Oral History Interview with Lorraine Ironplow

Interview conducted on August 30, 2018

By Professor Judith Raiskin, UO Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Linda J. Long, Curator of Manuscripts, UO Special Collections and University Archives, UO Libraries

For

The Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project

Lorraine Ironplow, August 30, 2018

Recorded in the University of Oregon Libraries

Preface

This is an ongoing community-engaged oral history project. Linda J. Long, Curator of Manuscripts in the University of Oregon Libraries, and Professor Judith Raiskin of the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Oregon, conducted video interviews with eighty-three narrators in the summers of 2018 and 2019. The interviews were held in the UO Libraries' recording studio. This collection includes the video interviews and the bound and on-line transcripts. Associated with the interviews are materials collected from the narrators, including photographs, diaries, flyers, business records, letters, posters, buttons, and T-shirts that document the businesses, organizations, and cultural and political activities discussed in the interviews. These collections will be made available separately as individual archival collections and can be searched and retrieved using the Library's Online Catalog.

In the 1960s-1990s hundreds of lesbian-identified women came to Eugene, Oregon from across the United States. These women founded cornerstone organizations central to Eugene's history and influenced Oregon's political landscape. They created and worked in collective businesses, ran printing presses, and founded cultural organizations (theater companies and dance troupes, music bands and choirs) and gathered in lesbian cultural spaces (book stores, martial arts studios, restaurants, bars, and softball teams). They became leaders of Eugene community service agencies and worked in City and State government positions. A number were instrumental in leading important legal challenges of discriminatory policies at the county and state levels regarding employment and housing protections, benefits, lesbian and gay adoption, and marriage equality. Those who came to study or teach at the University of Oregon were influential in making institutional change protecting the rights of lesbians and gay men.

The artist Tee Corinne, whose papers and photographs also reside in the University of Oregon Special Collections, asserted, "The lack of a publicly accessible history is a devastating form of oppression; lesbians face it constantly." The Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project seeks to preserve a specific and vibrant history that otherwise is lost. This collection of interviews captures a range of engaging and important stories that reveal new angles on lesbian history, women's history, the counterculture movement in the 1960s-1980s, Oregon history, feminism, sexuality, intentional communities, and women working in jobs reserved for men. Looking back over twenty-five - fifty years, the narrators reflect on the complex relationship of individual aspirations and larger social

movements in times of dramatic historical change. Many of the narrators have retired and continue to be involved in vibrant artistic, scientific and political work.

Abstract

Interview conducted on August 30, 2018. Lorraine was born in 1950 in Salt Lake City, Utah, into a Mormon family. Her family life was wrapped up in the Mormon Church. Her father was very patriarchal. Her mother didn't like being a housewife. Her family moved to southern California. By age fifteen, Lorraine knew there was something different about herself but could not articulate it. She was at odds with the dating culture in high school. She went to Brigham Young University but her interest in studying mathematics was not supported because she was a woman. She dropped out, left the Mormon Church, and later moved to Eugene to attend the University of Oregon. After graduating from UO, she went to graduate school at Cornell University. She describes the extreme sexism there. She dropped out, became a lesbian, began reading feminist philosophy, and became a radical feminist political activist. At Ithaca College, she became Director of Academic Computer Services. In 1979, Lorraine moved back to Eugene. She describes lesbian counter-culture Eugene, Mother Kali's Books, and Izzie Harbaugh. In 1979, Lorraine and Izzie became lovers. Lorraine discusses conflicts at the bookstore, and describes Izzie's death. She continued to read feminist philosophy and discusses issues of class and race. She concludes her interview by discussing lesbians and aging and healthcare issues.

Additional subjects: Ageism ; Ballot Measures; Butch and femme (Lesbian culture); Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; Collectives; Coming out (sexual orientation); Community life; Consciousness-raising; Cooperatives; Feminist bookstores; Hippies; Lesbian community – Oregon; Homophobia; Lesbian feminism – Oregon; Lesbians – Identity; Moral turpitude; Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC); Politics; Radical feminism; Self-naming; Sexism; Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP); Soromundi Lesbian Chorus of Eugene.

Transcriptionist: Rev.com and University of Oregon Libraries

Session Number: 035

Narrator: Lorraine Ironplow

Location: University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon

Interviewers: Linda Long and Judith Raiskin

Date: August 30, 2018

Long: This interview is part of the Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project. The recordings will be made available through the University of Oregon Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives. This is an oral history interview with Lorraine Ironplow on August 30, 2018, taking place in the University of Oregon Libraries' recording studio in the Center for Media and Educational Technologies. The interviewers are Linda Long, Curator of Manuscripts in the UO Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, and Professor Judith Raiskin of the UO Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Lorraine, please let us know if you agree to be recorded for this project, and that you give your permission for the University to preserve and make available your recorded and transcribed interview.

Ironplow: Absolutely, yes.

Long: Thank you very much. Why don't we just start with a basic question. Can you please tell us where you were born, where you grew up and something about your early life?

Ironplow: Okay. I lived all over the country, especially the West. I was born in Salt Lake City, a fifth generation Mormon and that has a lot of baggage that comes with it. I had parents who took care of physical needs well and emotional needs poorly. Most of my life was wrapped up in the Mormon Church. I did well in school, I loved school. Let's see, I was born in Salt Lake City, went, like I say, all over the place, ended up in San Diego for grade school and in Whittier, California, which is a suburb of L.A., in junior high and high school. I was fairly stable although there was a little trip to Nebraska in the middle there.

Did well, got lots of awards and that sort of thing. Then I made a stupid decision to go to BYU instead of Stanford because my mother pretty much insisted and I didn't actually know how to resist that. There's other ways things could have worked out badly had I done the reverse but the particular way my actual life went was that I went in this place where I wasn't just smart for a girl, those kind of put downs, I didn't just have to wear dresses all the time, which I had had, they took me to kindergarten screaming in a dress. Then, I wrote in my life history there, if I played on the jungle gym they said, "Oh, your panties are showing," and it's like, "Why do you have a jungle gym then? What am I supposed to do

about that?" I'd fall and skin my knees and the boys had jeans on. They were fine, I wasn't.

Just thing after thing like that through my— then in high school I had to wear a girdle in 1967 because we were just behind the times and nylons and then I went to BYU and I not only had to wear them to school, I had to wear them to breakfast in the dorms on Saturday. It was just like, "Are you kidding me? I can't eat if I do— you know—" so sometimes I didn't, it's just too much.

Raiskin: What year were you born?

Ironplow: 1950.

Raiskin: Okay.

Ironplow: Yeah, thank you. For this process, I did the life history and I ended up seeing it as a series, it was not only my development period and learning period, but it was also a series of feminist clicks and there were just these things adding up. By the time I was sixteen I was, kind of, saying, "I'm not so sure about this, something's wrong here. I'm not like other people, what's going on?"

Raiskin: In what ways did you feel like you weren't like other people?

Ironplow: Well, I was just not excited about dating, I was not liking the things that I've mentioned. I did not like being put down all the time, it just, it wasn't suiting me. The Mormon beliefs are quite a stretch if you're an actual intellectual smart person. I was not well read at all. At a certain point when they make you read The Old Testament,

which they did in seminary which I went to every day before school, in fact, once I got a driver's license I drove a whole car full every morning. I had to get up really early and I was fascinated, but the Old Testament is just a study in God behaving badly. Just story after story, are you kidding me?

This person is supposed to be all good and all powerful and he did this? Are you nuts? I had that reaction quite a few times. I was getting fed up and then I went to BYU and just managed in this environment of all Mormons all the time and girls who were only there to get engaged. I had mentioned that there were forty-two or forty girls on my dorm floor and of them fourteen got engaged in one year and it was a big deal, they have this big candle passing, everybody sits, I think they were sitting on the floor and passes a candle with a ring on it and you wonder who it is that's gotten engaged and there's music. Then the girl blows out the candle who's been engaged and everybody runs and throws her in the shower and then the guy pops out of a closet or something, he was hidden somewhere.

It was just an unbelievable ritual fourteen times and did anybody ever study or encouraged me to study? No, nobody cared at all. That was not what I was there for. Anyway, it was not a fun place to be and it wasn't feeding me as an intellectual at all, in fact I hadn't realized I was an intellectual because I didn't know anything, but I was wanting to go there and I even took a

philosophy class, but it turned out to be all about the Bible basically so I forgot where I was going.

