# Sally Mack Transcript

Judith Rosenbaum: Today is August 3, 2000. I am sitting here in Gloucester, Massachusetts with Sally Mack and this interview is being conducted by Judith Rosenbaum. Great. I think the best thing would be if you told me about your childhood and where and when you were born, that kind of thing.

Sally Mack: OK. Well technically I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but I grew up in Oil City, Pennsylvania--which is a small town that's 90 miles north of Pittsburgh, almost on the Ohio border-- in an Orthodox Jewish family, about 100 families in a twenty-mile radius, and there was a lot of antisemitism. I was born in 1933. I was in first or second grade when problems started in the world and I remember I couldn't read the newspaper yet, quite, and I saw this word, “Czechoslovakia,” and I was trying to figure out what my father was so concerned about. My parents were -- my mother was born in this country of Russian immigrants. They were from Belarus, a little town called Skitle (sp?). My father was born in Lithuania near the Polish border in a little tiny village called Shay (sp?) which we called Veshay (sp?) which I went back to Lithuania to try to find it. There is no Veshay, so that was the Yiddish name for it. It probably was Veshalius (sp?). My father was a businessman who was fairly assimilated. He had a lot of friends who were Jews and non-Jews. My mother was very, I'd say, almost paranoid about not trusting non-Jews. We lived very close to my maternal grandmother who was a very powerful matriarch in our family. She was the rabbi, she was the doctor, she was really sort of a shaman, she was. She was amazing. She didn't really learn English properly, and she couldn't write it very well, so I used to write letters for her -- sometimes with Hebrew letters, but the English words -- and sometimes just write letters for her.

JR: Did you speak English with her?

SM: Oh, she spoke English. I actually never learned to speak Yiddish. That was the secret language. If you didn't want the “kinder” to understand -- especially about the war -- you spoke Yiddish. So I grew up -- and I have a brother nine years my senior who was sort of like a second father to me, who I pretty much worshipped and hated at the same time. There was a lot of secrecy and whispering and Yiddish talking during the war. I have two very, very close girlfriends and one of them said to me, "You know, my parents are part German and Hitler wins the war. You are our enemy, and we have to turn you in," or be against you, or something. So I learned to be very nice and very popular and I graduated like the most popular girl in my class. I just totally assimilated socially, and I was very much a leader. I had a lot of support to do well. I mean, my parents appreciated me, but for my mother, the focus was definitely on my brother, and I should just find a nice husband and get married and that was it. My father really had more ambition for me, and I was pre-med and he wanted me to be a physician, if I wanted to, which I did for a while, and then decided that's how I wanted to spend my life after all. Anyhow, so I was married when I was 26. I had three sons. One was born nine months and one day after I was married. I got right into having children. I married a man who was a psychiatrist, who shared a lot of my social-political interests, which actually were not that evolved when I met him. I remember during the McCarthy era, when I was in college, I was asked to sign some protest letter and I wouldn't do it. I thought, "oh this might affect my getting into medical school, so I won't do that." So, I wasn't -- I was active, but I was active like I was head of the Women's Judiciary Council -- sort of goody-two-shoes type of things -- but I didn't take risks. I really wasn't a risk-taker.

JR: Were your parents political? Did you talk about politics with them?

SM: My father – yeah, they did talk about politics, they were Roosevelt Democrats -- but my father was -- I think he ran on a Republican ticket for City Council in Oil City, which of course he didn't win. I don't think any Jews went into public office, and that was a heartbreaker for me. I really found his -- I remember vividly his receiving a phone call

from his captain or something, that he lost. It could have been for many reasons, but I certainly thought it was partly because he was Jewish. My mother, pretty much, she was a very obsessively clean housewife and just had her shopping lists and cleaning and her maid who cleaned for her and stuff.

JR: Were your parents well-educated?

SM: No. My father was very knowledgeable. He read the paper cover to cover. He knew the name of every Congressman and senator in the United States. He came to this country when he was eleven and he was in a schoolroom for three years, but he doesn't know what grade he was in. I don't think he spoke English well enough to understand what grade he was in. So by the time he was fourteen, he was working in the steel mills fourteen hours a day and you know… But, he did go to night school. He took public speaking courses. He was really a self-made man, and he owned his own insurance and real estate business, and sent two children to college.

JR: Was it assumed that you would go to college?

SM: Yeah. Yeah. I had very good grades you know. What most people did was they went to local community or state colleges, and I went to the University of Michigan where actually my cousins, my brother had gone, and that was a whole renaissance for me to be with people who looked and thought things that I'd never thought about, you know.

JR: Were your parents supportive of you going far away for college?

SM: No, not -- well, my father didn't care, I don't think -- my mother really clung to me. She was a very smothering, protective mother and I was a critically ill baby. I was not expected to survive. I had something called Pyloric Stenosis and to operate on babies in 1933, I don't even think they gave us anesthetics in those days. It was really risky. But it also was my mother. My mother is a very anxious, was a very anxious person, but very loving in her own way, and very critical and careful. My father was more of a risk-taker in

a way.  Although he really was an extremely patriotic American and he was just incredibly grateful to this country for giving him a chance to have a good life.  So he never did anything that would be law-breaking or dangerous.  He wouldn't drive too fast, or something like that.  So my brother was more of the rebel.  I was the good girl, he was the rebel.

