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

**TAPE LOG**

Sandra Harding is Professor of Social Sciences & Comparative Education and Gender Studies at the University of Los Angeles. She served as Director of Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program at UD from 1985-1989 and 1990 to 1992.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Sandra Harding

Other people present: No other people present

Interviewer: Marie Laberge

Date of interview: July 10, 2012

Location of interview: Sandra Harding's home in Venice California

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): Cat Meowing in background. Helicopter and plane sounds, sirens in background. Chicken noises in background.

General description of contents:

Discusses her personal and educational background. Activism in women's movement in Albany. Arrival at UD and search for others interested in women's studies. Hired in Philosophy. Connection to others in women's studies. Discussion of early years here and structural issues in WOMS. Discussion about the previous generation of women academics and the women's movement in area. Support from some men in her department and resistance from others.

Discussion about early director and retreat in Lancaster. Development of minor and major in WOMS. Work to help faculty develop WOMS classes with Maggie Andersen. Work as Director. Comparison of UD with UCLA. Discussion about hiring faculty in WOMS. Early introductory classes, Delaware seminars. Effort to get a graduate certificate.

Discussion about Women's Studies as a department. UD WOMS more institutionalized and woven into fabric of the University than other departments. Discussion about Smith Hall location of offices and why it was important. Noon time lunch series was great idea. Discussion about her work and resistance to feminist theory in her field. Years spent as administrator in Women's Studies. Able to connect with women in other fields about theoretical work, learning from each other. Attacked by right wing and impact on her work situation. Women's studies training helped her respond. Can take more risks due to tenure. Currently working on post-colonial issues and technology studies. Impact of WOMS on her fields. Successes of WOMS. Discussion about name change, related to debates about UCLA name change. Misses UD women's Studies Program and community. Introduces her chickens.

Recording Format: Video interview

Total Running Time: 101:46 minutes

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## TOPIC SUMMARY

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00:00 Grew up in New Jersey, went to Douglass College as English major, Worked in NY in late 1950s. Married at 23. Husband got job at Vassar so moved to Poughkeepsie. Taught Greek and Roman literature and other classes. Also taught fifth grade math. 1966 husband got job at SUNY Albany. Had first child while in Poughkeepsie and second child Emily born in Albany. Went back to graduate school because missed intellectual stimulation when children were so young. Started in Sociology in 1967 and switched to Philosophy at NYU in 1968. Had a 2 ½ hour commute each way.

3:00 Women's movement beginning in Albany. Liberalized abortion laws in NY before national effort and was part of a network to help finance young women to go out of state to obtain abortions. Talking about her CR group which began in 1972, still meets. Was last person to leave it when she came to Delaware in 1976. Out of it grew the Capital District Women in Albany area, grew from 13 women to about 400 women. Discussion of the CDW group.

5:50 Got Doctorate in 1973. Taught at the Allen Center at SUNY Albany. SUNY Albany on the AAUP censor list because closed down Allen Center in inappropriate procedures. Was on job market and had split from her children's father. Selected job in Philosophy Dept at UD.

7:00 Arrived at UD with strong feminist background in summer of 1976. First thing she did was to go into the bookstore and looked at who was ordering what, and found women's studies books and called up Maggie Andersen based on the books she was using. Was the beginning of long and wonderful friendship. When moved her children were 10 & 11. Visited many times with Maggie Andersen., including when Maggie was in California.

8:27 Women's studies was just starting up. Hired to teach Philosophy. Allen Center had been doing radical philosophy and very successful students. Interviewed with Honors Center at Delaware. Did not want to go into another interdisciplinary program so went into Philosophy. It had a Master's Program at the time.

11:30 Had been teaching Introduction to Feminist Thought before so was welcome here as well. Women in community were very welcoming when arrived at UD ( list of names). Was a wonderful women's community.

12:45 Discussion of structural issues in women's studies. Joyce Jennings was not the ideal person for directing women's studies. She was divisive. Did not have good managerial style.

13:44 Co taught a class with Maggie Andersen. Working to get Departments to hire women, and recruiting courses on campus. Felt gifted to get to work with Maggie who was doing research on race theory and [Akasha] Gloria [Hull] who was one of early founders of Black Feminist Scholarship. Taught African and African American philosophy to show the need for the class. Discussion of class and texts. Would never have had the courage to go into that area if not for Maggie and Gloria.

16:15 Structural issues go along with being in marginal programs. Current similar struggles and issues around field of science studies.

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17:10 Were all untenured faculty at the time in different departments. Black Studies also starting around the same time and were around in public life. Big women's community in town. There were also supportive men. Still a very small number of women on faculty who had been active in first women's movement, women in their 60s. Discussed some women from previous generation. There were still about 1/2 dozen of those women and no one between us. Few tenured women, so sense the time was right, happening everywhere. Immensely exciting time.

20:06 Discussion about Philosophy and her own research. Had two extremely supportive men – Frank Dilley and Bob Brown, ran Honors Center and some young philosophers that were totally hostile. Some had vigorous careers as womanizers. Frank was protective and made sure rules of Dept were cleaned up so they could not mess up. Discussion of National Association of Scholars role in Philosophy. Discussion of one male scholar who was a total anti-feminist, which led to support for her. Lot of hostility but we all had each other. Between supportive senior male faculty and female buddies across the campus it was very lively. Description of the two extremes – supporters and people who hated it and fought against it.