Long: First can I ask, what was your relationship with your parents? It seems like you were becoming at odds with their beliefs. How did they react to—

Ironplow: Yeah, it wasn't— the attitude of the church and my family was pretty much that life is not about desires or trying to fulfill yourself, life is about figuring out your duties, figuring out the one right thing to do in this situation, figuring out what God wants you to do and doing it. It's mostly about duties and I said, again, in the write-up that fun was not about an internal state, I really didn't figure that out for years until probably after I left BYU. "Oh, you mean you're supposed to be inquiring about your sense of joy. There's an internal joy state and fun should be when that's happening." Or pleasure or fulfillment, it just wasn't that was wanted and I don't know that my mother ever had that moment.

She was, in some ways a marriage resister. She did not like to cook and she did— she cooked dinner every night, but managed to burn the vegetables a good 50 percent of the time because who could bother to be still paying attention to vegetables five minute later? She was the smarter of my parents and it was just like, "That's too boring for words, and I agreed." The vegetables were burned every night, that's the way it was and she did not get up to make my father breakfast and he said one time to me privately when I was a teenager, "I think maybe she was born in the wrong body, maybe

she should have been a man." And it's like, "God doesn't make mistakes, what are you talking about?"

I had a cousin one time who told me she believed in astrology and I'm like, even as a heretic, a jack Mormon, I just said, "What, you don't notice that this is completely incommensurate with the doctrine that you purport to believe in?" It's like the belief and obedience is more important, I think, than the— than trying to be consistent about all the ideas over time.

Raiskin: What did you learn growing up about homosexuality?

Ironplow: Nothing. Did not know it was a possibility, had never heard of it. There's a fuzzy memory that somebody may have called a gym teacher in Nebraska a lesbian, I think. But I didn't know what that meant, I had no idea, it was off the map. I knew a girl, and when I was— I was probably like between my freshman and sophomore years in college, who had gotten engaged to a guy that I knew reasonably well. And it turned out he was gay, homosexual, they said. And she broke off the engagement.

So, I knew that, but I didn't really quite know what that was. And actually it wasn't like something I went looking for. When I was a freshman in college, I chose, just out of the clear blue sky to do a paper on Oscar Wilde for my English class. Who knows why? I don't. I mean, it wasn't like I identified with him particularly. I did think it was fun, you know, *Importance of Being Earnest* and the pun

and all, but it wasn't— I don't even know how that happened exactly.

So, I knew by then at least the definition of homosexual, but really I had almost no contact with actual gay people or gay culture until I was in the process of falling in love with a bisexual woman who was taking me to Bi Night at her suggestion, in Ithaca, New York in 1974 or five. I just didn't know anything. I have to blow my nose.

Long: It's okay.

Ironplow: I'm sorry, time.

Long: So, Lorraine, you were at BYU, how many years of college did you take there?

Ironplow: Freshman and sophomore, two years.

Long: Okay.

Ironplow: And then I was in a quandary. I mean, there was lots of unpleasant things. Being locked in the dorm at 10:30, are you kidding me? The library was open much later, and the men could go there, I couldn't. The rules were ridiculous. They came in and shown lights on you to make sure you were in bed. And I got in trouble for visiting somebody on the seventh floor from the sixth. It's nuts.

I was fed up with that, but really I was in a quandary because I wasn't doing that well in math. And the teachers, you know, it's math as a male field. My mother actually was drummed out of

math and forced to major in art when she was at BYU, and she still wanted me to go there.

She actually was a cartoonist for Walt Disney for a while. She did well with that. And she did backgrounds for the plays and stuff. The Mormons are always doing theater stuff in the church. She would do stuff like that, and make us clothes, and not so much clean the house or cook for us. Okay.

Back to the main reason I left BYU and dropped out of school for a year was that I wanted to figure out whether I should stay in math. Well, I wasn't really excited by the classes, and the teachers were beyond not excited to have me in the classes. And the computer science, which I loved all by itself, the teachers didn't have to be excited. I mean, I later found out that men who were comparably good at it, and interested in it were allowed in the middle of the night to go in and hang out in the computer room. They learned a lot of stuff I didn't because I was locked up.

I was just like thing after thing like that. I decided to drop out of school for a year and figure out whether to go into computer science or mathematics. And that was the big decision from a logical point of view that I was thinking about. And it got me out of that unpleasant environment. And so, I went and lived in Hermosa Beach for a year and a half, and got a job at United Computing Corporation, and got a bunch of real world experience as a programmer. Got underpaid, told I couldn't do certain jobs just because the customers wouldn't like having a woman do them.

That was a whole another experience with how sexism works. But also I got familiar with the anti-war culture.

Long: So, what year is this now?

Ironplow: This is now a '69, '70.

Long: Okay.

Ironplow: I think the Cambodia demonstrations must have been in that period of maybe the fall of '69 or the early part of 1970. Because someone moved into our— we had four women sharing a place. Can you believe it? One block from the beach. It was just now like completely unaffordable. But at the time it was just, you know, like a hang out for young women who did— it wasn't very expensive. And—

Long: And where was this, again?

Ironplow: Hermosa Beach, California.

Long: California.

Ironplow: I got a job in Redondo Beach, which is just down the coast. I lived there and I had this experience. And I still loved the actual work, and hanging out with the guys was okay. My experience is after a while doing technical work with guys, they'll realize that, "Oh yeah, she actually knows what she's doing." And then I'll get into a more comfortable kind of work relationship. That's happened to me a few times. It did not happen, this, I'm jumping around again, but

that did not happen at the Free Net. Those Unix jocks, just like, were not going to accept me no matter what. I tried so hard, I was trying to— Anyway, I was trying to do the nonprofit purpose, but there was just no hope.

I decided to go into computer science, and I decided I would try to go to Stanford, because I had gotten in there before. But really with those recommendations from professors who barely knew I was existed, was not sufficient. I went to my safe school, which was the University of Oregon.

And I finished college there, and that was very comfortable. I was one of the best or the best student. I was taking all graduate classes as a senior, and the people, though mostly male, were all pretty supportive. So, that was a good environment for me to be learning. And I was working in the Computer Center, and did some work for Chemistry Department and some other people.

Long: Was that your first introduction to Eugene then?

Ironplow: Yes. I only put Oregon because I had dated— I had managed to find at BYU, a guy who had left the church on his mission. I think I started to say that earlier, Val was his name. And, again, it's like somehow I picked Oscar Wilde. Somehow I dated this guy who had already left the church. And I got lots of information about reasons one might not believe everything they tell you. But I was really in a lot of struggle with it from age sixteen to nineteen when I did leave the church.

That happened while I was in Hermosa Beach. I had a celebration and getting drunk, because the Mormons don't drink. This is kind of a statement, I'm not a Mormon anymore. And I never bothered to get myself off the rolls at the church because my mother would have really had a conniption fit. But the problem was that the church follows you around. Everywhere I moved, I don't know if she told them or they researched it, but they would always find me and they would always send the elders, who are nineteen years old to tell me that I should be coming to church and try to be home teachers.

And I, eventually when I was in Elmira, and having left long ago, I had to just tell them if they set foot on my property, I'd charge them with trespassing, because they were hard to get rid of. But from their point of view, they were doing their duty following through.

I've given you a jumble there. I went back to school, U of O, graduated, my parents came up. That was just totally weird. We had hardly communicated since I left home at seventeen, and I was lucky enough to have scholarships, so I didn't have to ask them for money until I got to Ithaca. That was when I decided to go to graduate school in Ithaca, New York.

They had a computer graphics programs, is what their catalog said. I thought, "Oh, that sounds good. I really like graphics, I'd done a graphics project in Eugene. Well, I got there, they didn't have a graphics program. I just believed the catalog. That was how naive I

was. I just thought it's in the catalog, it must— no. The guy had left that was doing that, and that wasn't happening.

I applied to be in a master's program at Cornell, and they don't actually accept master's students, but they didn't pay any attention because they needed to fill for affirmative action quota. They let me, and I didn't know they had done this. And so, here I was, again, a fish out of water for at least two, maybe three, four or five reasons.

There I was, there's twenty-six in my class. I'm the only girl, there was no girls in the class before me. The one before that had a girl in it, and some of them were more successful than I. I just was, you know— the feeling of the people there, including the faculty was that I was flunking out. But, you know, if you actually look at my grades, I got As in everything except one class. That was the theory of computation, the highest status class.

