

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women's Herstory Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 750

JUNE LUCAS

Interviewed

by

Alexandra Vansuch

on

January 10, 1988

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: JUNE LUCAS

INTERVIEWER: Alexandra Vansuch

SUBJECT: political experiences and views, OPIC, YSU OEA,
abortion, consumer rights, unions, gun control

DATE: January 10, 1988

V: This is an interview with June Lucas on Women's Herstory for the Women's Resource Center in conjunction with the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Alexandra Vansuch. This interview is being conducted at Mineral Ridge, Ohio, on January 10, 1988, at approximately 6:30 p.m.

June, I would like to start with just kind of a brief background about where you are from, where you were born, and your family?

L: I was born in Trumbull County, Warren City Hospital. I lived in Mineral Ridge all of my life. I have some very deep roots in the Valley. My forefathers came here when this was the Connecticut Western Reserve. I have an account of their travels in their oxcart. The men came first and settled on the west bank of the Mahoning River in Niles, Ohio.

V: Where did they come from?

L: Connecticut. They were burned out during the Revolutionary War in Connecticut. So the government, to reimburse them for fighting and losing their shops, they were coopers; they made barrels and had other carpentry products. So they were able to get land very cheaply in the Western Reserve. They came to what is Niles now and bought the land west of the Mahoning River and put up a slab house. The following year, the oldest son went back to Connecticut and brought his mother and sisters. Their name was Park. Park Avenue in Niles is named for my grandmother's family. The Harshman's, a little bit later, came to Lordstown and farmed in Lordstown. They were teachers for the most part. My grandfather went to Hiram and became a superintendent in Gustavus and started the first consolidated school system. He decided that it was just too much for the children to get to school in the wintertime. So he used sleighs to collect the children through-

out the countryside. It is kind of a precursor to the school bus. I still have a picture somewhere of that sleigh filled with straw and all of those little faces looking out. But grandpa almost starved to death trying to teach school. So that is when he moved to Mineral Ridge. That was probably about 1903. So Mineral Ridge is where I have grown up.

V: What did your father do?

L: He was in the trucking business. Before that, after grandpa moved to Mineral Ridge, he started road contracting. They hauled a lot of slag and gravel for the roads that were being built in this area. He had a hardwood lumber company.

V: So that is why you have all the beautiful wood in this house?

L: Yes.

V: Did your mother work at all?

L: No, she did not. Well, she worked in a dress shop in East Liverpool as a girl. She was from this area too. She was born in Girard. When she was about seventeen, I think that was probably 1929 or 1930, the times were very tough. She quit school in the tenth grade and went to East Liverpool and worked in a dress shop. Then she met my father here in Mineral Ridge. He was twenty years older than she. He was a bachelor and had this house built in fact. When he was forty, he decided that was the lady he wanted to marry. I arrived the next year.

V: So your mother did not work then after they were married?

L: No.

V: If you had to think about being a child and think about what you learned about working from your father, what would you say you learned from him?

L: To do it right the first time. I did not have brothers. I was the oldest of two daughters. So I did a lot of the outdoor work and a lot of helping dad. I much preferred that to housework anyway. I think that I deliberately screwed up a lot of the housework so my mother and grandmother would say, "Get out of here, you ruined this." That would give me, of course, my opportunity to help dad. So I guess, I was his best son, so to speak. But he would not tolerate slipshod work. You had to do it right the first time. Once he knew you knew the job, you damn well better do it right.

V: That was probably a good lesson.

L: Yes, it was.

V: What was your first job? When did you first go to work?

L: My first job was as a waitress, right out of high school. I decided that I would like some spending money. So I got a job at Howard Johnson's out on Route 422. I think that lasted about four days. There was a businessman from Niles who came in every day for lunch with his friends. Every day he would order sherbet for dessert. No matter what I brought him, it was always the wrong sherbet. He thought that was very funny. He would order orange. I would bring him orange. He would insist that he ordered lime. Then he would try to make me look very foolish in front of his subordinates. The fourth day I dumped the sherbet right on his head. The manager, Mr. Beech, came running over telling me I was fired. I said I was not fired, I was quitting.

V: You were how old at the time?

L: I was seventeen.

V: That was a precursor of things to come.

L: That was just too much.

V: What would you say your next job was?

L: My next job was probably as a housewife. I spent a lot of years being married and being a housewife. So I did not have any jobs in between.

V: So you raised children and took care of household duties. The next time you went to work was?

L: It was when I was attending YSU. I worked as the first secretary for the YSU OEA. That was when the professors at YSU decided to organize. I was married to Jim Lucas at the time. We were trying to live on about \$4,600 a year in 1964 or 1965. That is when some of the younger professors decided they would organize and had collective bargaining at YSU. So for that first year, I did their secretarial work for them.

V: Were you trained in secretarial stuff?

L: I was a very good typist, but I did not have any formal training as a secretary. I went to work for them and took classes part-time at YSU.

V: What kind of classes were you taking at the time?

L: I was taking a little bit of everything. I had not decided what it was I wanted to be when I grew up. I was twenty-five when I started college. I found that I was surprised how interesting a lot of the classes were and how unutterably boring

some of them were. I knew right off that I did not want to teach in the public schools. I took introduction to education and the first thing I learned from the teacher was that gentlemen should always carry a clean handkerchief and make sure their zippers were secure. I thought--okay, any moron should know that. I don't know that I have the endurance to go through four years of this business.

V: I think that is what it takes too, endurance.

