider it important, it is hard for you to consider it important or to see the meaning in it.

K: Very much so.

B: Do you find yourself dealing with those sorts of things with clients and in the workshops?

K: I do all the time. I also deal with it with the women at work, the secretaries at work. I try and go out of my way to be respectful and supportive of them in every way that I can because I think they have a tough way to go, tougher than we do. Yes, I most certainly do address those issues with my clients and in workshops. It is always an issue that that motive is always on and is always operating.

B: You have never been a waitress?

K: I have never been a waitress, but that is an experience that probably everybody should have.

B: Yes, that is what I was going to say. Since I had that experience I find that I am very generous and understanding with the frustrations.

- K: I am too. No matter what is going on, I always leave a good tip because I know that those poor women are having an awful time no matter what. They do not get paid very well either. They sure are dumped on. Unfortunately, I do not think that we have moved very far in the last fifteen years. That is the depressing part. That is the down side. I do not know what is going to happen, but we must not give up.
- B: I see you approaching it through education, showing people their opinions.
- K: Yes, that is a piece of it and in my work helping people to know themselves and to interpret the experiences that have happened to them and what they mean for them, what their life means to them, how they are going to use whatever has happened to them in some way. They could make some sense out of it, real importantly, that they are not alone. That is one of the most important things. These experiences that they have had instead of being isolating should give them kinship because they are not isolating this experience. This is something that happens to many people. I try and encourage people, women especially, to join groups of older women who have similar problems. I think that some of the self-help groups are very helpful. Women share common experiences.
- B: I think we have a lot of good information about your feelings about work. You have shared a lot of very interesting ideas. Are there any other areas that you feel that we have not covered about your work in particular, about your feelings about work, or work experiences that have been particularly meaningful for you?
- K: I just feel fortunate that I got to a place where it was good and okay and desirable for women to work in this way. My work has given my life special meaning for me. I cannot imagine a life without work that I enjoy.

END OF INTERVIEW