And in that class, I got a B minus, I think. And I actually, I had the highest grade in the homework, but I couldn't prove theorems in the time limits of an hour test. I was not strong in that area, and from their point of view, I might just as well have been a dunce. You know, they didn't. And then I found out— I had a research fellowship, they never asked me to do anything. I finally went in and asked the guy, because it was nice not to have to do any work and get money. But I went in and asked the advisor, what projects do you want me to— well, you know, you're only here because you're an affirmative action person.

He just said that out front. And, I was just dumbfounded. And then I found out later, like at the end of the year, we were comparing GRE scores, I had the highest GRE of anybody. You know, I didn't ask every person, but there's like ten of us there, maybe. I had the highest GRE of that whole group, but the math GRE. And I was like, "What?" They were doing this, it's like I was both only there because of affirmative action because they don't accept master's candidates, and one of the better qualified people in the room.

They had math requirements that they didn't bother to put in as prerequisites in the catalog. It turns out I would've done better if I'd had like a class in ordinals, for example, which is not one I've ever actually seen in a catalog, but people that had that were able to understand what was going on in the class.

If I want to ask a question of a professor, which I only did about twice. Here's Dr. Constable. First of all, there's no bathrooms on the whole floor. If you want to go to the bathroom and you're a girl, you have to go down to another floor and go to the bathroom. It's like an excursion. And, there's a men's room right down there, right next to Dr. Constable's office.

If you go there, it's like foreign territory just to get there. You knock on the door, if Tom London is there, I mean they insult everybody. First, the teacher would open the door, but wide enough so you could actually see them, and say something insulting about why you're there. And then they would answer his question. This is Tom London, I'm thinking of. Now, when I went down there, you

know, twice, he opened the door, like this far [gestures], saw me there, I would try to ask my question and he would just say something like, "Well, that's really obvious. Anybody knows that," and shut the door.

Then I tried to go to the teaching assistant several times, and he was actually like ensconced in a desk, in the study room, so he was right there in front of everybody. And I asked him questions and, again, he would tell me it was so simple, but he never really help me figure it out. And so, I really— this is the theory of computation problems, this is the professor, you know, TA. That was kind of my experience. Is there anything major that I missed there? I think I got it. That was a— it was a bad experience for me, and it really undermined my intellectual self-confidence for a good ten years.

I just felt like such a failure, and just completely lost. I didn't know what to do. So anyway, I dropped out after a year and a half of that, and I got a job in a— well, that's the year I came out, also, by the way.

Raiskin: Let's hear about that.

Long: Yeah, let's hear about it.

Ironplow: Well, but let me just finish that sentence. I got a job as the director of Academic Computer Services at Ithaca College, which is another small college in the same town. I ended up staying in Ithaca till through 1978. Let me see if I've got— so, I think I've given you the life story as a series of clicks stuff. I didn't mention that my attitude

in leaving the church was that I didn't decide there wasn't a God, which is perfectly evident if you actually look at anything real to me. You know, it just seems like this is a no brainer. Even though most of my friends will say, "Oh no, you only can be an agnostic. You don't really know." Well, come on.

But I didn't leave saying there is not a God, so I'm not going to church. I love saying if there is a God, I'm against him. This is a bad guy. You know, read the old Testament, you know, that stuff. There's that. Then I started to go to the Bi Center, like I mentioned earlier. I'm going to have to do that, sorry.

Long: That's okay.

Ironplow: We don't want it dripping down. The process of coming out was as much about becoming radically feminist as it was about discovering lesbian sexual desire. That's confusing now to a lot of people who seem to believe, I mean, the current mainstream belief is, you've got a gene, and you're just gay. That's how you are. No matter where you were or what your experiences were, you're going to be a lesbian.

Well, I think if there is a gene, it has nothing to do with that. What it has to do with is self-respect first, and there is a self-respect gene, and they're female. Then of course they're going to be a lesbian because the alternative is just horrible. You know, just dealing with men and then it really was worse. There's still lots of terrible men, but there's more men that are somewhat respectful now in my

experience. Or at least pretend to be respectful, which is sometimes enough.

Then it was really quite common for men to just trounce. If you open your mouth, then they're going to ridicule you, same as those teachers. That's just like they're going to interrupt. I remember going to feminist theory lectures even in Eugene where the first question is some man, and it's a hostile question. Izzie tripped one of them on the way out the door one time. I shouldn't really say that, but I did.

It's just like— it was when Dale Spender was here from Australia giving a lecture. And there was a wonderful feminist, you know, she's a strong feminist lecturer. And this guy asked a hostile, stupid question, and then left the room and she just figured he needed to have some kind of thing, so she stuck her foot out at an appropriate moment. She had a book table right outside the door of the lecture. Anyway, there we are, that's what happened.

Long: So, coming out?

Ironplow: Yes. The actual process I went through was the stuff I described about going to the Bi Center, Bi Night at the Gay Center with Joan. And that was just, I was just confused, and I didn't know, but then all of a sudden I was in love with her. And this had not happened to me before with anybody. So, that was a different experience and wonderful. And, I didn't really quite figure out how to have sex, you know, that was still kind of a— I was not good at it, and

actually neither was she. You know, it was just kind of fumbling about.

But, I really was in love with her. I was having all these feminist experiences. I joined a group, a consciousness raising group of women, several of whom were faculty members at Ithaca College, or Cornell. And was just going through the normal consciousness raising process of taking topics and looking for common experiences. And we were a little too much alike to do the— what's your like textbooks supposed to do in terms of finding commonalities. But we learned a lot from each other, and it was also a support group.

So, there was that, and then by the end of that year, I was a feminist. I'd found some books, I was reading those books. I had the—

Raiskin: Do you remember what you were reading?

Ironplow: There were two collections of short articles of things like, why I want a wife, you know, that essay by a woman. And, of course, the last line is of course, you know, why wouldn't I want to— who wouldn't want a wife? Look at all the stuff they do for you.

Those kinds of essays from a variety of— you know, they were liberal, socialist, radical, all different kinds of flavors of feminism. And not so much women of color at that time. I wasn't finding— that was like, we were trying to add that in by the end of the '70s more. And let's see, I want to see if I'm— for me coming out was a

discovery of options for myself I hadn't known about, but it was also a choice, right? It's not about a gay gene, who I intrinsically am or something. It's just like, "Oh, this is a really good choice for how I can live a meaningful and happy life."

And I was like, "Oh wahoo," you know, there's this thing. And then for me, also, in retrospect, it provided a lot of opportunities for meaningful action, and for things that— then opportunities for me to do something that was worthwhile would emerge because of that, you know, supporting lesbian community there. Being part of political action groups, I joined Working Women United, which was working on sexual harassment. Not my top issue at all, but it felt like it was useful.

And then it turned out my statistical expertise was actually useful. I did a paid gig in New York City with that. And that was just getting published about— Lynn Farley was there part of the time, there were two folks from the ACLU. They were maybe even in competition, you know, there's like who's going to have hegemony over this new issue? There was all that nonsense that, you know, that projects bring.

Let's see, I did all of that. Then the next year I met a bunch of women who were more radical. They were—

Long: Excuse me, early '70s then?

Ironplow: This is 1976.

Long: Oh, okay.

Ironplow: Yeah. So, Joan, I was with for those two years, but not— we weren't living together or it wasn't, you know, just what it was, you know, I apologize for this.

Long: That's okay.

Ironplow: And in 1976, I was becoming a radical feminist. And, you know, feminism is basically the belief that— let's see, if I do anything that can distinguish me from a doormat, I'm called a feminist. Somebody said that. And, basically the belief that women are human and ought to have full access to every human opportunity and possibility.

And radical feminists are going to the root and willing to take— actually they're willing to be, in my opinion, rude to men or ignore men or even have conflict with men when necessary to take up your normal amount of space, and kind of, you know, need to be sure you're not actually intruding on their rights, but usually that's not what's happening. It's the other way around.

Becoming radically feminist was what was going on. And as I did that, my sense of being lesbian grew, and then— the process of coming out was the same as the process of becoming a feminist, is what I'm trying to say. And the importance of feminist theory in daily life— we debated everything, we questioned everything. You know, monogamy or non-monogamy, it was like, at first the

question is, which one is better? You know, should we live in a commune or shall we live as couples?

Well, as couplism it may not be that good, maybe we ought to do polyamory. We didn't call it that then, but basically, you know, which sexual practices are okay. By the '80s it was, you know, the sex wars. It's like, "Oh, vanilla is just stupid, and limited and not sex positive." And other people are saying, "Have you ever heard of violence against women? We don't want to participate in that." There's this big— instead of, you know— I think the thinking on the average was not very complex. It was kind of like this or this.