L: I was very interested in the history classes. I liked natural history a lot. I met a very interesting woman, Saradell Poddar, who is married to an Indian professor at YSU. Saradell and I had become very good friends. She and I used to collect insects together. That was always a fun thing to do. I enjoyed my years in knowing Saradell so much before she moved away. But through that, when my youngest daughter was at Kennedy School, I had a project of raising Cecropia moths. I was raising beautiful, big moths. I thought the Kennedy School kids might like to see the life cycle of these moths. Mrs. Turner thought that was a pretty fascinating project and liked my presentation and asked me if I would come and work for her. I told her that I did not have an education degree. She said that she was not interested in that so much because I could work as a teaching assistant under her auspices. So I went to work at the Kennedy School and was there six years. The first few years I worked at YSU OEA mornings or afternoons. I worked a half day there and worked at Kennedy School. The last three years, I think it was, I worked full-time at Kennedy School. I loved it. That was so much fun. The kids were just a delight.

V: You got to teach them things that you had a good time with too.

L: Oh, I did.

V: That is the important part of anything I think.

L: It is, it really is. I loved it.

V: So you worked as a teacher's aide then, we would say, and worked as a secretary at the OEA office. From there, what happened after that?

L: My father was getting old. It was pretty difficult working in Youngstown and trying to keep an eye on him here at home. I thought--Well, Adrien, my youngest daughter, will have to make the transition from Kennedy School to a public school sooner or later. I think then she was in the fifth grade. So I decided that I should perhaps transfer her back to Weathersfield Township and quit work for a few years. So my last year of working at Kennedy School until the following December, I was semiretired. Then a professor from YSU, Mark Shutz . . . I don't know if Mark is still there or not. Mark

had been working for the Ohio Public Interest Campaign. He was going to leave that job to, I think, finish his Ph. d. So Mark called and said that there was a job that he thought I would like a lot. It was part-time and it would be organizing around issues that affected consumers and union people. There were a lot of causes that OPIC supported, as did I. I said, "Well, I will talk to them, but I am not looking for full-time work." So he arranged the meeting with Ira Arlook from the Ohio Public Interest Campaign. He was the founder of OPIC. Ira came down from Cleveland and we talked about it. He hired me that day. I was the first woman who OPIC had hired to be an area director.

V: What year was this?

L: I think it was 1976 or 1977. It was January. I remember I started work the first of the year part-time. It was supposed to be part-time. It was part-time in a sense that it was not an eight to five schedule, but there were many meetings in the evening. You had to go where the people were to organize around the issues.

V: Explain a little bit about what OPIC is about.

L: OPIC is a nonprofit grass roots organization that deals with consumer issues that their steering committees general suggest, and those are the projects that OPIC takes on. For instance, plant closing legislation was one of the first projects that I worked on for OPIC.

V: You just jumped right into it, didn't you?

L: Yes. It was just about when the Sheet & Tube was closing. It was my task to go to the different unions to try to promote the idea of passing plant closing legislation in the state of Ohio. Surprisingly enough, it was very hard to convince some of the working people in the different mills that perhaps their jobs were in danger too. In some cases, it is like trying to organize the dying. By the time you get them convinced and organized, they are dead.

V: That is an interesting metaphor because it is absolutely true. Have you had any kind of union background at all before this aside from the OEA?

L: That was my first working relationship with any kind of union really. I remember the kind of resistance that some of the professors had toward a union. They did not want to think of themselves as being part of a union movement because they considered themselves to be professional people and above what they perceived as blue-collar types. Most of them were making one third of what the average steelworker was making and yet they had this elevated impression of themselves.

V: Sort of an ivory tower ideal.

L: Yes. So we had to, of course, think of it as an association, but when you look at it realistically; it was a union. Damn few of them were willing to turn down the pay hikes that they would get as being an affiliated member of an association.

V: When you worked for OEA, were you involved at all in organizing or were you strictly a secretarial person?

L: I was a secretarial person, but believe me I had both ears wide open. I could see what organizing was all about. It interested me a lot. I did not actually go to any of the professors and try to give them the pitch to organize, but I was following the whole process because I was, of course at that time, married to a faculty member.

V: So when you took on this job with OPIC, you were dealing with different kinds of people now probably?

L: Yes.

V: Away from the ivory tower.

L: Yes. I was dealing with, for the most part, rank and file union people.

V: They took on a different approach to life.

L: They did and I have to admit that it was a new experience trying to sit down and talk to, I would have to say, men because there were no women and still there are few women who fill the hierarchy of the union. I found that they generally were just astounded in the first place, that a woman would be coming to talk to them about union matters or organizing or anything like that. So some of them, instead of being outright hostile toward me, kind of took a sympathetic view, like why this poor fool, what is she doing? They were sympathetic.

V: Which could be helpful.

L: It was. Often it was very, very helpful.

V: Did you encounter any outright anger or feelings of hostility?

L: Yes.

V: Was that a common occurrence?

L: Well, it was more common that I liked, but I can remember a man who I later became very good friends with attacking me in the parking lot. He verbally attacked me in the parking lot of

a union building telling me that I did not know what the hell I was talking about. The mills were closing because the EPA had come down with all of these regulations and it was the EPA's fault and I did not know, I will quote him, "Shit from shinola," about what I was about, and that I should go home and mind my own business.

V: He later changed his mind?

L: Yes, and became a very, very good friend and allies. So that worked out very well. I also had another one tell me . . . Well, we almost got into a fistfight, in fact, in the laborer's hall down on Rayen Avenue. It was really hairy. And what shocked me was that the union people at that meeting were from all different unions. The AFL-CIO affiliates and the auto workers leaped to my defense and said this guy would have to go through them to get at me. That is the kind of plan I knew; I had cut across that.

V: How long into this job was that? How long did it take you to establish yourself?

L: Probably five years, probably that long.

V: So you held this job for how long?

L: Nine, almost ten years.

V: You are saying that in the period of ten years, it took half of that time pretty much to know that you were on solid ground with these folks and that you could count on them for their support?

L: Yes.

V: I am getting to a point here, wondering within all of this time, what kind of other support systems did you have? Family, friends, did you have a support for working? Was there a positive feeling about that?

L: The positive support I was getting was from my colleagues at the Ohio Public Interest Campaign and more and more from union people from rank and file members who could see the kinds of similar interests. Our goals were the same and that is where I would get the kind of feedback that would not allow me to get too discouraged when we kept losing issue after issue.

