

MSS 664, University of Delaware Women's Studies oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Special Collections University of Delaware Library / Newark, Delaware 19717-5267

Phone: 302-831-2229 / Fax: 302-831-6003 / URL:

<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>

***Transcripts in this collection created by Marie Laberge unless otherwise noted.**

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law. Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library, <http://www.lib.udel.edu/cgi-bin/askspec.cgi>

**WOMEN AT THE CENTER:
HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE**

TAPE LOG

Marian Palley is Professor Emerita, UD Department of Political Science and International Relations. She served as Chair of the Women's Studies interdisciplinary Program from 1980-1990 and 1999 to 2005.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Marian Palley

Other people present: No one else present

Interviewer: Emily J Bonistall

Date of interview: April 27, 2012

Location of interview: In Marian Palley's office, Smith 460, UD campus

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): N/A

General description of contents: An interview with Marian Palley about her background and her involvement in the University of Delaware's women's studies program.

Recording Format and disc number: Video interview

Total Running Time: 54:39

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 1 of 5

Time	Contents
------	----------

00:00 Introductions. Background growing up and what was it like growing up as a girl. Grew up in NY -- Mother was a professional so there were not differential expectations of boys and girls.

1:07 Early Schooling & Undergraduate degree Both parents were social studies teachers with advanced history degrees. Started as an economics major and liked her political science professor so she changed majors to political science.

1:58 Involvement in women's movement: Wasn't active as an activist but has always been a supporter and involved in various relevant organizations. On the board for Planned Parenthood

2:36 Self identification as a feminist? Yes. And would have self identified as one 40 years ago.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 2 of 5

Time Contents

3:05 Discussion about relationship between feminist advocacy and academics: Sees a separation between the two. Doesn't advocate in class. Wants to help teach students to think for themselves. "I do not believe in advocacy in education. I think they are separate."

4:30 Arrival at UD. Came to the state & university in 1970 as assistant professor of political science. Was not involved in women's studies because she had small children and could only focus on her duties in the political science department. Was supportive of the program but not involved.

5:30 Discussion about Mae Carter and her influence in the push for women's studies.

7:12 Other allies: Art Trabant, Leon Campbell, Helen Gouldner (female dean).

8:10 Discussion about resistance to WOMS. If there was resistance, she was not aware of it. It was too minor of a program to get resistance. She was not involved in the first team taught class.

8:43 Discussion about women's studies classes. Most of them were cross listed. When she announced she wanted to teach women and politics, they said "go have fun." Started teaching that class in the early 80s. No risks to working with WOMS for her.

10:47 Question about the role of students? "I don't know, I can't tell you." There weren't many women students on campus.

11:30 Discussion about the name change of program: Gender studies is more inclusive

12:13 Discussion about her term(s) as director and experiences, challenges, growth as director. Once for a year (89-90) and then for six years (in the 2000s). (conversation about iPads while she tried to find her CV to find the specific years she was director). First time she was director she was filling in for Sandra Harding who was on leave. The second time she had two three year terms. During that time WOMS went from no full time faculty to four full time faculty. Director was given a chair's salary and teaching load. Offices were moved from Smith to "real offices." Got a chaired professorship. Budget increased dramatically and they could do things they couldn't previously do. Had an outside review during that period. Jessica [Schiffman] did unbelievable amounts of work putting review together. One of the results of review was that they needed more faculty and should be a department. Within two years of her leaving, became department. Held a bunch of conferences. Visibility. Ran huge numbers of programs on campus with speakers and public programming. Tremendous amount of growth. Discussion of professors becoming full time.

18:08 Question about the growth of program. Very aggressive campaign on the part of those in Women's Studies. Were getting high enrollments. The courses were popular. The dean was supportive (all three over the course of that period of time were supportive). First Dean was DeLorenzo, next was Mark [Huddleston] and then Bobby [Gempesaw].

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 3 of 5

Time Contents

19:01 Discussion about life changes and advice for tenure. Her children grew up. Get a good babysitter or housekeeper and have your mother move to town! Get a good network (story about Margaret Andersen babysitting so she could teach).

21:20 Discussion about two half time profs became full time and Major/minor. She campaigned to the dean. Simply doesn't remember [major /minor effort]. Doesn't know but doesn't think there was much resistance to establishing a minor. She doesn't remember that or the major being established. There was money, faculty, and s-contracts so she doesn't think it was an issue. A lot of the people teaching the courses were senior faculty.

23:20 Discussion about impact on women's studies as moves from program to department. She was treated as a chair beforehand, the program as treated as a department beforehand. She thinks the evolution into a department was the logical next step. In theory, programs can't hire but departments can but they were treated as a department (had a chaired professorship so obviously they were allowed to hire!).