A lot of binary thinking, even among people who had critiqued binary thinking. So, let's see, what were some other things that we— sex roles, is butch and femme good or bad? I wrote a little rant in my thing here about, you know, butch, I used to think of that butch/femme as really pretty limited. You know, that's that old time dykes at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York, did that, right? And yet, now as I see what's being painted as the possibilities, it really seems to me that that's— I mean, here's the world [gestures]. Here's women's area of the world. There's this line, but we can move the line, but it's still a binary world.

My idea was, there's the world, here's humanity, let's just take “woman” and do this with it [gestures]. I even said at the time if some of those women happened to be biological men, who cares? But then it turns out, I've seen now why I would care. But, really the idea is just to take “women” and pry that category open, and

make this line fuzzier so that— because in real life it's fuzzier than people say it is. And I wish for that. So now butch is looking better to me, because there it's not about a physical body. Even though, of course, my life's about my physical body, but you don't— why is gender is such a big deal? Why isn't it like eye color? That's a human possibility that's not, in my opinion, being explored very well.

It seems like if you could move this line as far over this way as possible, maybe just the assholes are on that end. And then just make this line— make it so this line is just not what you're thinking about. You're just thinking about human possibilities and gender is kind of not part of your picture. And I haven't seen any reason the new stuff, I read a whole bunch of queer theory a dozen years ago or— yeah, about a dozen years ago. And I just didn't find anything there that was— it was interesting, but it wasn't opening up my possibilities or the possibilities of women in my life. That centrality— anyway, that's done and said. Oh yeah. All the talk about ethics, and then the OCA came along. I guess, am I jumping too far forward?

Long: We'd like to know how you got back to Eugene.

Ironplow: Yes. Okay. Excuse me again. I have this chronic allergy stuff going on. I stayed there and did the job at Ithaca College. And some of the time I really liked the job, some of the time I didn't. My boss was kind of a jerk, but as long as I didn't try to change anything major,

it was fine. You know, because I had a lot of— I was in charge of a lot of stuff.

Long: Can you explain, again, exactly what your work was.

Ironplow: Oh yeah. I was the Director of Academic Computer Services, and at a small college. They were the educated combination of rich kids from Long Island, kids who were getting master's degrees in specialized fields that they covered, and scholarship students from all over, kind of the Eastern seaboard.

And so, I taught computer science. I don't think I mentioned that before, but anyway, I taught computer classes to them sometimes, and tried to help them with their homework, because the computer class would be— they would take a class for four credits and it would take a whole lot less time than the programming classes would, because they'd have to spend all this time. And at the time, you don't get your feedback right away. You have to wait while the computer runs your job, and get the results back later. Anyway, it was challenging for them to do it. I don't know what to do except just keep doing that.

I had that job and eventually I wanted to change some things. And so, the friction with the boss became worse. And then I had an opportunity to go to a conference down in San Diego, and took a— just did a side flight up to Eugene, my alma mater to check things out. Well, they had a feminist bookstore. Wow, did I like Mother Kali's? I loved it. I came back later that year—

Raiskin: What year is this?

Ironplow: 1978.

Raiskin: Okay.

Ironplow: And, hung out there in Eugene—

Raiskin: Can I ask you what the—

Ironplow: —on bicycle.

Raiskin: —what Eugene looked like to you when you came back, and what you can see, what you saw of lesbian community then?

Ironplow: I didn't get a bird's eye view of lesbian community. I saw women that were places like Gertrude's, Mother Kali's events. And there were lots more events happening then are happening that I know of right now. It was sort of a hippie aesthetic in terms of dress. And, I'm trying to think where people hang out at the atrium, which used to be a place where there are lots of little small businesses at Prince Pucklers. And there was a movie theater there, and the sort of the equivalent of the Bijou now, or what the Bijou was before they opened the Metro.

And, I don't know what else to say about it. It was a lot of people who had just— I was just at the tail end of people being able to live on less than full time work. The wages were high enough that you could and the Mother Kali's folks did work at half time doing something. And then that can support them, and then they would

work as many hours like somewhere between ten and forty hours a week at the bookstore. And so, and then all kinds of women would come in the bookstore, straight and lesbian, but a lot of lesbians.

Raiskin: Can you describe Mother Kali's bookstore?

Ironplow: Yes. It was at that time, there had been one other earlier location on Eleventh, but I never saw that location, and I haven't ever met anybody who gave me a good description. Maybe, you know, E, Muff, and Devi will do that for you when they interview. But, the second location where we were for a long time was on Blair, 541 Blair. It's just going back to being a Mexican restaurant right now, in process. It was very inexpensive rent, I'm trying to remember if it was $145 a month maybe, which that was low rent even then.

Right next door to Zoo Zoo's, which is the natural food restaurant— was the natural food restaurant. And in the same building with a guy named Terry, who was an auto mechanic and he hated us. He would stand in the middle of his shop and scream, "Goddam, dykes," at the top of his lungs. And I don't even know what it was, but there was a bathroom at the back. You had to go outside the store and around behind.

And, he had written on the toilet before I ever arrived, and then that would stay there until the day I left. It's like, "Shit on your toilet seat at home where you live. Next time here is your last, Terry." So anyway, probably somebody had missed, and he was just— it was just like, and there was that icky message, which we

didn't— I don't know if it would've worked for me to just scrub it off, but I didn't want to make him more angry.

And the fireman, I know I'll get back to the description, but the firemen would come, way more often than you have to do fire inspections, believe me. You know, every three months maybe they would come in and they weren't just like one or two, which is I'm sure a normal squad for an inspection, it'd be like six of them, all male, all in full regalia with boots. And they would go tromping up the stairs.

Upstairs was the women-only space, and they were really interested in that. They went upstairs into the women-only space, stomped around, stomped around, came down and told us there was something that should be unplugged or something.

Long: So, was like the Fire Marshal's code, the fire code?

Ironplow: Yeah.

Long: And they were checking the fire code?

Ironplow: No, what they were doing is violating women's space on purpose.

Long: Yes. That was their rationale.

Ironplow: That was their rationale.

Long: Yeah.

Ironplow: Yeah. Well, we didn't complain about that because what do we expect from life? You know, we were illegal to start with.

Raiskin: What do you mean by that?

Ironplow: Well, I'd never looked into the legal details, but just being a lesbian was enough to make me a sex outlaw.

Long: Oh, I see, yeah.

Ironplow: And, I was afraid of losing my job. When I was in Ithaca, that was a fairly high profile job. I was on college wide committees, and people weren't going around saying I'm a lesbian. And I wasn't doing that until the last year I was there. I was out a little bit to individuals, but I didn't let it be known, really. I was afraid of being fired, and I was being afraid of being put in jail. I don't know of statistics like whether that was ever likely or not, but it was a fear of daily life.

And, back in Eugene, same thing, but we were doing it and people were violating social norms a lot in other ways, too. Here we were, there's this wonderful store, they had— it was all of this wood bookshelves and a wood desk that someone had built, and it looked like— I mean it's probably from recycled materials, which wasn't cool. It was just low rent kind of, is how it seemed to me when I came.

And there was a huge bulletin board right below, the counter was high-ish, so that you were standing and looking right at the woman

behind the desk. And we had just tons of interactions of all kinds. People didn't just come there because they wanted to buy a book. They might buy a book, but what they wanted was human contact and advice.

You know, women who were battered, women who were trying to figure out what to do with their husbands. Women who needed childcare, women who were trying to come out, women who wanted to find other lesbians. I mean one way to do it. We had an old chair, it was a school desk with a little thing, what do you call that? Anyway, the thing you put paper and books on. And just a school desk, which we could all fit in then, because we were all skinny.

You could just sit there and hang out, and meet somebody that was— and then on the bulletin board there will be all of these groups of people looking for housing or traveling women. We had a list behind the desk of all the places that would take— that was a long list when I first came, of places that you could come if you were a traveling woman or a pair of women. I think two is the most I ever saw at once. And you'd just call those place, I would call them, and find them a place to stay for the night.

Raiskin: Did you know about Trudy's Ranch?

Ironplow: I did, but it wasn't on that list, as I recall. It was more of a place where women would go and live for a while. Yeah. I can't tell you much about her ranch, just that it existed. Joyce Thomas is a

straight woman who joined the board of Mother Kali's later when Izzie was the manager. And she had lots of business experience, and she was opening her place, was sort of half country in Springfield.