V: I guess I am talking more on a personal level. We were talking before we turned the tape on; since we know each other, I said to you, "I remember when you got the job and how nervous you were about your first television thing." Do you want to talk about that?

- L: I was absolutely terrified with the first television interview. I think that I was more terrified about appearing to be foolish than anything else.
- V: Was this because you did not feel prepared for the job?
- L: Yes. I felt that there were probably so many more people qualified to do the job, that I was just very terrified.
- V: You were afraid of not having the necessary experience to take the job and yet you did it. You took it.
- L: I like to be successful, but I really don't know how to put it, Sandy.
- V: I think maybe I can help you. I know you as a person who jumps into something and takes it on and, just as your dad says, "kind of does it right." I have never known you to be involved with something that you did not give your whole heart to. I see that. We are going to talk about this in your current job, which is maddening to say the least. You really have taken on an enormous challenge one would say. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about how you went from OPIC into your current situation.
- L: That was a natural process of evolution I think because the frustration that I felt with the job at OPIC of trying to get issues with real merit advanced in the legislature and finding our pleas falling on, not only deaf ears, but sometimes wondering if anything was between the deaf ears, it was absolutely maddening and frustrating. I just had to have a broader forum to try to make some impact with the kinds of issues that a lot of us, for the last ten years, have felt needed addressed in the state.
- V: So this decision to run for office then was something that you thought about yourself? Were you pushed by other people to run for this office also?
- L: Yes. OPIC wanted me to run as well as the democratic party in Trumbull County.
- V: Let's talk about what the office is so we have this clear. What position do you have at this point?
- L: State representative in the 58th House District.
- V: You have just given us the official title that you hold. We were talking about how you got involved in running for office in the first place.
- L: I decided that that would probably be the best way to advance an agenda. Instead of having to lobby legislators for things

that I felt were right and things they ought to be doing, I could do it myself or attempt to do it myself.

V: It is a tough job, isn't it?

L: Yes.

V: As you are finding out?

L: Yes.

V: Let me ask you about how you went about campaigning. How does one do that? Where does that begin? Where did you get that money to do that?

L: You take out your petition. You begin to campaign. You have to have a combination of enough money and enough support to win. It really takes that mix. I found that the campaigning itself, the strategies, the work on the campaign, was predominantly done by women.

V: That is not much of a surprise, is it?

L: Right. It was women who did the nuts and bolts work of the campaign. Men were more willing to write you a check. "Let me write you a check." They would do that, but when you had to have 18,000 pieces of mail out within a twenty-four hour period, it was Mary next door and the network that she would call of volunteers to come. Understand, the men, we had men willing to come and sit at the table and fold things and do all of that, but the organization itself ran on the women's work.

V: So they knew what to do and how to get it?

L: And how to do it. I had a campaign manager who is like a daughter to me, Laura Meagher. Without Laura, I would not have won the primary, I am sure. Laura had such dedication that I have never seen in my life. She would work untold hours, talk about finishing tasks. She was amazing. She lived here with me from January until I won the primary.

V: Which was in May?

L: In May. She stayed for two weeks after that and intended to follow through on the general election and learned that she had a scholarship to Case to study law. I said, "Good God, Laura, go get them." Because the primary in my case was the race, the general really was not anything.

V: Did you run against, were there more than two people in the primary?

L: There were six of us in the primary. There were three women and three men.

V: That is unusual to have that many women in the election.

L: It is, but it was an open seat. In other words, the incumbent said he was not running again. It was an open seat. I think probably the other women felt that was a good time for them to get their feet wet too.

V: We are talking about the democratic nomination?

L: Yes.

V: Did you have party endorsement?

L: Yes, I did.

V: So was that considered an edge?

L: That was a very slim edge because I did not clearly win on the first ballot. On the second ballot I won by, I think, three or four votes. I am not sure now, but it was a very slim win for the democratic endorsement. I like to keep my pledges and I found that I am moderating my pledges as I get older because they are so damn hard to live up to.

V: Right.

L: I wrote a letter to all the precinct committee people in early January and said that if the incumbent did not run, I was very interested in running and intended to do that. I hoped that they would not make a commitment to any candidate until I had a chance to talk with them personally. So that meant 130 people I had to talk with personally. The incumbent did not make his decision until the last possible moment.

V: Was his decision not to run?

L: His decision not to run, yes, which meant that I was squeezed into a weekend of visiting that many people. That was a tough commitment to keep.

V: How long had the incumbent been in office, for a long time?

L: He had been there, I think, three terms, six years or something like that.

V: So he was pretty well established?

L: Yes.

V: Did he endorse you?

- L: No. It turned out that a cousin or a relative of his wife's got into the race. So he did not endorse me.
- V: But despite all of that, you won the primary and lost your campaign manager then?
- L: Yes.
- V: After, she decided to go to law school. So what did you do about that?
- L: We replaced her with another young woman from Kent State. She was very competent. I did a lot of door-to-door work. I went to a lot of doors.
- V: How much of an area does your . . .
- L: Geographically the 58th House District is one of three in Trumbull County and it is the largest district. It runs from the Ashtabula County line north to the Mahoning County line in the south which is surrounded on the east by Pennsylvania. It is two townships wide from Ashtabula to the bottom where it is three wide, Weathersfield, Liberty, and Hubbard. It is a very large and diverse district.
- V: Very diverse, I would think. So you had your work cut out for you trying to make it door-to-door and meeting people. Who did you face in the general election? Was there just one candidate?
- L: There was one candidate, an independent, who had been a democrat all of his life but became an independent during the primary. He knew that if he got in and mixed it up with the big kids he would lose. So he ran as an independent. That is one way of avoiding a lot of the work and expense of a primary.
- V: No republican . . .
- L: No republican was in that race.
- V: So did you find this to be an easier goal?
- L: Yes, the general was a lot easier than the primary.
- V: So that was how long ago?
- L: That was the spring of 1986.
- V: So you have been in office since January of 1987?
- L: Yes.
- V: Do you want to tell us a little bit about what that has been like?