JR:  In what ways was he a rebel?

SM:  Well, he went out with gentile girls and did things he wasn't allowed to do -- or he was allowed to do, that was the thing, my mother said, "I have a complete double standard.  Your brother can do anything he wants, you absolutely cannot," and I was very good in that way.  So neither socially, nor sexually, nor politically did I step out of line at all.  I was interested in reading and writing.  I was editor of the school paper and literary editor of the yearbook and stuff, and in college I really focused on my pre-med classes.  I really wasn't a strong enough science student in those days.  Very few women were accepted to medical school.  You really had to be exceptional, and I wasn't.  I mean, I could have made it somewhere probably, but I really was very interested in social work, so the public health/social aspects of medicine.  So I went to the School of Social Work and my mother wasn't very enthusiastic about my doing that.  She just wanted me to settle down and my father wanted me to be able to support myself. Both of his sisters were widowed at a young age.  He helped support them.  I guess the other really dramatic thing that happened was at the end of undergraduate school, I went with the Quakers -- with the American Friends Service Committee -- to Israel to work in an Arab village, and that was a real eye opener for me because I was from a very Zionist background, and there I was in an Arab village with these beautiful Arab friends, but watching the Arabs and Jews mistrust each other all over the place, even the ones that were in the camp together, you know, the work camp.  We were rebuilding the road that went from the main road up into the village.

JR: What was your upbringing like Jewishly?

SM: Well, we were Orthodox. I did not ride in a car. I did not handle money. I didn't even turn on lights on Shabbos. There was a lot of discomfort in that because I couldn't eat at my friend's house and my mother refused to have non-Jews come to our house because she was embarrassed that she couldn't put butter on the table with meat and so on. So a lot of it was defensive. It was very non-inclusive. It was like, don't go out with those *shagetzim* and don't do this and don't do that and you can't really trust your gentile girlfriends. I knew she was wrong, but I knew there was some reason why she said what she said. I wasn't even allowed to give a bathrobe to someone to use in the Christmas play because a Jewish bathrobe shouldn't be used in a Christmas play. I mean, it was just way overdone, I think. But at the same time, there was a warmth and security in the kind of humility that grows out of being observant. Needless to say, I married a non-practicing Jew. (laughter)

JR: Were you practicing in college or were you (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SM: My first two years I observed Kashrut and then I gained about 20, 25 pounds because I was eating bread and potatoes and dessert. So I started eating meat and my head didn't fall off my body. I still don't eat ham or pork. It was always a game in the house because I wouldn't bring any ham or pork in, and John and the kids would bring it in and tease me. Yeah, this has been a big issue for me, both the spiritual and ritual aspects. I don't quite know what to call me. I was married to a man who saw it as just amazingly primitive and non-thinking to go along with these things and I kept saying, "It isn't about rational thought. That isn't why you do it." He subsequently turned 180 degrees, but more so since we're divorced. But he's very grateful that I introduced that into our marriage, even though he fought it every step of the way. The fact of the matter is that I wasn't very successful in it. The boys chose to do what their father did, and they didn't want to go to Sunday school, and he'd say, "What are you trying to get this kid up

for on a Sunday morning," you know? So, the youngest was bar mitzvahed, but the other two weren't, and that was a heartache to my parents, just really hard for them to deal with. So, I guess I had some unfinished business about that too. I was very, very close to one of my cousins in Oil City and my whole family, all the extended family on my mother's side, were all very religious and I could have lived with anybody if anything happened to my parents. I was close to all of them. My father's family lived about 15 miles away. His mother didn't speak English and so I never really communicated much with her, but she didn't communicate much with anybody, she's a very quiet woman. I was interested in that family, but I didn't have the comfort with them. I didn't see them often enough and they weren't as physically demonstrative as my mother's family. So, for me, religious practice and love and closeness and security, all went together. But socially, I was uncomfortable as a Jew in my own community.

JR: In what ways?

SM: I didn't talk about being Jewish. When we would go to Hebrew school, kids would throw rocks at us and call us dirty kikes. I mean, there was out and out antisemitism. So, I just never mentioned that I was Jewish and I was -- I mean, people in Oil City knew it -- but like when I was in college, I remember going to dinner at someone's house and the parents were going on and on with antisemitic statements and I just prayed that I wouldn't get discovered, you know? I subsequently learned to handle that, but at the time, I didn't know how to handle it. I just hid it. I didn't deny it, I just didn't advertise it.

JR: And your family was very Zionist, you said?

SM: Yea, they weren't radical Zionists, I mean, the people that were they thought were too much. They're very anti-communist. The great grandmother for whom I was named, Zora Channah (sp?), was my maternal grandfather's mother, and she chose when she got older and very sick to go to Eretz Yisrael to be buried in that ground. So, that was really the value system, and I was often compared to her. Partly because I carried her

name and partly because I think, the way they described her, we were both very optimistic people who kept healing the tensions between people. We wouldn't let a -- apparently she, and I know this from myself -- I wouldn't let a warring situation rest. I would always keep working on healing it and the fact of the matter is that my parents fought all the time. So I carried the messages and I tried to heal that all the time.

JR: So you started to tell me about your trip to Israel with Quaker community.