24:51 Departure of Joyce Jennings discussed. She took her line into Psychology which was considered a Women's Studies line and that alienated many people. Discussion of retreat in Lancaster. Hard to remember it but it was wonderful. Agenda was how to regroup and strategize about how to move forward. Had the big Introduction to Women's Studies and soon were able to get TA's for the class. Discussion of both TA's now.

28:31 Do not recall any big battles over getting a minor. Getting a Major and later a Department were big battles but for minor were not needed. Used to let the administration know they were lucky to have such a reasonable person as director when the students were demanding X, Y and Z. It was the Director and faculty who channeled student discontents in productive directions. The administration was lucky to such faculty.

29:51 During this period, Maggie Andersen and Sandra Harding got a grant to run a summer program for social science faculty to introduce feminist issues into their introductory courses. Had eight faculty, discussed. It was a full year program, with summer workshop meeting with readings and discussion and the following year there was a lecture series and each faculty brought in leading feminist scholars in their field. Had done work on revising the curriculum at the Wellesley center. Discussion of the male faculty responses to reading feminist material from their disciplines. There was a deep sense of shock discovering gender in places they hadn't thought about. Two young women running this series with older male scholars. Was great working together with Maggie. They all did something in their classes. They loved the interdisciplinary work and conversations. ( Plane noises)

35:34 Director of Women's Studies from 1985-1991 & then again 1991 – 1993. By 1993, in California half a year. Six years of commuting back and forth to UCLA. Applied for several jobs when was 60. UCLA had a Feminist Philosophy class on the books. Last course at UD in Fall 1995. Was sorry to leave after 19 years.

38:30 Effort to push for major took place when she was Director. Made appointments with chairs of several departments to discuss how we would get faculty freed up to teach classes. Most were very welcoming. It was a commitment of resources. Was a continual effort over three years.

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41:11 Departments wanted their faculty for their own classes. Discussion of efforts at UCLA. On one hand, was difficult to squeeze faculty out of department obligations, on the other hand feminism was more widespread and had 20 years of it in their disciplinary organizations and journals. Wasn't about legitimacy of the field. At that point we were all senior faculty. Still a sense that maybe women's studies would go away.

43:21 Carol Hoffeecker as provost & Maggie Andersen soon to be in administration helped address issues of legitimacy.

44:16 Discussion of diversity in field. Was a constant issue. Gloria Hull and Maggie Andersen both had an impact. There was an increasing number of faculty women of color. Discussion of efforts on campus and joint programming. All of senior people were clear about what needed to happen but it wasn't easy when hiring wasn't happening. Discussion of differences between East coast and Los Angeles.

47:41 Discussion of hiring of faculty in Women's Studies. Sue [Cherrin] and Kathy [Turler] had both been Sociology graduate students. Hiring several graduate students to teach courses. Sandra affiliated with Sociology as a faculty and familiar with Sue & Kathy. At some point the creation of half time positions was stabilized. Was not a big problem for the half time positions. Was more controversial around changing to full time later. Both have given fabulous services and teaching service.

50:31 Had multiplied the Intro courses including one for men called "Men and Masculinity", taught by Gerry Turler. Had to change the title to "Men, Conflict and Social Change". Sue designed one for Women in International Perspectives long before anyone else was doing it. One focused on women in professional tracks. Had four introductory classes.

52:51 Founded the Delaware Seminars in Women's Studies, modeled on Penn seminars. Someone on campus would have a paper read ahead of time and would invite scholars from other institutions. Did it as dinner. It was really successful and a wonderful intellectual adventure.

54:51 While director, made effort for a graduate certificate. Minnesota had designed a certificate program. "We were all a buzz all over the country." Offered a couple courses in different departments with a feminist focus. Distributed flyers around campus indicating classes being taught. Cannot recall any encouragement from administration at all.

59:44 Pause in conversation.

59:44 Discussion of Women's Studies becoming a department. Do not recall thinking that we could become a department. At UCLA it was a big issue, she thought it was a bad move to become a department because they could get rid of faculty more easily when they were not tenured into other departments. Acknowledges she was wrong about it. Recalls being more concerned about curricula and graduate certificates. UD program was allowed to own faculty which they could not at UCLA. UD was well institutionalized program compared to many other institutions. We were more into the fabric of the University structure. Example of the diversity requirement, in its development WOMS was highest represented.

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63:14    Issues she had to deal with as Director of Program rather than Department Chair. (Cat meowing in background) Dealing with fewer issues: didn't have to deal with promotions etc. Were required to attend the Dean's Department chairs meetings. Urged to go by Maggie Andersen. Didn't have to manage faculty.