25:20 Given position in political science, why committed to women's studies? She's done a lot of writing on gender/women. As an academic discipline, it made sense to her.

26:02 Any impact of women's studies in own discipline? No. Do have a feminist theorist in department now though, gender and globalization is a topic they teach. But people in political science who teach these things teach it from the political science discipline. Framing is different.

27:55 Question about if cross-listing strengthens or hinders a women's studies degree? Strengthens. It allows you to look at the issues through a broad range and not a narrow framework. She thinks WOMS is a fantastic multi-disciplinary major.

28:52 How has women's studies grown and evolved over the last 40 years? Certainly a whole lot more faculty involved. And more students taking the courses. The expansion probably reflects change of women's status in society – political and workforce participation. Having strong teachers (core faculty in WOMS are very strong teachers) draw students in.

29:54 How has Women's Studies department helped improve the status of women on campus? Not a one way street – it is interactive. As more women became tenured they were more willing to participate in WOMS. The university was much more women-friendly/supportive than many other universities. Story about chair who would schedule meetings around her schedule since she was only female faculty member and had to get home to her kids. Says that the whole institution was supportive – no barriers were put up for women. Discussion of sciences versus other disciplines. She never complained about administrative support as a woman on this campus.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 4 of 5

Time Contents

32:30 Discussion about how UD is different than other universities. Female colleagues at other places awe-struck. It says something for the folks who were in leadership positions early on – that Mae Carter was given the opportunity to set up a women’s studies program is reflective of that. Other people may have had different experiences, but she never had a negative experience being a woman on this campus. She found that by playing by the rules she was very successful. The fact that U Delaware had one of the first women’s studies programs in the nation is reflective of the environment here.

34:40 What are you most proud of? My students. And if that’s not what you are most proud of, you shouldn’t be here.

35:00 What still needs to be addressed? The hard sciences still have an underrepresentation of women – Gender is diversity too! There are still pay disparities. Have been changes in recent years, such as parental leave at full pay – women’s studies wasn’t a part of this, but women were a part of this, and men who were supportive of women were a part of it as well. Seneca Falls Convention had a debate about the participation of men, but men had to vote to let us have the vote. In that women have been successful on this campus, initially it was men who pushed for women’s success and sometimes we forget that. Hates to admit it, but its true.

38:01 What would you say to people who are critical of women’s studies? Look at the literature! Look at the work of the scholars who associate with women’s studies – as good as it gets. As a major, it provides a breadth of knowledge and experience that other majors don’t provide because it is multi-disciplinary. Though, she doesn’t know what happens when employers ask new graduates what is a women studies major?

40:01 How do you feel that your story and your role adds to the creation of the department? What do you want people to take form your story?

The evolution of the department was a process that had a lot of people involved – there wasn’t anyone who was primary (except maybe Mae Carter). All of us did things, 1+1+1, it was additive over time. We should be weary of someone who would claim too much for themselves in the development of any institution.

There are some people, though, who don’t get sufficient credit, such as Emily Hayworth and Jessica [Schiffman]. She’s hesitant to say that what she did made the big difference; it was cumulative and additive. There were a lot of women doing a lot of very good scholarship, and everyone got into print media so everyone knew what they were doing. Also, good leadership of the program over the course of time. And a tremendous amount of focus. Finally, very good teachers who are committed to their students. Not one person or thing, all of these things together.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 5 of 5

Time Contents

43:27 All the questions I have, anything to add? When did it go from being a shadow program to something more visible or aggressive? I can't answer that, I'm just wondering. It probably happened when you had more women hired on campus, but I really don't know. I'm curious. Was there a takeoff point?

45:10 Would you say that happened before your involvement? I think so, but I really don't know. Had to be something before I was director.

46:05 We learned about a retreat that many of the women went to in order to talk about the program. Could it have come from there?

I can't tell you because I wasn't there. It's quite possible; I simply don't know. If you're living day to day you don't see change, and suddenly you say oh my god look at the difference! When you go through it you don't see the advance, but when you fast forward 40 years you say what has happened? Changes not just within the program but with women in general. Women's Studies paralleled a lot of the social changes in society, and the expectations. Discussion of the rising average age of marriage and the pill. .

50:35 Any influence of the women's health center you saw on campus? There was a doctor who wouldn't distribute the morning after pill (or birth control?) and students mobilized and complained to Roselle who was president at the time. And Roselle told him that he could distribute it or find another job.

52:26 Was there a lot of mobilization on campus? No. It's an unmobilized campus. Quiet campus. Which isn't to say that students don't organize to make demands, but it is done in a civil fashion instead of mass demonstrations, for whatever reason. But I don't think you see mass demonstrations on most campuses these days so we may reflect the rest of the university world.

53:29 Words of appreciation and signing of the consent form.

54:39 End of tape.