And, she was the longest person on the list. She still was doing it after everybody else and said, "I have had enough of traveling women. You don't know if you can trust them or not." And it started to be an imposition, but it was exciting. You know, you meet women from other places, I would do things with them when I could. So, it was building a national network and community. And of course there were women's bookstores all over the country. Now, there's like three left, I think, last I heard.

Long: But the bulletin board at Mother Kali's served a very important purpose—

Ironplow: Absolutely.

Long: —long before social media. Nobody had cell phones—

Ironplow: No.

Long: —at the time.

Ironplow: No. But I think it would still serve a purpose even now to collect it together in one place. If you look online, the best replacement that we've had is queerineugene.com when Julie— her name's not coming to me. It starts with W, was doing that. But then she again became too much for her, but she really was good at finding all the

things a person might want to know, and putting them in one place, events and services.

Raiskin: It's not like a little desk where you can sit and actually meet somebody?

Ironplow: No. No, it's not. But, you know, there's *Lavender Network* for women to meet each other. I think that younger women might have a hard time imagining how necessary of a service that is, but it really was necessary and useful. And that human connection, women for years and years, you know, Izzie started out as a substitute worker at the bookstore. And Izzie Harbaugh, whose name then was Anne Harbaugh, her name's Elizabeth Ann. So, Izzie was her childhood name. She, kind of went back from her former business name to her child name. And I thought that was a positive sense of opening up.

But over the years, she worked there as manager for about eighteen years. And, you know, women will come to talk to each of us. You know, you had different vibes with different women, but they came to talk to her because she was really good at listening without a lot of judgment, and then offering really genuine. She was very authentic, and women just loved that about her. When she died, there was a huge crowd.

She called it a bartender role. She would sit and listen, and then the thing the bartender doesn't do is, "Well, have you met so and so?" She's a matchmaker, right? "Have you met," you know, "this and such a woman?" "Well, have you seen this group that's meeting?

What about this magazine?" And then she would sell stuff. She would find just the perfect book that would answer their questions. And not everybody's a reader, and she was able to pick that up. She just was really good at providing the next step forward for women in all different kinds of situations. I really admired and appreciated that role. And— Well, I'm getting out of order, but—

Raiskin: Many students have told me that she was the first person they came out to.

Ironplow: Exactly. You know, when she died, a woman came in— I'm trying to remember if it was then or the twenty-fifth anniversary. Maybe it was the twenty-fifth anniversary. She came in and told her story several times that she had just graduated from high school. She got all dressed up in dyke regalia, got in her pickup truck and drove down slowly in front of the store, around the block, and went home happy. She was just like, you know, and now it's like a debutante party or something. She was just announcing. And that eventually she would go— she went in and presented herself to Mother Kali— to Izzie Harbaugh.

And so, here I am, and Izzie would get that, and provide that affirmation. And it's something we just never succeeded in doing, even though individual people would have resonance with individual others we never succeeded in— I never succeeded in communicating to the new staff, that warm and engaging is the appropriate way to be in a bookstore, not studious, politically dogmatic, judgmental. I was unable to do that. And so, that was a

huge loss when, you know— Yeah. Okay. And did I answer your question?

Long: So, you're back now in Eugene, let's go back to when you— and it's '76, '77—

Ironplow: No, it was '78, and I came here for the summer. I went back, quit my job, moved here in '79. They had an opening for a collective member. I joined the collective, then the jobs were getting— it was getting harder to find people who had enough money, so we were having a lot of turnover. And then Izzie decided to quit her job at the university, half time job.

Long: What was she doing at the university?

Ironplow: She was a computer programmer—

Long: Wow.

Ironplow: —which is so ridiculous. She had figured out that she could make money in the Bay Area as an efficiency expert. She did that, and then she came here to U of O and did that again. She came with the back-to-the-land movement in the early '70s. She organically farmed while she is working sixty, seventy hours a week at the bookstore.

She did a full tomato crop every year, and onions and peppers and all that stuff you need for good sauce. She just loved weeding, you know. I'm just not an outdoor person, and not a gardener, but she

loved that. And she did it even when she had all this other stuff going on. Let's see, why was I talking about that?

Long: Because you came back and you joined the Mother Kali's board.

Ironplow: Yes. And then she became the— well, at the time we were a collective. That means the board and the staff are the same. And then it started to be that, the newer people would have so much less, like after a year or two, Izzie knew everything about what was going on. I was only working one day a week because I had had to get a job because my TIAA CREF ran out.

I had withdrawn all my— unfortunately, all my retirement money from Ithaca College and lived on that for ten months, and then I needed to get a job. I got a job three-quarter time at the City of Eugene. I wanted the half time, but they wouldn't do that, but eventually they did let me go half time. I was going back and forth between twenty to fifty hours a week for thirty years with them. I'm sorry, I cannot seem to remember—

Raiskin: So, you joined the collective.

Ironplow: I joined the collective, Izzie became the manager. And because it reflected more accurately the relationship that the new person who came was always— it was usually just two people, her and somebody else. And they always knew a lot less. And plus she is much older. She's twenty-three years older than me, and she was older than most of the folks that came and took jobs there. She'd had a lot of life experience working many other places.

Raiskin: Can you talk about your growing relationship with Izzie?

Ironplow: Yeah. The first year we got together— you know, setting behind the desk, there was a wooden desk with a window out, and there was a sort of a saw horse, a bench, hardwood bench. And we'd never replaced it, I have no idea why. And she and I were sitting side by side on that, kind of snuggling out a little bit behind the counter when we were both working at the same time, which is unusual, but that's what happened.

And, we just started getting, you know, liking each other more and more. And we were both passionate about lesbian community, about feminist books and ideas, and we started loving each other. And then we were in a Mary Daly *Gyn-Ecology* group. But we kind of disrupted the process of that group by getting together. Some of the people in the group a little disgusted with us, but we thought it was fine.

That's how we got together. And I moved in with her in 1980 in January, just six months later. And then I stayed there until she died. In fact, I stayed there for five years more after she died, just—

Raiskin: And, where did you live?

Ironplow: She lived in a house on Sheffler Road, in Elmira. And she had five acres, and she put about two acres in garden. It's a big garden.

Long: Can I just ask a little bit of more background about Izzie? Had she ever been married?

Ironplow: No. Oh goodness, no.

Long: No.

Ironplow: No. She came out in high school without ever having sex with her English teacher. I mean, they didn't have sex, but they were just had this intellectual thing about Shakespeare, and then Virginia Woolf. And, she knew she was in love with her, but—

Raiskin: And what year do you think that was?

Ironplow: Well, she was born in '29 so add eighteen, you know, about— let's see, that would be—

Raiskin: Before the war?

Ironplow: Well, or during— I don't remember what year she graduated from high school. It was either during or right after the war. And then, you know, she had a— if I tried to do a whole biography of her, that's a whole another thing.

Long: Yeah.

Ironplow: But, she worked in steel mill, she was very working class. She grew up rural poor, her father was a school teacher, but that didn't make enough money. And so, then he also was a chauffeur. She was a maid growing up when she lived there. And then she lived with steel mills, she worked as a telephone operator for quite a few years. And I told you some of her later career. She went in the army for a year, or several years. I'm trying to— during the Korean War,

she was a psychiatric social worker during the Korean War when I was less than three in Denver. That was that. Anyway, that's the reality.

She was quite a character, you know, and not everybody loved her. She had a lot of struggles with people, but on the average, she was really helping a lot of women. The store always had a lot of struggles about the fact that we did not pay. In fact, no bookstores were paying living wages. You work for a bookstore and you just make minimum wage, and it's a lot of work. Carrying those books to class, which she did mostly herself. I did sometimes, but she'd get a dolly with four or five boxes of books and truck them physically all the way over to the classroom and sell the books there.

It was just— we always made just a little less than their costs. The assets of the bookstore were basically the result of donations. She and I were major donors to the store over years. I mean, $110,000, that kind of neighborhood of money, but that's twenty years. And so, it wasn't losing a lot of money, but it wasn't generating capital either. And there were other donors, other generous donors.

Raiskin: What was your social life like during those years?

Ironplow: You know, she liked to read a lot, and she worked really hard in the store. I was doing a lot of things, but I did have more social energy. I went to events mostly, feminists, lesbian events. I'm trying to think, we would go— we would get tickets for a play.