SM: So when I went there I was -- the first few days I was there were like the most wonderful days of my life, just you know the openness, the pioneer spirit. This was in 1955. The work camp was just so confronting to me, my values, and even my physical strength, I mean, I really built up muscles. We were digging ditches and building ways to get water up into the village.

JR: How did you end up going on this trip?

SM: Well, I got very involved with the Quakers actually. I wasn't that involved with Hillel, but I got very involved with the Quakers and their weekend work camps when I became a sort of pre-social work school student. I learned about them and went into inner-city Detroit and rehabbed houses with people, and I liked Friend's meeting. Actually, that was a real deliberation for me. There were a lot of things about Quaker meeting that I like better than Jewish ritual. I just like the silence and being able to see where my own thoughts and feelings took me instead of having it all prescribed for me. At this work camp, I actually fell in love with a Quaker man who was semi-engaged to another woman, and he ended up going back to her. But I really, really though a lot about, could I marry a non-Jew and really live a different kind of life? Because it was very much my belief system that they really lived these beliefs so actively, at least the Quakers that I knew did. After I came back to Ann Arbor, I did go to Quaker meetings a lot, and I still go sometimes, actually. But I decided at the end of the work camp that I just was not ready to go to graduate school, that I was such a protected American Jewish girl. I didn't know

what it was like to feel that people were actively plotting against me or that my life was really in danger and so I wired my parents and told them I wasn't coming back. It's a long and involved story, but the end of it was that my parents, after much cajoling and getting my brother to help them, wired me and said my grandfather was dying and calling for me and I really had to come back; I did, and he wasn't dying. They just felt that they had to get me back, my mother did. It was also the beginning of the Gaza incidents, and her picture was that I was under gunfire or something. But that time in Israel and being with young and not-so-young people who had the establishment of the state of Israel ahead of their own lives -- being able to raise their kids by hand or something like that was just such an incredible experience for me, because I had been in just the opposite situation. Well, I didn't really do much about that except gain about 20 pounds in my depression and anger. I got very invested in my social work training.

JR: Did you ever go back to Israel?

SM: Yea, I went back twice. John and I went back together with my mother, who had dragged me back after my father died. We took her and Tony -- my youngest son did have a bar mitzvah -- and the four of us went to Israel together. That was a wonderful, wonderful trip and then we went back again in the late '80s, early '90s to a psychiatric conference about children in war. It's wonderful to be there and my middle son, who always insisted he wasn't interested in Jewish stuff, went there after he finished undergraduate school and before he went to law school, and he worked with “B'tselem”. That was fascinating. He was there at the time that John and I went to the conference, so it was fascinating. We went to Gaza, interestingly, with a very prominent Arab psychiatrist/activist, spent time with him. And we're in a room with some Arab people, a man who is just enraged about what the Jews had done to him, he was just screaming and swearing in Arabic and I found myself very empathic with him. Terrible things had happened to him and his family. Those were the times that I'd been back and I have some friends who -- this coming Sunday I'm joining them -- they're making Aliyah. You

know, there's a twinge.  In many ways it would be wonderful to live there, and I have some friends there and my roommate in graduate school was an Israeli nurse.  But I'm not -- I've sort of looked for a way for my own social-political-spiritual feelings to be expressed more in a Jewish venue.  I haven't quite found that.

JR:  So tell me a little about the kind of work that you do now.

SM:  Now?  You mean professional work?  Well, right now I'm 67, so I've sort of cut back a bit in my practice, but mainly it's because I'm not in the hospital anymore.  Most of my life has been spent working in hospitals and my focus has been pretty much peri-natal social work, working with families who've had a crisis around childbearing.  So, I worked in the neonatal intensive care unit.  I developed a lot of programs with pre-natal programs -- childbirth preparation programs -- and I've also done a lot of work in the community with special needs kids and their families.  I've been a leader in the social work community.  Mostly in that area, I've been the head of a peri-natal, national peri-natal social work group on social/political issues and really worked hard to get the mandate that parents could stay home when their babies are born and they're sick and so on.  I worked with Barney Frank on that.  So these days I'm mostly in private practice and I'm doing some interesting work at Mass General, facilitating monthly rounds where a multi-disciplinary staff – anybody who wants -- can come together to talk about the emotional feelings that they can't express when they're taking care of patients and trying to help each other think through what they could do.  There are areas of vulnerability, whether it's ethical issues around research and testing, or whether it's relationships with families that are with a patient who wants to die or doesn't want to die and the staff wants to stop intervening so much and let the person and the family have a more peaceful ending, you know, those kinds of issues.

JR:  My husband's a medical student so, we hear a lot about these kinds of things.

SM:  Oh you must.

JR:  He's a third-year --

SM:  Oh is he?

JR:  -- so he just started in a hospital.  So maybe you'll encounter him someday.

SM:  Where is he at school?

JR:  At Harvard.  So he'll be an MD.H for internal medicine starting in October.

SM:  Well, it would be nice if he's able to come to rounds.  My goal, my dream, is to write an article that will be read by medical school instructors about the kind of issues that people learn how to avoid in medical school that doesn't serve them in the long run.  As one of the doctors said, "this was everything we were taught not to do at medical school."

JR:  Well, Harvard, I think, is actually doing some pretty good work --

SM:  They are doing some good work.