- L: Well that has been a real experience so far. I was under the impression that a representative was to go to Columbus and vote in, what they believe to be, the best interest of their constituents and their conscience. I have found that 99% of the time you are free to do that on a vote that does not have any meaning to leadership. Now leadership, meaning speaker, decides what issues are near and dear to his heart. If it is really important, he will suggest very strongly how you vote and what will happen to you if you do not vote the way he would like you to vote. On my very first vote out of the chute, shall we say, I had to disappoint him greatly.
- V: This was the insurance bill?
- L: That was the tort reform.
- V: So the first time out, you were able to make yourself an enemy right off the top of the ticket. It has been in the press how much problems Vern Riffe has been giving you. We can say that because it is not a secret. We are talking about women in the workplace. Now we are talking about women in politics. You are one out of how many women in the House of Representatives?
- L: There are thirteen women in the House of Representatives, nine democrats and four republicans. In the Senate, there are two women, one republican and one democrat.
- V: And there is a total of . . .
- L: Ninety-nine representatives and thirty-three senators.
- V: Okay, so out of 132 people, we have fifteen women. How are the other women dealing with there being women in the legislature? What kind of experiences are you running across? You mentioned, when you talked off the tape earlier, about another woman in the representatives, another representative was a woman who kind of votes along the same lines you do. Do you want to talk about that a little?
- L: It is very clear to me that the Ohio Legislature is equal in a lot of ways. There is no pay discrimination. Women have committee chairmanships. There are a lot of things about it that are very fair to women. So what is clear to me is that you are either perceived by the speaker as a team player or you are not a team player. Sex has nothing to do with it.
- V: As long as you vote along the lines that he is concerned about, then you are one of the guys.
- L: Yes.
- V: So you don't regard this vendetta he is currently waging against you as a matter of gender?

L: No.

V: We are talking about party politics, pure and simple?

L: Yes, hardball politics.

V: I would like to talk about that, but I would also like to just continue along this line of being a woman in the legislature. You say that it is a fairly equitable situation in terms of pay and chairmanship's responsibilities. How do your fellow legislators respond to you, the gents who you work with?

L: The majority of them are very friendly to me. On a personal basis, they like me a lot. Some of them think I am crazy to have given up what they perceived to be a very promising career in the legislature.

V: Wouldn't they regard your giving it up as not voting along the speaker's line of choice?

L: Yes.

V: So they really think you have packed it in?

L: Some of them do, but more of them tell me, "Wait it out." The speaker punishes everyone as a matter of course. In fact one of my female colleagues told me that when she is punished for a vote, for a year the speaker will not even acknowledge her existence. At the end of the year, he sends her a note that says, "All is forgiven." Then she is once again given appointments and perks and that sort of thing until her next so-called "bad vote." He does this with men as well.

V: So you don't regard what he is doing as a matter of sexual discrimination. He just treats everybody the same way.

L: That is right.

V: Well, here you are in a situation of having voted against his wishes; he has made it clear. In what way has he made it clear to you that he is unhappy with you?

L: In the staffing, in the matter of staffing all staff, all personnel at the House of Representatives is hired through the speaker's office. The secretaries, the aides, the interns, any of that kind of help that the representatives are to have are hired by the speaker. So first off those people are beholden to the speaker for their employment. My contention is those people are paid with tax dollars, and each representative should have staff. When I began the term last January, I was given my predecessor's aide. I had asked for her. She had been there sixteen years and was completely experienced with all of the names, the departments; anyone you needed to know, she knew.

V: She had a wealth of experience to give to you.

L: Yes. I thought--What a benefit for a freshman to come in with an experienced staff, an experienced aide. I, as a freshman, had to share this aide with another representative. In other words, two freshman representatives get one aide. Two freshman get one secretary to share. So you have fifty percent of each of these people or a total of one whole person. That is how the math works out to my way of looking at it. This aide, it turned out, was so awful in that she was not doing the work that Representative Krupinski and I gave her to do. We would give her something, "Call Emma Smith in Bazetta and tell her that, yes, we are looking into her problem; we will get back to her," and assumed this aide was doing that. It would turn out that maybe two months later, you would either run into Emma Smith or you would get a telephone call from this irate person saying, "You are a lousy representative. You never answered my complaint on such and such." Krupinski and I were absolutely hysterical along about March when we realized this person was not doing the work. So after Krupinski and I talked about it, we decided that we had to go to the house secretary, Aristotle Hutras, who is in charge of all the staff, and begged for relief. So we told him that we would like to have her replaced and if we could not have her replaced, we would rather do without an aide because in fact, she was a hindrance, not an aid. So two weeks later, Representative Krupinski got another aide, a very good one. I have not had one yet.

V: That was in March?

L: That was in March.

V: Wow, so was that your first indication of being punished?

L: Yes.

V: I realized it. I usually try to be too logical about these things, but is there no recourse for you?

L: I don't think so unless I sue him.

V: It is amazing.

L: I am really not sure. I went to Hutras at least once a month, sometimes twice a month, to ask when I was going to get my new aide. It was always, "Well, maybe next month, maybe next month," or, "I have to run this past the boss," meaning the speaker. I repeatedly asked him when I was going to get help.

V: Why is it that you were not still sharing this person with . . .

L: Representative Krupinski.

V: Right.

L: Because he told me that aide was assigned to another representative and he was getting half. However, lots of staffing have come in. There have been lots of staff changes and I still have not seen one. My secretary, I am supposed to share with Representative Malone. Representative Malone has a full-time aide, which is pretty rare, but he has one aide who is a marvelous young woman, very dedicated, and generates mountains of work for the secretary that Malone and I are supposed to share. The orders have come down that Malone is to be reelected at all costs which means they generate mountains of work for the secretary. They clip out every one of the hospital release things from East Godsock, Ohio, "Dear Mrs. Smith, we are so glad you are over your recent gallbladder attack. Here is wishing you good luck and good health in the future. Yours truly, Representative Malone." Well, this is what Natalie spends all day typing. I am damn lucky if I get my phone calls answered and transferred to me.