64:11    "We were used to having the double institutional structure of being our own unit with our own set of issues and being out, working out in departments and across the university colleges also." Was never enticed to be a Department Chair, but was delighted to be a Program chair. ( sound of helicopter... discussion of it)

65:10    Question of space and location of women's studies. Loved moving into Smith Hall. Being in the small house, it was outside the mainstream but Smith Hall had many other departments and lot of people going past our office and it felt it was huge space for us to have. Made it easy to find us and we wanted to be in the middle of things. By the time she left, that space was too small for us. Larger space was cut up into office. Now back in old building, though now have the whole building.

67:21    Other issues important to discuss? Noon time lunch series was a brilliant idea that she and Maggie Andersen developed. It reached deep into the university community and ran it to showcase our faculty. We had 60 or 70 people in it. It reached very deep and broadly in the university community. Then we changed one of those terms into the gender and race so brought in a lot of faculty of color. That type of outreach into community was very important. Still exists. Sometimes taught by graduate students. Discussion of who teaches it now.

70:48    Discussion of her work and whether there were any issues in how she combined feminist and philosophy. It was a struggle for the whole field. In epistemology, it was hard to work in feminist theory and met with resistance. Discusses grant to the Wellesley center where she wrote her first book.

71:54    Had spent 17 years administering Women's Studies by 1995: 7 years at UD, 5 years at UCLA and 5 years co editing Signs. Administration has different rhythm to it and it enabled her to do her writing. Taught half time each of those years.

73:23    Several grants provided her with time off to do her writing (before directing WOMS at UD). Discussion of her early books and organizational work in philosophy.

74:33    Was doing in concert with other women in different disciplines : discussing early theorists in Standpoint theory from a variety of disciplines and working with scientists. Would organize programs about gender and science. We didn't know how to connect it all but it was astonishing performance for the audiences to have us all there. We learned from each other.

75:44    Recalls telling chair Frank Dilley about her edited collection with subtitle "Feminist Epistemology, Methodology and Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science" was coming out, he paused and then said it better be good. He was having to deal with objections to my work.

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77:04    The right wing has always been after me. The John Birch Society in Delaware sent letter to some DE Senator objecting to commies on campus, due to an alternative history lecture series. Heard about it from chair who received a letter from University President. Chair wrote the letter from President to Senator describing this as legitimate part of her work.

78:14    The science wars started while still at UD. Recalls a reception line, and the President said he saw my name in Newsweek. Paragraph was same one as Shirley McClaine and a scientist who was associated with people abducted by aliens. Was an object of attack, along with Donna Haraway. Women's studies training was very helpful because I was clear about which struggles to respond to and which to ignore. Discussion of speaker attacking her on campus. Learned when to stand and fight and when to not react. Would respond by saying I wasn't radical enough, because hadn't address race issues or other issues. Undermined the attacks.

81:34    Since tenured, have known I can take risks when others cannot and have taken them where its important. These days its around post colonial issues. Discussion of her new Postcolonial Reader. Addressing issues of postcolonial science and technology studies. Discussion of conference she will soon attend.

83:14    Growing up in Women's Studies was a wonderful training. Still teaches Feminist Philosophy. In her Feminist Theory class at UD it was a Feminist Philosophy. Still a fun class to teach. Discussion of teaching the class at UCLA with cross listing of Philosophy and Women's Studies and how to bring the two sets together.

85:33    Impact of Women's Studies on her field. Need to discuss "fields". It has impacted Philosophy, although only small percent of women in Philosophy Departments faculty. But there has been an out pouring of literature so are established in the field. Current presidents of all three divisions of American Philosophic Associations are women, feminist philosophers. Women discussed.

87:05    Still a struggle in Science Studies. Has taught Gender and Science for long time. Now trying to move into feminist post-colonial science studies but it is hard. Discussion of her work in post-colonial studies, science and feminism. Hard to link feminist post-colonial theory, and feminist and Western science studies, and women and development literature together coherently. Discussion of her paper and effort to create a reader on this effort, these studies share some commonalities but they do not address three areas: what are the important social issues and movements, important sciences to be concerned with and who are the imagined agents of social change.

89:54    Question of Women's Studies biggest successes. Only have experience with two programs UD & UCLA. Successful in making intellectual issues what people thought were "only" political issues and has institutionalized that into different intellectual environments. Still see continual work in these different areas. Discussion of currently reading critiques on Western secularism and meaning about them and feminist issues in these debates. Reading a lot of Islamic feminist work today. Feminism is always present because new things happen.

93:34    What's difficult is providing a safe and nourishing home for people alienated from other disciplines. Discussion of post doc program at UCLA and success of it. Discussion of different lines in UCLA women's studies. Sometimes hard to integrate them into larger UCLA campus.

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97:00      Discussion of changing name of Women's Studies to Gender Studies. Discussion of debates at UCLA related to name change. Development of Gay and Lesbian Studies at UCLA. Still don't have courses on Men's Studies here.

99:32      Misses the UD Women's Studies Program: That was so fun and a lovely environment and miss the women there. Still see some UD women who go to California to visit. Wish the Delaware program as glorious a future as it has had a history..

100:42 Still recording... Can hear cat in background. Introduces to her chickens: Peaches and Clementine. Clementine is the top chicken, the big white chicken is the boss.

End of Tape 101:46