JR:  -- my husband took a course called "Living a Life-Threatening Illness" where he was paired with someone --

SM:  Great.

JR:  -- and really had a wonderful relationship with this person and they would have these meetings once a week and talk about how those relationships were going and how to deal with all the kinds of things that come up in having a relationship where you know they're going to die and they know they're going to die and how you talk about that and how you end that relationship, how you leave it.  That kind of stuff.

SM:  That's great and that's so hard to do.

JR:  Yea.

SM:  Especially when you haven't lived that many years of your life yourself.

JR:  Do you see your work, your professional work, as being a kind of activism?

SM:  It has opportunities for activism.  When you sit and talk one on one with a person, you're not there to be an activist.  You're really there to help them solve their problems or think through their problems with you, so you're in a more receptive -- I am, anyhow.  But I have, especially when I did this work -- I had a lot of honors at the time, because other social workers at the time honored me as -- we have a yearly thing -- so they honor the greatest contribution to social work, the best teacher, and the greatest contribution to social policy.  People acknowledged the work I'd done that year.  That was '88 or '89, something like that.  So some of my patients knew about that and one woman -- she's an academic -- she was in a terrible situation with her administration.  Was she at Brown?  I don't think so.  She has taught at Brown, but that wasn't where she was at the time.  She really organized a protest.  I said, "Wow.  What got you to do that?" and she said, "What do you think?"  So, it does have an impact on people.  For some patients, it made me very anxious.  ‘Are you sure you're OK and you're sure you won't get into trouble?’ because I did choose to go to jail rather than pay my fine.  So that was scaring people.  It certainly changed my practice, and it certainly helped me talk much, much more about spiritual issues and more about -- not to push other people to do it -- but to give them a chance to talk about their own social, political, ethnic issues.

JR:  So tell me a little bit about how you got involved in the issue of nuclear disarmament?

SM:  Well, I really backed into [it].  That wasn't what I was looking at.  I was sort of avoiding that because I was focusing on these babies and their families.  My son, I think was, a junior or senior at Cambridge School of Weston, when they had a law day and somebody came and talked about the possibility of nuclear annihilation.  He started becoming more and more obsessed about it.  Meantime, John, who was a psychiatrist,

and a history major at Oberlin, before he went to medical school -- very politically interested -- got involved with him. So everybody was sort of looking at these issues and talking about these issues. Then John was invited to go with a group of physicians and public health people to the nuclear test site after Chernobyl to protest the fact that the United States was still doing nuclear testing in the face of this -- and the medical and social and so on -- hazard of that. He invited me to go and I said, "You know, it's a wonderful --" (phone rings). Let me just turn that off, sorry. So anyhow, I said no, I didn't really have time and needed to focus full time on these families. So John asked each one of our sons and they all said yes. So I said, I'm not staying home if the whole family is going, so I went and the idea was to do non-violent civil disobedience and I said I would go just to be a support person. I certainly wasn't going to get arrested. I write about all this in great detail in my (inaudible), but being out there, being inspired by the people who came to do this, people literally from all over the world came to join this protest. Again, sort of connecting to the Quaker's stuff, the non-violent approach and a lot of Gandhi and Martin Luther King stuff was in that. That was really my cup of tea and it really helped me face the peril that our country was building toward. So I decided finally that I wasn't going to join the line of people that were going to cross. You cross the cattle guard onto the test site and you get handcuffed and arrested.

JR: How many people were there?

SM: Probably thousands of people there, but there were only about 150 who crossed the line. Very, very, very powerful experience to do that with my kids. I got kind of physically sick before we did -- I was so anxious -- and I still wasn't sure I was going to do it even when I woke up that morning. We'd been camped out. Woke up and I saw the sun hitting the tops of the mountains and I thought, we're ruining this land and the people on it and I'd heard how the Shoshone Indians had so much higher incidents of birth defects and leukemia than people downwind. The white Americans in Utah were downwind of the test site, they had much more leukemia. Our government was totally lying in doing

studies in showing it wasn't significant. So I sort of felt like I had to do it. It was very, very connected with the Holocaust memories that were submerged at the time.

JR: In what way?

SM: Well, I didn't realize until afterwards. After we were arrested -- will you be reading this little article I wrote?

JR: It's good to have stuff on the tape too, because not --

SM: Everybody else is going to be reading it, OK. OK, well, it was connected because I saw people really fighting for the life of their children. You couldn't really bring a child onto the test-site land, but there was one woman wearing a placard that said, "Let Megan Live," and it showed this picture of a child swinging on a swing. Every time I gave a talk and it said that I would start to cry, and John said to me, “you should be raising money for UJA, you’re great up there” (laughter). I remember hearing very inspired speakers who had been to Israel and had been through something doing that. I was just very moved by the fact that people would get together and protest what wouldn’t work.

JR: Had you had that experience before?