V: So there is a definite attempt here just not to give you any help, but probably to hinder what you are able to accomplish.

L: Now the reason I think that he has come down especially hard on me is because there were other democrats who voted against the tort reform. Here is the part that makes sense to me, that is the Ohio Public Interest Campaign worked very hard statewide to let people know what a disastrous piece of legislation was facing them.

V: In this tort reform bill?

L: In the tort reform bill. They went door-to-door across the state talking to people saying, "Your representative may not vote against this; you had better phone them, write them, and let them know what your wishes are on this bill." It absolutely enraged some of the other legislators. They were furious that these uppity, grass roots organizers would have the gall to go into their district and tell their constituents how their representatives were voting.

V: Now the bill was defeated?

L: The bill passed with flying colors. It was so-called insurance reform.

V: Which we all know is a joke.

L: It was a joke. Not only that, it will prove to be a very sad thing for individuals when they try to seek redress in the courts. There are limits set on how much they can be awarded in lawsuits. All sorts of changes in the system and damn little . . . He allowed in the budget, that we passed the last day of June, this

little amendment to be slipped in and it has since been called the OPIC Amendment. That would prevent nonprofit organizations from going door-to-door to collect contributions to help and fight these kinds of cases unless they did the following: They have this long list of things that nonprofit organizations like OPIC have to comply with. In Alabama, that sort of thing was found unconstitutional because when the NAACP was trying to do their voter registration during the sixties, the Alabama Legislature tried to prevent that. It was found unconstitutional. So this will be too, but that is an example of how furious the speaker was at the Ohio Public Interest Campaign.

- V: And with you being a representative of that group suffered the brunt of that.
- L: And when he gave me my little talk after my vote, he sent word to me before that he would appreciate my vote on this and I told Ty Marsh, his representative, that I could not vote for that. Later that day, I was summoned to his office where he told me that if I could not be a team player, I was going to find things would be very difficult in Columbus for me. I would have looked like the biggest political prostitute in Ohio to have voted against not only the constituents, but the Ohio Public Interest Campaign. MADD opposed it. The Council of Senior Citizens opposed it.
- V: All of the people who you have been representing all of this time?
- L: Yes. But you see, he wanted to show these people--I can control her; I can make her do this.
- V: And you did not play along. So how does this affect . . . You have a two-year term?
- L: Yes.
- V: Are you going to run again?
- L: I have taken out my petition. I am circulating and I intend to run.
- V: I did not get to hear too much of this, but you were on Dan Ryan the other day. I caught it right when your potential opponent, one of your potential opponents came on the air and was talking. I did not hear too much of that. What is happening? First of all, you have somebody who has indicated that she is going to run against you?
- L: Yes.
- V: Do you want to talk a little bit about Mr. Riffe's attitude toward your running?

- L: He said that he will not give me any more money. He stated that in the interview he gave to the Warren Tribune. He gave me \$7,500 out of the house caucus money. He felt, I guess, that he bought a vote, at least the tort reform vote, for that amount of money. He gave other representatives a lot more than that. They voted against him.
- V: Is this going to be a problem to you, not having . . .
- L: The money?
- V: Yes.
- L: He gave me the money for the general. Historically, he has not given money to defeat an incumbent democrat. In the past, he does not care what democrat serves in the legislature as long as it is democrat. So he traditionally has never put money up against a democrat, but I think he would rather see any democrat than me in the legislature.
- V: So do you think he will send money to your home?
- L: No.
- V: That is why I caught the interview on Dan Ryan.
- L: Right. I don't know if he will do that or not, but he did not give me the money in the primary. That is when I desperately needed it. He gave me money for the general election against this independent I was running against.
- V: Which was less of a problem.
- L: Yes, much less.
- V: So you won the primary against a lot of odds and did it on your own?
- L: Not on my own, I could not have done it.
- V: Well, no, certainly not, I meant without his help.
- L: Yes, without the speaker's help.
- V: You have had another issue that has been brought up which I think is especially pertinent to this interview. That is the abortion issue. Do you want to talk a little bit about that and how it might affect your campaign? How did it affect you?
- L: I think that we absolutely have to have choice. We must have choice. I am committed to that. I cannot think of any alternatives for desperate pregnancies. I firmly believe that we need more education for young people. We have to support

women who choose to have a child. We, as a government and society, have to be willing to help that woman raise her child if that is her choice. We have to see that she has the kind of support that she needs to raise a child. But we need better education programs in the schools. We just have to do a better job of it. That will reduce the amount of abortions that are taking place. But, we have to have clean, safe abortions for people who choose that course. It is a pathetic problem.

V: In talking about this particular subject, you went on record publicly letting people know that you, in fact, had an abortion yourself.

L: No, I did not have an abortion. I was faced with the possibility of seeking an abortion. What had happened was that I became pregnant immediately after my second daughter was born. During my third month of pregnancy, I began to hemorrhage in the middle of the night and was rushed to the hospital, transfused. It was a nightmare. What the physician told me when I asked him what my chances of having a normal child--that would not be profoundly retarded because of this deprivation of blood--he told me that I had a one in ten chance of having a normal child. Furthermore, I would have to spend six months in bed to insure that I did not spontaneously abort the fetus if I had not already. I said, "Well, you have to check me to see if I am still pregnant or if I did, in fact, spontaneously abort because I made it to the bathroom and there was blood everywhere and no one was looking for an aborted fetus at that moment." I said, "I cannot spend six months in bed and I will not spend six months in bed if the outcome is going to be giving birth to a profoundly physically and mentally retarded child. I will not do that." But he would not even examine me and that is when I decided that I would find a physician somewhere in this country that had enough mercy on me to give me a D & C, so I could go back home and take care of the two daughters I had.