And then the first time somebody said something ageist or awful, she wanted to leave. I was kind of like more like, "Okay, that was horrible. Let's just wait and see what happens. “But no, she was like, she wants us to get up and leave out the door.

I remember we went to the *Capitol Steps* one time at the Hult Center and had to do that. I'm like, "Damn, I just paid for these tickets." But, her passion about ageism and about feminism, I mean, that's what we had in common. In fact, I have this little thing, I'm just going to read this very short. I wrote this in 2011 because Tree House Press was having less published stuff about bookstores issue.

And I thought I might polish this up, but all I got was just like the first paragraph of the thing done. And pages of reminiscences, which were fun to read again now. But here it is. And this is just a, you know, like tongue in cheek, fun thing. The title is “Mother Kali’s and Us, a Ménage a Trois.”

“In the beginning, MK’s was my girl, Mother Kali’s was my girl. I'd quit my job and moved across the country for her. I left a real sweetie name Smedley’s in Ithaca, New York—that’s another bookstore—But, she and I only flirted. Of course there were others, Mother Kali’s was never monogamous. When I got there in January '79, there were six in the collective. Then Anne was jealous and stole her from me. It took a while, but in the end we worked out an arrangement with all three of us, a “ménage a trois,” if you will, that lasted twenty years. Mother Kali’s could never support all of

us. Always needed more than we could give, always gave us more than we had any right to expect. That's Mother Kali's."

That's my little contribution. Let me see if there is anything that I've left out. Oh, well, yeah.

Raiskin: Do you want to—

Ironplow: Measure 9 and names, and the lesbian community now. Can we slip out away from Mother Kali's for a little while, so I don't leave out everything else?

Long: Sure.

Ironplow: Or, what kind of time frame?

Raiskin: It's fine.

Ironplow: Yeah.

Raiskin: I'd like you to tell us at some point about Izzie's passing—

Ironplow: Yes.

Raiskin: —because it was important to so many people.

Ironplow: Yes, it was.

Raiskin: So, either now or later.

Ironplow: Yeah. Okay. Let me just switch over. I don't know why, but I just feel like it's important to talk about my name. My brother's name was picked before I was born. If I had been male I would have had

it. I don't like his name, but I'm still jealous of him for it. They wanted a girl and they had four girls before they got the boy. They would have only had two kids if he had been the second one. Maybe only one if he'd been the— I don't know, you know, the Mormons are kind of not big on birth control. But anyway, I just resented that.

Raiskin: What is his name?

Ironplow: Brett Duane Hodgson. I don't want that name. But, I kind of just resent him for it. Okay. Then when I was a kid, I wrote essays, not just one, and signed them Billy Bob Hodgson, sort of, because I just knew that— I just visualized that if I was a boy, I would get to do more stuff, basically. And then when I was in graduate school, I signed my homework, A.L. Hodgson, and I was no dummy. I mean, I knew that I would be more likely to get a fair grade if I didn't put Lorraine in there. And the teacher's passing them out and says, "Al," you know. And so then, I grabbed it from him.

So then everybody, I mean, they really just all called me Al from then on. That was sort of— and I have liked it and kind of, you know, why do I have to be a male in order to be okay. I did that. And then, my father's name was Hodgson, and as I came to understand feminism more, I just felt like I didn't want to have my father's name. And also I don't like my father.

He was very diligent and dutiful and all, but he's also very patriarchal, you know, just definitional, patriarchal. Then I was

living— this is the summer of '78 back, I know, flipping out of order. In Eugene, I was staying on Cross Avenue or Street over by the river. And, we're sitting on the porch, with some women I hardly know. I'd actually moved in with a couple that I just barely knew.

And, we were just talking about names and all the interesting names of women that we knew. And it was sort of a cross between earthy names and hippy names. And, I had met Hayfield, which is Sally Sheklow. And I knew a woman from Ithaca named Green Wind, and Hawk. I have a friend here named Tree. I now have a friend named Singing Breeze, those were the kind of names. And they're lovely names, but I thought, you know, I was just describing to them, "You know, if I was going to pick a name—" I'm an engineer, I just am. And I love, it turns out, I found out later, I love philosophy, but I was thinking in terms of my paid work as an engineer. If I was going to pick a name, I'd grab something that's more solid, just like— I'd felt like I was grabbing it out of the air, like “Ironplow.” And it was an intuitive thing that came to me and it had the earthy piece to it.

I don't know if I've ever seen an iron plow, but anyway, I liked it, it sounded a little bit British. All my people are from the British Isles, or at least Western Europe. And there's also a Mormon connection about hold to the iron rod, which actually makes me cry because it's a horrible song. But something about that image is like something solid to grab onto.

And so, then I just picked it like in that moment. And the more I thought about it, the more I liked that name. I chose that name and I did an informal name change, which in retrospect is too bad because it turns out that doing a legal name change twenty years later when the DMV requires you to, with photographs that look like somebody else is a little tricky. I had to find the people that stamp your stuff, that certify that you signed it. Can't think of the name of it.

Raiskin: The notary.

Ironplow: Notary. Yeah, thank you. The notary. I had to just shop for a notary that would believe me. That's basically how I got to really change my name later. But I used that name. I interviewed for my job as Lorraine Hodgson, and I showed up as Lorraine Ironplow, and they got used to that fairly easily. You know, women do change their name often, the bank just believed I'd gotten married. They didn't care. That's the name change piece. And then what was the other one I just said? Oh, Measure 9. Is it jumping too much to—

Long: No.

Ironplow: Okay. I do wish this would stop [blows nose]. I just know a little piece about that history that I'd like to put on the record, which is that I was working with a fellow named Steve Neet. I was actually his functional lead at the City of Eugene. I was the head of the microcomputer group at the time. And this is 1992 when No on 9 was— anybody listening to this will know what it is. And there

was a whole thing, there's a woman named Loretta Neet in Springfield who started stirring up lots of energy about the special rights that gay people have.

And all of a sudden, they turned me into a *gay* person. Everybody at work, everybody I met, they all thought, "Oh, you're gay." And I was like, "No, I'm a les— Please, don't call me gay. I'm not a gay— I'm not part of the auxiliary to the gay movement that has to do with men. I'm at the center of the thing that's changing our whole society, which is lesbian feminism."

There's that ethical culture, a place where we're working on changing values, we're thinking, being thoughtful. We're not part of that irresponsible bunch of guys I don't know much about and don't want to. The reason I wanted to tell you about her is that, it turns out Loretta Neet had married Steve Neet like a year or two before she did this thing. And she really was quite a pain in the ass. I mean, she just was not a nice person.

And, she kept talking about special rights, special rights. There I was at the City of Eugene, she had married him recently and immediately gotten health insurance. Well, my partner Izzie Harbaugh worked in a job that didn't have health insurance. And there was no way, and I actually did make some fuss about it at the city. Did not have any health insurance, and I couldn't get it. And we had been together at that point thirteen years. And here she's talking about the special rights. Loretta Neet had special rights and I didn't. That's my point.

And I may be the only person that kind of knows that. So, I wanted to put it on the record. And the rhetoric of that movement was really very disturbing. The wording of the measure about moral turpitude or something—

Yeah, et cetera. Okay. I think that I covered enough of the things that I had written down. And, we want to talk about Mother Kali's Izzie some more, I think. Is that right?

Long: And, have you talked about— I guess you talked a little bit about your impressions of Eugene, and the lesbian community in Eugene—

Ironplow: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Long: —that discussion already was about the bookstore, but—

Raiskin: I want to know about—

Long: — what about other aspects?

Raiskin: Like, what did you think about Starflower, and some of the other collectives, and what lesbians were doing socially?

Ironplow: Yeah. I didn't know a lot about Starflower, but I knew a lot of people who worked there. I knew, for example, Delia Evron, and I think I said she was in the Mother Kali's collective, but she wasn't at that time, actually. She's the woman I argued with in the Mary Daly book group about whether the people in New York City at

that time were actually alive or dead. I mean, this is that argument actually broke up our communications for months.

I mean, it was a long time before we even wanted to talk to each other again. But, if you could imagine a culture in which a disagreement about whether the people in New York City are alive or dead right now, is something that would break up a friendship, then you kind of understand how important verbal philosophy, verbal feminist theory was to the center of the culture I was living in. Now, not everybody was like that.

Raiskin: Can you explain what that argument was about?