SM: Not in that kind of way, I guess. I mean, I certainly gathered my courage to say things to people in protection of my children or something, but certainly not to get arrested, not break the law and I didn’t know what would happen, what would do with us. What would they do with our kids? Although our sons were in their twenties, they can take care of themselves and they had already been active in college, or in work, or whatever. Each in his own way had been an activist. They really inspired my activism. In the morning before they went out to the test site, I had a wonderful picture of Danny and Kenny reading Martin Luther King’s letters from a Birmingham jail. It’s interesting, Kenny was holding the book, Danny was over his shoulder showing him what to do, which is typical of their relationship. Danny was the idea man who got Kenny to do the

deed all the time. In this case, Kenny chose to go to jail, and Danny and Tony paid their fine and went back to work and to school, respectively. John and I chose to be part of a group that protested our arrest on the basis of the Nuremburg defense, that there was greater crimes against humanity that we were protesting by this action. We lost our appeal, but we did appeal it. Anyhow, Kenny went right to jail and that was a very dramatic time for me, seeing my son so willing to do that. So when the time came that we lost I said, "I'm not going to pay the fine, I'm going to go to jail too," and I did. But the moment of our arrest was really something in that we were holding hands, the five of us, and walked up together and the sheriff said, "You know I have to stop you and handcuff you," and John said, "Yea, we know, that's why we came here," and he looked at us and he said, "You have fine looking sons. You should be proud." It was just very moving to sort of meet the enemy in the sense, and he wasn't the enemy, that's the whole point. (sounds of crying) It's amazing, I can still just do that as soon as I talk about it.

JR: It's a very moving story.

SM: So, I wrote about that and I still can't get it out of my system. So I came back home and then when we learned that we had lost our appeal, I did go to jail, and that was a marvelous experience. I went with another friend of mine, Margaret Brenneman Gibson (sp?), had also been arrested, and there were six young women in the jail cell with us who had also done a non-violent protest. I've got to get Kleenex, but they had actually walked like five days and nights toward ground zero to stop the testing. Would you like one?

JR: Yes, please.

SM: So that was very inspiring to hear what these young women were dealing with. What happened was, I was in jail for five days with them. That was an incredible experience because you're totally, totally controlled in jail, I was very scared.

JR: Where were you?

SM: We had to go back to Nevada. We were in the jail in Tonopah. I thought I'd be like in solitary confinement and other people would think I was a kook and would want to attack -- or they could tell I was a sissy and couldn't take care of myself. It turned out there was one other young woman in the jail with us. It actually had been the juvenile detention holding room. Her boyfriend had brought -- I don't know, marijuana, or maybe stronger dope, into her house, and they were searching her drawers looking for his stuff and they found it. So she went to jail in a state where alcohol, prostitution, and gambling and everything is fine. Not marijuana. Anyhow, her reflections were, 'Why would you guys choose to go to jail?' So Margaret and I became very close with these women and they talked about everything. There's nothing to do, you're just in jail all the time. They talked about being raped. They talked about their mother's boyfriends, they talked about their own ambitions. Two of them were in a lesbian relationship, actually. So they were very open. I ended up interviewing all of them, asking all of them the same 25 questions including their spiritual backgrounds and their relationships with their mothers. I've never written it up and published it, which I'm really sorry about. It's now 13 years later, almost, or 12 years later. I called their mothers when they got out of jail and told them how great their daughters were and that they were doing fine. They had to do six months for their action, in jail. But they did community service, so I think the judge commuted it to three months, but still it was tough. The men who had done this didn't get sent to jail, but the women did. It was very interesting, they were really angry with women for doing that. It was just such an evolutionary point of my life. This whole thing, from the beginning resistance, watching my own process of avoiding the confrontation to totally immersing myself in it. Then our youngest son went back to Michigan and joined a group called AMISTAD, which was Ann Arbor Managua Initiative for Soil Testing and Development and went to Managua and helped build a soil testing plant and I insisted we go down and visit him. So I got all involved in the Central American stuff and brought the head of the School of Social Work in Managua up to Boston to work with our social work group. So I

just gave a lot of talks and did a lot to try to encourage other people to get involved and did some writing and stuff and I felt it's like one of the most vital periods of my life. Although I consider, I guess my raising my kids as the most impactful part of my life, but the most profound. It was close. Doing that action together with them was really important to me. It brought the meaning of having children and why you keep life going anyhow, I felt, at least for me.

JR: You started to talk about a connection you made between this and the Holocaust and you didn't finish that thought.

SM: Oh, well that was one of the things I wrote -- on our way back on the plane, I began to realize -- we all went separate directions, matter-of-fact I think we went back before our kids sentences were figured out. I realized how terrified and helpless I felt as a child and didn't know what it was about, especially when my first son was born -- he happened to be born in Japan because John had to give two years to the military in order to finish medical school during the Korean War. You had to be in something called the Barry (sp?) plan. It so happened I was reading the Exodus when I went into labor and the nurses, the military nurses were really tough -- I think partly because I was a doctor's wife and I was breastfeeding my baby, which only the Black women did in those days. So they were very tough on me and I kept wanting to see my baby and they'd say, "Boy you sure are a worry wart," or whatever. I had these fantasies of Nazis throwing Danny up in the air and catching them on the end of their bayonet, and I couldn't do anything about it. There was something about my incredible anxiety, about going ahead and marching in this line and getting arrested, that just stirred up my awareness of how the Holocaust -- both during the time when I didn't really know what was going on and afterwards -- drove me in a way that I didn't quite understand, because I did feel very personally the threat. The other thing that happened was my mother wanted to adopt a Jewish child from Europe, when I was young and I didn't want her to. And I remember -- she was waiting for me to give her permission -- I said no, I don't want anybody else around here. Also,

there was an immigrant family from Germany in Oil City and I was forced to socialize all the time with this little girl who was kind of obnoxious. Partly she was just socially inadept, but I felt her parents were very arrogant and defensive about having to be immigrants. Whatever it was, I was not generous at all in my attitude as a kid and I never felt good about myself for that. It's just who I was in my development. So somehow maybe it was redemptive in some way, I don't know. It was also that threat to a people's existence that I was in touch with.