V: This is before legal abortions?

L: Yes. It was about 1968. I was so desperate; I just cannot tell you the desperation I felt. I did not have . . . My mother was dead. I did not have anybody who could simply come in and take care of my children. My husband had to work every day. I was nursing my baby. I understand that horrible dilemma. I just have pity for women who have to make that choice.

V: You eventually did not have to make that choice.

L: No, as it turned out. I left the hospital. I got up after my transfusions were finished, went to a phone booth, called my sister to come and get me, and I left the hospital. I came home and called Parade magazine in New York City who had done an article on clean, safe abortions that physicians were

performing in the United States. There was a clinic in Detroit that would take you. So they gave me the phone number in Detroit to call. I told them who I was. They did not tell me who they were. They said, "What you must do is go back to your physician, demand that he examine you, and sign a statement that you are in fact pregnant, and how far along you are. Then fly to Detroit. Call us again. Let us know what flight you are coming in on and tell us how we can identify you, and we will meet you there." So I did that. I went back to that doctor and said, "You will examine me. I want to know if I am still pregnant or not." He was furious. He was outraged, but so was I. He put me on the table and examined me. He said, "Oh, well, there is placental tissue in the cervix. You have already aborted. Now, we will send you into the hospital and do a D & C." How the hell long would he have kept me in the hospital, six months? He told me that they were going to keep me in the hospital at least a month in bed and then I would be able to then go home and spend the next five months in bed. It was just outrageous, absolutely outrageous.

V: It is amazing because today we don't think anything about that. We don't remember those things.

L: God, do I remember.

V: Sure you do. You told this story or at least parts of this story publicly since you have been a representative.

L: Yes.

V: It got you in some trouble?

L: Yes.

V: With whom?

L: Apparently with Dr. Timmons, who is the chairman of the democratic party in Trumbull County. He is also an avid right-to-life advocate as is my opponent in the primary this time. I understand that she is going to be campaigning on the right-to-life ticket. So they apparently believe there are enormous grounds for all the popularity for that particular issue. I have a lot of Catholic friends. Many of them have told me that they support choice. What is mystifying to me is the kind of convoluted thinking that Dr. Timmons presents. He was at a meeting in Hubbard a couple of months ago. A young woman at that meeting told him that if she were driving home that night and was stopped and somehow raped and impregnated, she would have an abortion. Dr. Timmons said to her, "You would not need to have an abortion. All you would have to do would be to go to the hospital and we would clean you out." He made this statement in front of the Hubbard Precinct Committee people. They were pretty angry about it. They really were. They just don't think that really he should

be making those kinds of statements particularly about . . . He has admitted that I have a wonderful voting record. I am an excellent democrat. The only disagreement he has is my position on choice.

V: So here you are in your fledgling term and facing an issue that you probably would not face if you were a man.

L: Probably not. Most men say, "Well, I personally oppose abortion, but I am for a woman's right to choose." That is the standard political line. That is a very safe line.

V: You say Dr. Timmons cannot really fault you on your voting record or your being a good democrat and certainly representing your constituents. Do you feel that you have support among your constituents in terms of, is this issue going to get in your way?

L: I don't think it will. I don't know. It depends on how much, how far she wants to push it. It is hard to read. It is very hard to read, but in the privacy of the voting booth, I am inclined to think that people will think--If that is my daughter or if that is my wife, I am not going to subject her to bearing Charles Manson's child. That is the bottom line for a lot of people. No one believes that abortion ought to be the first method of birth control.

V: I think that is something that a lot of people forget when it becomes an issue. It really gets blown out of proportion.

L: Yes. The rhetoric gets crazy.

V: Let's look at this then from a personal standpoint. You have gone on record saying, "If I had to do this, I would."

L: Yes.

V: Meaning, have an abortion. You said this publicly and are paying for it. Even if not, maybe it probably won't have anything to do with the election, but nonetheless you have suffered from the kind of remarks that people make. How do you separate that, being a public person? This is a personal question for me. How did you deal with the kinds of things that people say to you, the media's handling of you? What is it like to do this as a job?

L: I guess that is where I don't make a division between my so-called public image and my private image. I am the same person.

V: I realize that. That is why, I guess, I wonder, I would think it would affect you more personally, things would affect you more personally, since you have not put up this front. You are yourself.

- L: It does not affect me because I know I am right. I just absolutely know that I am right. I am not saying that from an arrogant point of view at all. Dr. Timmons' real objection was that I made these statements publicly. He would rather I put the back of my hand to my brow and say, "Oh, this is just a terrible problem. It is just so hard to think about," just have been evasive and not have talked about it. That is what he would have liked me to have done. These are just hard, cold facts. These things happen every day. It is like the "emperor has no clothes" school of politics that he belongs to. I think about my job all of the time. I would never want to embarrass the people who voted for me. That is important to me. I would hang myself or try to drown myself in the washbowl if I were to go out and get blind drunk and run into a phone pole or fall on my behind off a barstool, to have people say, "That is our representative?"
- V: Some people would say that to go ahead and say what you said about having an abortion is embarrassing to your constituency.
- L: How can that embarrass my constituency? I have thought about that. You know, many of these same people who would never admit that they had taken their daughter or their wife for an abortion twenty years ago are the same people who actually believe that they nearly had their daughter cleaned out at the Cleveland Clinic for \$3,000 back in 1965. "Now let's get real about this," as the kids would say.
- V: I want to address some of the questions that are on this interview form here and one of them is the question of support in the kind of work you do. You are married, you have children, you have friends, you have family, how do all these folks help/hinder in the way of support for your career? Do you find the support for one thing?
- L: Yes. My daughters think that I am great and that makes me feel good.
- V: So do your friends.
- L: That is what feeds me. I just absolutely need those strokes to be able to look Vern Riffe dead in the eye and say, "This is what I believe and you cannot make me change my mind; no matter what you do to me, you cannot do it."
- V: If one of your daughters said to you, "Gee, Mom, this is too hard for me to do, to support you on this," it is not going to change your mind?
- L: I cannot think of anything yet that they have not been supportive of. The only thing I disagree with my husband on, is the issue of death penalty and gun control. As a woman, now here is a woman's issue, I will just be double damned if I will ever be