Ironplow: Oh yeah. Well, let's see. It started out with, are some arguments about whether an ideal culture needed to have bicycles and ice cream, that's why— you know, some people were saying, "Well, you know, technology is inherently bad. We don't want to do that." And other people are saying, "Wow, it's such a better thing than cars. We do want to do that." Well, then we have to have the machine, you know, we're really going into what kind of a culture do you need in order to have those things? What does it mean for the people in the culture to be using those artifacts? To me, it was more of a— it was about thinking through the ideas, but for some folks it was really like, you know, "Are you with me or against me?"

Raiskin: But, what is it about to be alive or not alive?

Ironplow: Okay. Well, then how did we— I'm not sure how that turned into— I guess I can't answer the question exactly, but the reason they might be dead, which is the most puzzling thing, is that because they're in such a compact space in which they cannot actually provide even for their needs right there. It's not a sensible human living arrangement. And you know, she, unlike me, had actually— well, I've been to New York City, but she had lived there, and just found it to be— of course that, she's saying we used to be dead. It didn't quite make sense, but it wasn't about logic for her, it was about, you know, that way of life is death-centered. It's not a form of life that we care about.

And she wasn't saying, "So, we might as well kill them all right now, which, I think some deep ecologists might say. But, she was just saying that that way of life is stultifying, and not to be encouraged. And it's kind of a death culture and just don't. She believed in— and this was hard for me to get, but I do get it now. She believed in deep upwelling joy. That was what life should be about.

And I was thinking, you know, I was still sort of a little bit in the Mormon thing. Now, it's about duties and what's right. You know, it's, we want to do what's right. And she was more like, "No, we want to do what's joyful." And I think both are important, but I'm going a lot more for what's joyful now than I was then. But so, does that give you a sense of what—

Raiskin: Yeah.

Ironplow: —that argument was about?

Raiskin: It helps me ask you to explain the role of philosophy in your life. The field of philosophy.

Ironplow: Well, to me it's just lifesaving. I took philosophy when I was a UO undergraduate, and this hard person named William Davies gave a— it was a 500 person class that was the introduction to Western philosophy. Just like all the other introduction to philosophy classes people have taken, except that it was so divorced from real life.

There was a place that this is the moment at which I gave up on him. He was talking about John Locke, who has this thought experiment in which you hold up a sphere and a pyramid or something, some such. And there's a person who's been blind from birth but now given back their sight. Can they tell having touched those, which one is which? And a woman raised her hand, long, blonde hair doing this, you know. And he did call on her, and she says, "Well, they did that. They did an experiment." And I thought, "Oh, what did they find out?" And he says, "That has nothing whatever to do with the subject." You know, he was just like, "It doesn't matter what actually happened, what we want to know is what John Locke thought." And I'm just like, I don't want to know what John Locke thought if it wasn't anything about real life. I want to know, you know, what did he think? And if it's different or the same than what really happened and in et cetera. I want everything to be applied.

And boy, he didn't. And yeah, the TA wasn't much better. Anyway, so I got an okay grade. I'm sure I got an A in the class, but I didn't want to do that, so I didn't pursue it then. But then, I started reading all this feminist stuff, and it turned out that the women who are writing that stuff were professors at actual universities, and they all got together in universities all over the Midwest. And it was like the division between SWIPs in the United States has nothing to do with where you live, actually. What it has to do with is whether you're kind of a socialist feminist and a postmodernist, you're on the East coast if you're a radical feminist, and then they turned in to postmodernist too, later. But, at the time if you're a radical feminist, then you go to the Midwest. And if you're into— it was kind of hippy stuff, you go to the Pacific SWIP.

I've been to all those, but the Midwest was where the hot stuff was, from my point of view. You know, I live in the Marilyn Frye, Sarah Hoagland, Maria Lugones. And the dialogue between— Marilyn Frye came here, and was a visiting professor, and she— I was really excited because she was applying analytic philosophy to categories I cared about, having to do with feminism. Men and women, lived life, ethics, that kind of stuff. And so, and then she told me about SWIP, I went every time.

Raiskin: Okay, can you tell us what SWIP stands for?

Ironplow: Society for Women in Philosophy. Thank you. So, I was there, and I learned a lot. And the dialogue in essays between Marilyn Frye and Maria Lugones, was extremely helpful to me in terms of figuring

out how to think about, and how to make progress on thinking about class and race and lesbian relationships. The essay that most moved me was one called— come on, “Playful World Traveling.” It's a wonderful essay. And of course she's moved on, and she does actually interesting things with postmodernism, unlike to my mind, a lot of the other stuff.

She and Marilyn, and then we'd go to lunch, and I get to listen to them talk some more back and forth. One thing was Marilyn would say, "Well, I don't know how to do all this activist stuff. And what happens if I do something about, you know, try to participate in the thing about race and all these women of color hate me?" And Maria says to her, "So, what if they do? Just do it. You'll make progress. Just do it and you'll see." And, of course, Marx said the same thing. You've got to, you know, you're here, take a step, then you look around and you'll know something different, the practice/theory thing.

It's just been very important to me to the ideas of the movement and figuring out how to make progress, how to take a step forward. And the conflicts at Mother Kali’s are a caution there, because if you ever try to do anything, people are going to hate it. And some other people will love it, some people will hate it. And yet you have to take a step before you can really learn anything. You have to feel like what it is to be there. I really believe in that idea of progress.

And I feel like it's stopped. I'm sure individual women are still making progress in their lives, but feminist theory stopped having

new ideas that I was interested in. And maybe I haven't just discovered— but I haven't discovered since about 1990 stuff that's really exciting in the way that those ideas were exciting to me then.

Raiskin: Have you been taking— you go to these conferences, do you also take classes, or sit in on seminars at the university in philosophy?

Ironplow: Oh, I did for years, yeah. Like I say, when the postmodern jargon took over, and it seemed like it's almost for the purpose of making it obscure. To me, the analytic philosophy emphasis on ordinary language, and then being understandable. Not that every analytic philosopher does that, but there's a possibility there, is just a much more productive way to go. I've been discouraged by that move.

And it seemed to also, to me, and this is maybe unfair, but it seemed to me like, in 1989, the Soviet Union fell. And all these socialist philosophers, this like by 1990, they were all postmodernists. That's not literally true, but there was just this dramatic shift over the next few years. And I'm like, "Well, the Soviet Union has almost nothing to do with socialist feminism. What's going on here?"

I've been interested in philosophers as, you know, there's also a thing about postmodernists sometimes, not all of them or anything, but there's a significant subgroup of actual philosophers who are postmodernists, who really like to do SM aesthetics. And, somebody told me— well, I actually asked this question a few

times and the answer I got was, "They want to be naughty." You know, postmodernists just want to be naughty.

It isn't actually about sexual practices, it's actually about trying to be transgressive, I guess, something like— anyway. That's all by the by. But, it's been an important part of my life. And it's not just me, I mean, I've gotten more into the theory of it, and I've had the excess in discretionary income to go do things. But, the women that I liked and that I hung out with were challenging, you know, "Is this the better— is this what we want to do, or do we want to do something else? I'd made a list earlier, you know, we're trying to figure out what a good way to live our lives. What's our liberatory move we can make in our own lives? What answers have other people come up with? Well, just trying to think out of the box.

And that was— I think that's been important to the lesbian community. And now, I mean, we've always had lesbian communities, but it's less one community than it was when the bookstore was there. I think it's a loss. I think not having the bookstore has really been a loss.

Raiskin: And why did the bookstore end?

Ironplow: Well, in the end it was because of financial problems, and the fact, you know, Karen became the manager in about 2004 maybe. Well, yeah, right around there, and maybe 2005, and moved it out to the Meridian building at Willamette at Eighteenth, and she was really a new ager. She didn't have a gut sense of feminism. And you know,

I went in the store several times and just asked the person who happened to be at the counter, "What would you tell a new lesbian?" Well, the answer I got most recently was, the last time I went was, "Oh, well tell him to look in the *Eugene Weekly*. That's a good place." And it's like, "Yeah, that's not a good answer." You know, it stopped being a resource.

And she didn't emphasize books, you know, she was more interested in other kinds of gift kind of items. When Izzie died, there was a big change. And we tried and I feel I let go of the training of new staff, and I couldn't do everything myself. And it wasn't something that I'm particularly good at, being a supervisor. But, the knowledge of the— I could not convey the importance, like I said, of being warm and engaging to the successor staff. And there were always financial issues.