JR: Right. Did you remain involved in similar kinds of issues?

SM: Well, I certainly did with nuclear disarmament stuff, and I still am. I sometimes go to WAND meetings, or I got to know Helen Caldecott and do some protests. I especially helped organize social workers and wanted to start a group called Families for Nuclear Disarmament, I forget. We didn't actually get something like that title, but we did some of that and I continued to give talks. I even talked to grade school kids and stuff like that.

JR: Did your children remain involved in that issue?

SM: Well, not directly. Kenny went to law school. Right now, he's in Kazakhstan. He was very interested in Russian-American relationships, and he still is. He went to the Harriman Institute and learned to speak Russian. So that was sort of his way of dealing with the threat from the Cold War. Tony remained very involved in Central America and then he went to graduate school in Urban and Environmental Policy, and he's working for a group called Neighbor To Neighbor, which his part of it now is working in the Latino neighborhood in Salem and in Worcester and in other places and organizing them to get better housing and healthcare and stuff. Danny, it's very interesting, he started a computer company in Boulder, Colorado. He did a lot of other things before that. He went through a very almost kind of spooky period, of kind of spiritual--are you here Danny, or are you someplace else?-- kind of thing. Not with drugs, just on his own. But he ended up doing something very practical which was to start a Macintosh computer

agency in Boulder, but he did it in a way that he really wanted to demonstrate socially responsible business practice. He feels you're not going to change anything in the world if you don't have your hands in the economic aspects of it. So he chose to do it that way. Right now he's got a child and they're expecting another one. He's sort of more involved in business and family things, but he certainly is well informed. If I said to him, "Danny, I really need you to be here because I'm doing some action, can you take the—" (break in tape)

JR: What were the greatest challenges for you in doing this action and continuing this kind of work?

SM: I think the fear of physical harm by people who are stronger and tougher than I was in jail. I had a little bit of that confront -- I went back to the test site a couple more times, actually, and led other groups going back. They're called the [Wackenhuts?] or something. There's some paramilitary group that wears camouflage uniforms and they would round up the people trying to get into the test site area. So they really were physically hurtful to people. I mean, they didn't brutalize, but they'd handcuff their hands behind their backs and really make them tight or something. I think I saw myself as a softy. I wasn't a street tough kid. I grew up in a very protect -- I knew how to be nice -- I didn't really know how to fight. As you ask me that question, I realize I'm not a good fighter in terms of verbally attacking people. I'd be sarcastic, but it's hard for me to do things without my imagination leaping to, "Boy, what if this person knocks me out or stabs me or does something like that.?" To some extent, I counter that by living in an urban part of Cambridge and walking alone at night and stuff. It's a little bit counter-phobic kind of stuff. But anyhow, the greatest challenge was being physically assaulted by somebody for doing what I was doing, and I was worried about it being on my record. It probably is, I don't know. I was pleased to have it on my record, actually, I wanted to be asked if it ever became an issue. Actually, it made a huge difference for Ken, who planned to work for the State Department. You can never work for -- oh no, it wasn't because of that -- all

three of my sons refused to register for the draft. You can't serve in any executive branch of the US government if you don't have a registration number. First question they ask, after your name on the State Department application, if you are a male, what is your registration number?

JR: Technically that's true, but I guess --

SM: The law was never changed and they're not about to change.

JR: I'm sure they're not.

SM: And he can't get scholarships and stuff from certain government agencies. I'm not sure which ones. It wasn't an issue for Ken. So a lot of people said to me, "Why are you supporting your children in not registering for the draft? This could really affect their future," and I said, "There is nothing more important in their future." Kenny wouldn't agree with that now. He's very sorry he didn't register, which disappoints me. Not that he didn't register, but that it works against him.

JR: What were the most rewarding things for you about this kind of work?

SM: I think probably it was the deep sense of community feeling, of doing something with other people to have our world continue.

JR: You talk a little bit about this, but how would you say this kind of experience affected you or changed you?

SM: It made me see that I could be outspoken. I could do things that were upsetting or strongly disagreeable to other people. It made me more confident. It made me believe more and more that we could only make a difference as a people, not just leaders. Leaders can only be there if the people let them be there and do what they do. I mean leaders can do a lot, but people have to be educated to get in touch with what the sense

of needing to protect ourselves as a larger group. I think that's one of the reasons the work at the hospital is so interesting to me. There's always a struggle for me between intense one-on-one clinical therapy work and the larger picture. There was all through graduate school too. I need less to be nice and more to be honest. It made me much more empathic about where people's suffering is coming from. I just feel like a stronger, more evolved person.

JR: How do you think your contributions have affected other people?

SM: They affected my family and my friends and my larger community, my social work community. Many people have told me that.

JR: In what kind of ways?