a victim. I refuse to be a victim. I have thought about this so much because basically I am a very peaceful person until somebody screws with me too much. I will try all kinds of compromise, negotiation, but when I am in a life threatening situation, I find that I am able to defend myself very well. I have a lot of empathy when I read a newspaper article about some poor soul who has been bludgeoned and beaten and stabbed and burned and mutilated and on and on and on, and they repeatedly begged for mercy and their assailant has, of course, given them no mercy at all. I find that I would probably, well there is no doubt in my mind, I would just outright shoot them.

V: So your husband is a proponent of gun legislation?

L: Yes, he is a proponent on gun legislation, but he is six feet, four inches and weighs two hundred pounds. Men are not quite as vulnerable to attack as women. I am very smart in that I don't leave myself in a position to be victimized. I don't park in parking garages at night where I have to walk alone. I do a lot of driving by myself. I am alone in vulnerable positions a lot of the time. So, I am aware of it and I am extra cautious, but I feel as safe as I possibly can 99% of the time. I don't worry about that. I am opposed to Saturday night specials. I would certainly vote to license handguns and have a mandatory month long, six week long, or however long it takes to check out people to see if they have had past records, all sorts of safeguards, but personally I just absolutely cannot do without that.

V: So you are saying there, the difference between you and your husband in approach to this gun control thing is that he is male and you are female?

L: That is probably the bottom line.

V: In talking about differences between men and women, do you feel like you have been held back from doing anything because you are a woman?

L: No, I have never felt that.

V: You and I are both daughters of men who have no sons, the oldest daughters of men who have no sons, which is very interesting. I think that has a lot to do with . . . You were talking about your father teaching you things. I had the same experiences. You cannot speculate on whether that would be different if your father had sons, but I suspect that had a lot to do with setting you up as a pretty independent person.

L: I think so.

V: Have you encountered any kind of discrimination, would you say? I know you don't feel that you have been held back because you

are a woman, but have you encountered discrimination? Obviously in the legislature you had problems, but as you said earlier, you don't feel that that is because you are female.

L: No.

V: Have you encountered it anywhere else?

L: Yes. I guess you could say that I have. I remember a secretarial job I had when my husband was in graduate school. We desperately needed money and the only skill I had was typing. So I got a job as a secretary and I was working for five collection agents who absolutely harassed the hell out of me. They just made me crazy. I was much younger; I was only twenty-five. They just absolutely harassed me and I went to the boss, who of all people happened to be Art McGee, Trumbull County Commissioner. I have known Art almost twenty-five years. He was the boss of that particular division.

V: What did he say when you went to him with these charges?

L: He said, "I see, is that right? Okay, I will take care of that." I have no idea what he said to those guys, but they treated me with absolute respect from that day on. I had no idea what Art told them. One of these days, I am going to ask him.

V: Was it sexual harassment?

L: Yes.

V: Were they putting moves on you?

L: Yes. Pats on the behind and crowding against the file cabinet and lewd suggestions and things like that. I felt so victimized because I did not have any other skill. I did not have any options. I had to have that \$37.50 a week after taxes to help get by. It was just awful. So I have a lot of empathy for women who are in that position and they have to have that income. They don't have the luxury of saying, "Stick this job. I am leaving."

V: There are a lot of women in that position.

L: Yes.

V: You are lucky that this fellow came to your defense because many women do not have that.

L: No. In fact, it could well be the boss who is harassing.

V: Yes, very often. Jumping around a little bit here, but I want to cover a couple of things, how about your home? You have a

beautiful home. How do you deal with that? You are in Columbus three days a week?

L: When the House is in session, yes.

V: When you are home, you are not home very much?

L: Not a lot.

V: How do you deal with it?

L: I miss it.

V: I am sure you do. What do you do?

L: Frank and I kick into the household fund and hire a woman who comes in once a week and takes care of the major cleaning.

V: So you did not always have that luxury?

L: No, oh God, no.

V: You had the responsibility of taking care of your own home?

L: Yes.

V: Does Frank help you with the home?

L: He is a godsend around the house. He is a very neat person and an excellent cook. He does the cooking and I am really grateful to him for that because I burn everything I try to cook. The phone will ring and I will start taking all kinds of notes and the next thing I know, there is smoke and the fire detector goes off and it is like--Oh my God, I have ruined supper again. So I eat a lot of oatmeal and get my fiber.

V: I guess the final question that I would like to have you answer is . . . I have known you for a long time, twenty years. When we met, I never would have thought that we would be talking about you being a representative in the state legislature. Looking back, maybe even to high school which was your initial training to go out into the world, what did you envision for yourself as a young woman before you ever married, before you had children, before any of that? When you were in high school, what did you think about what you might do with yourself?

L: I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian.

V: You would have been a good one.

L: No, I would have killed a lot of animals inadvertently because I was never very gifted in mathematics. I would not have been able to measure medications properly. I would have probably

had a breakdown.

V: Stable side manner?

L: Right, but that is what I thought I might like to do, but the curriculum for veterinary medicine would have been way too tough for me.

V: Did you go to college right out of high school?

L: No.

V: You started college, you said, when you were twenty-five?

L: Twenty-five.

V: You had already been married, you had a child at that point, and you decided then to go to college. At that point you did not really know, you were just kind of dabbling and trying to find something?

L: Yes, I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up.

V: Do you think about . . . I heard you talking on the phone earlier about the years passing us by, to your good friend. What do you think about? What if you don't get reelected, or maybe you don't want to be in a couple of years? What do you think about for yourself down the road, when you are sixty?

L: Well, I had always thought that if I had the luxury of having enough money to maintain my house for me, I always thought that I wanted to go to work for a couple of years as a volunteer for maybe Green Peace or one of the very serious activist groups in the country.

V: Environmental activists?

L: Yes, I always thought I would like to do that even in as meaningless a job as cooking on the Rainbow Warrior. I don't get seasick. In some way to do something along those lines, I found that for a long time, I could get along on very little money, very little.

V: I think if you learn to do that, it is not so hard to fall back into that.

L: Right, it is not. I am glad that not only my father's work ethic, but learning how to make do is very valuable.

V: It is so much different from the young people today who expect so much immediately.

L: I have a wealth of skills that have been given to me over

the years by some of the best people you could ever imagine. My aunt, my father's sister-in-law, was one of the most unusual women I have ever met and one of the most sensible. She taught me all kinds of things, from how to set a sleeve in a suit to cooking, to genealogy, you name it.

V: Gardening?

L: No, she was no gardener.

V: She was not a gardener.

L: I learned that from my dad. I know how to raise vegetables. I know how to can. I know how to cut hair. I can sew. I can shingle roofs. I can paint a house. I can do all sorts of things.

V: Does the word "retirement" then fit into you vocabulary at all?

L: No.

V: I would not think so.

L: No, it just does not. I don't know really what retirement would mean other than not having a paycheck that you are actively earning. I think I would like to serve in legislature for ten years. At this point, I don't have vision of going on to Congress or anything like that. This is just a very small goal for me to serve in the legislature and in some ways, it is a luxury because I see some of the younger representatives in the House who are positioning themselves for runs on the Senate, Congress, or higher office. They seem driven to do these things and they don't think about sometimes what they are doing at the moment. They are just not thinking about it. What I envision is people who are jockeying for power; it is a real power hungry kind of thing. You don't impress me as being concerned about power, except for maybe getting done some of the things you feel need to get done. That is what my agenda is, trying to collectively move an agenda. You cannot do it by yourself, I know that. It is frustrating because there is the school of thought in politics that to get along, go along. You vote for things that may stick in your throat, but then somebody will owe you a vote. It is always frustrating. You know what I would like to see and it will never happen is that when a bill is sponsored that there would be no sponsor name on it. In other words, you could secretly go to a locked box that ninety-nine representatives have keys to and you unlock this box and you drop in your bill and you lock the box again. Then they come out and nobody knows whose bill it is. If it has merit and it will do a lot of good for a lot of people, then vote on it. Does not that seem to be . . .

V: It is very idealistic.

L: Yes, it is. That is probably my biggest flaw.

V: Of being an idealist?

L: Probably.

V: Do you find yourself alone in the legislature as an idealist?

L: No, there are some others down there.

V: Do you think they will last?

L: Some of them have.

V: You say you want to do this for ten years. In a young legislator's life, that is not a very long time.

L: No, not at all.

V: But ten years working for the kinds of things that you would like to see happen, do you see ten years as being a viable time period for getting done what you would like to get done?

L: I would like to see some solid environmental changes made. I think we will see that within the next decade. We are going to have to. The solid waste problems, what are we going to do with our garbage, our landfills? The capacity is about another ten years the EPA tells me. I think within the next decade it is possible that we could see some good legislation. We have to protect things like Meander Lake. We absolutely have to do that. I don't see any room for compromise on these things. Now, if that is being too idealistic, then maybe I ought to get the hell out of the legislature. How can you horse-trade on a safe water supply for a region of this size? You tell me how.

V: I am with you.

L: I know. They cannot either. And yet the lobbyists will come right in and say, "Look, you are crippling interstate commerce. You cannot stop these chemical trucks from hauling all these dangerous things. You are screwing around with business." I don't see any compromise in these areas.

V: Can you keep it going for ten years?

L: I don't know, probably not. It is like trying to . . . You think--Oh boy, good, here we go, here is the start. Then you turn around and it is time for elections again. The legislature, the way the House is set up, you run every other year. So they go down, they fool around until they get a budget passed and then recess, then convene for a little while, come back after the holidays, fiddle around another couple of months, and go home to campaign.

V: It is amazing that anything gets done.

L: Well, maybe the best thing to do would be for the legislature to meet for two weeks to pass a budget and to keep them out of Columbus so they cannot work so much mischief, but I don't know. I am told that in the first ten years in the House, the speaker did not introduce anything. He did not make any waves. He simply sat and watched and figured out how to oust his predecessor.

V: How long has he been there?

L: He has been speaker, I think, fourteen years. He was there maybe a few years before that. He was making his plans as to how to consolidate all of this power. He really figured it out.

V: Do you have female compatriots?

L: Yes.

V: So there are women down there doing . . . There are men in the legislature too I would imagine. There have to be a few who feel as strongly as you do.

L: Very good. There are some excellent representatives there, really good people. I always like to see idealistic people.

V: Who would you say were your role models in your younger days or maybe even now? Who are the kinds of people who you look up to?

L: Well, I looked up to my aunt, Lida Harshman. She was an early role model in a lot of ways. I think probably I was influenced more by authors too. Of course, there was my father who was one of the most honest people I have ever met and my grandfather who was a county commissioner in Trumbull County.

V: So there is a history of political life in your family?

L: Yes, he ran for one term as county commissioner. He said he would only serve one term and he had one purpose, that was to remove the director at the old folk's home in Trumbull County. He said the man was too incompetent to be the superintendent of the county home and had to be removed. So grandpa campaigned on that all over the county, won in a landslide, and ousted that incompetent superintendent who was ruining the county home, the old folk's home. Grandpa refused to run again. He said one term was what he had pledged he was going to serve. He did and that was it.

V: So he put on a long line of people who set out to do what they want and get it done.

L: Pretty much.