SM: Well, that they could dare to do that to because I'm a pretty straight person. If I were your everyday radical, "So there she goes again," but it was really a departure for me to do that. Pat Schroeder said that she felt our actions really did affect people in the Congress. Ed Markey said that to me too. He wanted me to give some testimonials or something. He wanted to quote me. I said, "You can quote me, but don't use my name." He said, "Listen, if you want to make a difference, people got to know that you're not hiding out, that you're willing to say your name." Partly it's about -- I got a lot of honors when I was in high school. I would get calls throughout the Jewish community calling me to thank me for presenting Jewish people in a good light. I got the Emily Post character award, or I got this or that. Jewish people were thrilled, and it was just blazed in my head, 'be a good person and represent your people in a way that nobody can find fault with you. No one can see you as being deviant or kooky or communist or whatever.' My mother used to call me a pinko because she thought I went off too far in my ideas. When she was very old and in a residential home, I told her what I had done. She said, "I'm so disappointed in you. Why would you stand out that way and do that?" Then either later that day or the next day she said, "You know, I'm kind of proud of you for

doing that," so it's interesting.

JR: That's nice.

SM: Yea, but she was about to die. I don't know if some of her ideas changed as she was reaching the end of her life.

JR: This is just something I'm thinking about as I put the different interviews together and people have had very different views on this. So I was wondering if you felt like there was some way in which Jewish values infuse the kind of political values which you are expressing through this kind of work.

SM: Jewish religious values or Jewish ethnic values? Any? Just Jewish values?

JR: Yea.

SM: Well, I think in terms of Jewish Talmudic teachings, I think the whole question of one's relationship with fellow man was something that I found. It's a hard thing for me to explain to other people, to my kids, because their father was so [much] more than agnostic. It's very hard for them to believe in God and they couldn't understand how a woman who is so intelligent or scientific etc., etc., could do this and I kept saying, "Well we don't know, but it's what we learn, what we think." It's like philosophy. So I guess for me, the Jewish teachings and having a meaningful life -- sort of Buber kinds of thinking -- thinking about your impact in the world has always been connected to Jewish teachings. Is it connected to turning on lights on Shabbos? No, not directly, but indirectly it's a kind of humbling awareness. There is something else going on besides your wish to flick on the lights, you know?

JR: Were you involved in anti-war stuff during the Vietnam war?

SM: I was. I was raising three little boys at the time and they're very close in age, so I really had my hands full, but I was -- Mothers Against War group. I didn't do a lot of marching. I did a lot more demonstrating after my actions in Nevada at the test site. I mean, I've read stuff, I went to meetings, but I wasn't an outspoken leader in the -- I'd buy things at shops that were selling money for the efforts and I wore a locket that said Mothers Against the War. So I was involved, but I certainly wasn't a leader.

JR: Were you involved in the women's movement at all?

SM: Not early on, I wasn't. I wasn't in any consciousness raising groups. The fact of the matter is that I felt safer with men than with women. My mother was very critical of me. She didn't mean to be attacking, but I perceived it that way, and my father was enormously supportive and proud of me and a much easier-going person -- he didn't worry about things the same way. In looks and in temperament, he and I were a lot more alike. He had ambitions for me. He let me be free to be who I wanted to be, and my mother really felt so obligated to mold me and have me be a lady and she wanted me to wear nicer clothes. My hair was braided so tight, I went to school like this everyday. She just wanted a perfect little girl and some of my girlfriends were very catty. They promised that they weren't going to say something and then they'd tattle on me to somebody. I didn't think my male friends did that. I had a lot of good buddies. I'm still friends with boys I went to kindergarten with. I don't see them anymore because I'm not in Oil City, but if I did--gotten together with. Because my parents fought so much and because my mother was really tough on my father -- maybe he deserved that, but I didn't understand it as a kid -- I tend to defend men. And my brother was kind of a sissy in a certain way so he got teased, but he was very aesthetically interested in things. He's a good musician and stuff. So, I've always been very supportive of men, and I saw the women's movement as an anti-man movement, and I didn't agree with that, nor did I think it'd get us anywhere. So, I have subsequently gotten into women's groups and that was very powerful for me when I did, actually it was, again, shortly after the test site experience. A

patient told me about a group she went to called “Women, Sex, and Power,” -- I don’t know if you’ve heard of it. There’s a “Men, Sex, and Power,” and a “Women, Sex, and Power.” It wasn’t so much I was looking for -- I was married and I didn’t need more power. Well, I did need more power, actually, but I didn’t see that was what it was going to give me. What it did was it helped me form incredible bonds with other women, and now that I’m divorced, I’m certainly very close to my women friends. But I was married to a man who needed every bit of time and attention I could give him. I mean, he’s a wonderful person in a lot of ways, but extremely needy, and I rose to the occasion. I met his needs and didn’t focus very much on my women friends as -- I had a couple. I had two or three really close women friends, but not as a group. I didn’t necessarily feel comfortable with women as a group, and I do now. I’m in a couple of different women’s groups and they’ve been enormously helpful.

JR: Have you had any women role models?

SM: There was a woman doctor in my community who I admired a lot. There are people like Henrietta Szold who my mother certainly admired tremendously. I suppose Eleanor Roosevelt was most impactful in terms of being out there in the world. Actually, I always wanted to be a singer, so there were a lot of singers I admired. My father and my uncles owned silent movie theatres before I was born. They were all in the theatre business, so we went to movies all the time. There were a lot of -- not beauty queen kind of thing, but women who could really convey their emotions and ideas to other women.

JR: That’s about the end of the questions that I have, but is there anything that we haven’t covered that you’d like to tell me about?

SM: I don’t think so. I don’t know if you need to fill -- maybe you just need to keep the information around the issues you asked. I don’t think so. I could go on and on about why I think the test site non-violent civil disobedience works and stuff like that.

JR: Tell me a little bit about that. I just think that all of us have the capacity for violence and all of us have the capacity for making peace. People lose track of what they can do and demonstrating what is possible taps into something that people are afraid to look at. It's probably not unrelated to my mother's defensiveness about being Jewish. It's like, don't ask me to look at these people. They might be nice, but I better not think that. I think that kind of paranoia. It's not a clinical paranoia, but whatever you want to call it, something I dealt with a lot in my life. I think that actions like this, if you hype it up like the Republican convention or something into hype kind of stuff then you do lose it. But you can work with people. We did a lot of meditation before we did our action, a lot of discussion. I think we need it more and more as our life is impacted by so many stimuli and so many material things and such -- I'm not a speedy person -- so email communications and flying around here and there and timing yourself and stuff doesn't work for me. I really need to have time to sit and see what's going on. I don't just get it like that.

JR: You sort of touched on little parts of what you thought were -- you mentioned that parts of the action had a spiritual component. I was wondering if you could talk about that.

SM: It was sort of spiritual and ecological. It was really seeing my connection with the earth, and I brought a poem that my cousin-in-law who lives in Mission, California -- she drove to Nevada to visit me in jail -- she understood. It's her connection with the earth that she's really writing about in a way. She saw me as demonstrating that. I think I feel most spiritual, most religious from within myself, when I'm in nature. Not when I'm in *shul* or services. Services are more distracting to me. I can be inspired by something somebody says, but the setting doesn't particularly inspire me and people's social -- looking around to see who's there, including myself -- is distracting, and it's not what spirituality is about for me. If I'm with people I really care about or by myself, I really love being alone right here with the gulls, water, and sky. So the experience definitely

deepened my spiritual connection. There were people at this demonstration literally from all over the world, but especially a lot of minority people there. I think I feel spiritually closer to them, certainly with the Shoshone Indian group.

JR: Did you know a lot of other people who were at this action, or were you coming just as a family, basically?

SM: I knew a few others. I knew Margaret, the women I ended up going to jail with. I think I had already met Dan Elsburg (sp?). Dan was really the person who said, "You know, Sally, I know you don't want to get arrested and you should do what you want, but you can't imagine the impact you'll have if you do this as a total family." So, I think he influenced me, either way, influenced me because I thought, 'This guy knows what works and doesn't work, that's got to make a difference.' I'm very close with a woman named Caroline Oppenheim (sp?) who was not honored at the event, but very well could have been. She has done so much stuff. She very much ties Jewishness into her activism, and she's a writer. So we've talked about this a lot and I haven't really -- we go to services together and I --

JR: You go to any services together?

SM: Oh boy, I really shopped around. Most recently I've been going to Eitz Chaim, but I went to Hillel for a while because I loved Rabbi Gold (sp?). I don't know if you ever heard him.

JR: I didn't, but he married my parents, actually.

SM: Did he? Oh, how wonderful. He really is an exceptional man. John and I were married by a different Hillel Rabbi. His name began with a Z -- not Zafroni (sp?). When he stopped leading the services I knew I wasn't -- it just felt too Harvard-y. I wanted to be part of a community and I just saw the kids running in and out making too much noise and stuff. I like the people who come to that who ask questions, but I would really like to

be part of the Jewish activist group. Do you know Gordy Feldman (sp?)? Well, he's been very much that and he's a sociologist at Brandeis. He was a good friend of Morrie Schwartz, you know, "Tuesdays With Morrie." So I'd go to his house -- he doesn't go to services -- but he has a non-Yom Kippur meeting with people. He invites people and talks about whatever issues are on their minds. It's just a nice time. I wish I did have more of a connection with my Jewish belief system. I guess I feel mine is kind of idiosyncratic. I'm not quite sure how it fits in with what other people do.

JR: I think a lot of Jews feel that way, actually, maybe just the Jews I know.

SM: Have you been part of a Jewish activist group?

JR: Not per se. The community that my husband and I are part of, that definitely is a component, and it's been really important to both of us in terms of how we define ourselves as Jews, and certainly in college I was involved in a lot of different Jewish social action projects.

SM: At Brown?

JR: I was actually at Yale as an undergrad.

SM: And there were certain groups.

JR: Oh yea. I mean, it seems to me that's an area in which Jewish life is really growing. I think a lot of people -- maybe even particularly young people, though I'm not sure that that's true -- who are looking for some way to identify Jewishly, are able to do so through a sense of Jewish values about how to change the world.

SM: I think they are too. I get that Hillel bulletin (inaudible). At that age, it was -- I remember the first Passover I spent away from home, a community Passover at Hillel, that's all I could do to chew and swallow. I so much missed what was being (inaudible)

although it was fun to be there with a lot of Israeli students.

JR: Well, thank you so much.

SM: Oh, you're welcome, interesting questions.

JR: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]