When we moved over— you see, the sequence is, we were on Blair until nineteen— from '76 until '84 about. Then we were over at Eleventh and Lawrence next to the Salvation Army. That building's gone for several years, and it was horrible. Hard on Izzie— had no air conditioning, and the trucks were using Lawrence at that time. The Blair building, I loved it in many ways, but it had a gas leak. And the bathroom was outside, and there wasn't that much room for the books. There were lots of just, stray, you know—

Long: And the auto mechanic.

Ironplow: Huh?

Raiskin: The auto mechanic.

Ironplow: Yeah, well, God, yes. Okay. Then we moved over to Franklin Boulevard, and that was wonderful because we're traveling, when we would come off the freeway and there we were, right there off of I-5. If they were going in the right direction. And, it was 2000 and something Franklin Boulevard across from the auto place. And we had more square footage, the rent went up quite a bit. But then, getting the books to the classes was a challenge. And we weren't getting a lot of university— even though it was just across the street. Franklin is an awful hard street to get across.

But it was good, because wheelchairs could get right in. Anyway, there were good and bad things. And so, Izzie moved us. I mean, she made the decision that we needed to be right in the thick of things by the university, because there were students that were going all the way through the UO and never knew we existed. In fact, that still was happening at the end.

And, right next to the Dairy Queen near Hilyard at Thirteenth, across the street from the Sacred Heart Hospital. And we were there for, I think, ten years, about. Well, in the neighborhood of ten years. And I was always the one who was doing all the plumbing. In fact, that's what I did at my job. I was doing network plumbing at work, and I was doing bookkeeping, computer inventory, telephone system. Now, this isn't the same as plumbing, but doing the evening events, that was kind of my niche at Mother Kali's.

And I had this other job, so I wasn't there even one day a week. I was doing lots of work, but it was mostly paying bills at home.

When we moved, it turned out that move it was mostly three fifty-plus age women who moved physically most of the boxes. The younger women all had bad backs, or didn't show up or whatever. And it was— a lot of the physical work was done by them. That's when I put everything on the computer inventory. That was a huge job. And then anyway, that was successful.

And we were growing steadily, but slowly there. But the rent was really high. It was maybe at a $2,200 a month, something like that. It was hard to meet that, and we're still paying the staff a little over minimum wage. That was not— and that was another thing that new staff didn't understand after she— was that, "Oh, this is not a place that has a full set of written policies." We had a minimal kind of health fund to help people, but we didn't really have health insurance.

And it was just like all the— they sort of expected, and there were more. There were more staff after she died, because she was doing an awful lot of work for free. I was still working for free, but the other people weren't. And we went from like— well, maybe two people, three. Maybe three— four. So, three or four people when Izzie was there. Then she was gone and all her free labor is gone. I was doing more labor, but it wasn't the same labor. And we ended up needing co-managers who are making a little more, and we had

like three or four other— I mean, it's like lots— doubled the staff, basically, so the expenses went up.

And I proposed not a— well, a customer proposed that we market to all of the departments at the university. And we actually did that, and a bunch of volunteers helped make that happen. I had a whole list of things we could do, like having food with a long shelf date, or having a little coffee shop. I mean, all kinds of ideas, but the one that was the easiest to move on was this one. And that's what we did, and it actually worked.

We doubled our sales in a couple of years, but it was— bookstores were doomed.

Long: Yeah.

Ironplow: You know, that the economy was such that they were. And then the shortage of resources, and the disparity and views of what the store was about. And everybody was not one of— the three of us together, me and Jeannie and Tova, did not have the expertise that Izzie had. You know, she was good at lots of things. We were each good at a few things, and it didn't add up to being what she was.

There's conflict built in, and then, of course, we all have our own personalities to bring. There was misunderstandings and conflicts. And then we did 100 percent change of all that, you know, all of us left. And the only person that was the same was Barb Ryan, and she'd only been there for a year. And Cheryl Rivers Hailey, she's continued on as a staff member. Well, they had a whole new board

and a whole new staff. And then the next year was the year when they were having strikes. You know, they were carrying strikes in front of Moth—. In fact, that's so funny. The strikers are the manager who shouldn't even be in the union to start with.

I didn't even mean to talk about this, but it's ridiculous. A woman who was sneaking in and working when her coworkers didn't know it at night. A woman who was leaving the next month to go somewhere else. I mean, this is the people that are carrying these signs and it's in the "What's Happening," and they have this very, not quite true article. Anyway, the documents about it are hard to follow and not all accurate, but that— we all had faults, but to me it was a structural problem in bookstores all over the country, and individual book— and almost all the feminist bookstores have closed.

Raiskin: Would you mind talking about Izzie's passing?

Ironplow: No, not at all. In fact, let me just see if I have— "The day she died," it says. She was afraid to take medicine to stop her high blood pressure, because it messes with your heart. But, it turned out one of her blood vessels wouldn't hold the load. And one morning she just collapsed in the pump house, which is like ten feet from our back door. And she called and I went out and there she was. She was paralyzed on one side, and we didn't know she was going to die that day. But, we were in the country and I called the ambulance, and it just took forever to get there, volunteers largely.

And then, she's telling me, “Well, do this, do this, do that.” You know, in order to keep the — we had to deal with the store. She's supposed to work that day, so I had to get somebody to do the store. I was getting her glasses and books for her to read. Well, meanwhile, she's gone in the ambulance. It took me, you know, there's all the traffic. It took me a while to get there, and by the time I was there, she was already in a coma. And so, we missed the last few minutes of her life, really.

And then, maybe I wouldn't have missed all of it, but they wouldn't let me in to see her. They kept doing this and that, and it's not like now they really honor the medical power of attorney and the relationship. I mean, I don't even have to say we're married when we go in they’re, they're assuming that I probably have the right to go in and see Kylene, now. And we had been to the hospital plenty of times. But, I was there in the lobby for hours, like three hours.

Long: And this is at Sacred Heart?

Ironplow: Yeah, the old Sacred Heart. Right across the street from the bookstore. And she hated hospitals. She just hated them. And there she was dying, and I didn't even know how she was because they wouldn't let me see her. "So, we have to prepare her. She's not ready, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” But I just felt like they were giving me the run around. What I finally did, and I'm not a person to whom these things occur readily, but I finally just got on the phone, I don't remember who I was on the phone with, and I started wailing at the top of my voice, "They won't let me in to see

her, blah, blah, blah, blah." They're doing this, they're doing that," you know what I mean? Like, blaming them so that everybody else could hear.

And then somebody comes them over to me, "Oh, did you want to see her?" And I said, "Yeah, I said that three hours ago." They did finally let me in, it worked. And she was in a coma, and then we were trying to get her released because they were saying, the doctor was saying, "There's nothing we can do." And so I said, "Okay, well then she doesn't need to be here. She hates being here." She didn't know probably that she— but she— we don't know what she knew. In comes Dr. Hacker, horrid person. He lifts up her arm and says it full voice— drops it, and says, "Yeah, there's nothing we can do." And I said, "Well then release her." "Oh no, I can't do that." And no reason, walks out before I can even argue with him.

The doctor that actually finally released her was hours later, many hours. It was evening before— you know, that was in the afternoon. It was evening before we got her out of there. And the way we did it, is a nurse named Doug, a woman nurse named Doug was just eager to try to help. I didn't ask her if she was a customer, but she seemed to maybe— she really connected with Izzie. And I thought, you know, maybe she's part of this community. But she really worked on finding a doctor who would let her go. And you know, the one she found was the doctor who had been such a jackass that he hadn't diagnosed three different

problems that I'd had. He was a terrible doctor, but he was a nice guy.

And he said, "Oh yes we can do that." But then it turns out that wasn't the end of the problem, because we couldn't take her across the street, we had to put her in a car. I think that was the rules. Well, they just kind of fudged, you know, and we ended up with two nurses and me holding Izzie's head, she says, "You hold her head." I just walked the walk and held her head, because she was, you know, not very present. I don't know how much of that she knew, but I hope she knew she was getting out of there.

And we walked her instead of it, we just started out for the parking lot, and then we kind of zoomed around and crossed the street, and got her into Mother Kali's, which is right there. And then later on the sofa in the women's lending library in the back of that store. And, it meant a lot to me, it meant a lot to many women. I called some friends of hers and a couple of friends of mine, and we were all there. We played music she liked, we lit candles, we talked about her. And she got to die, you know, that was still a few hours later when they took her off the respirator.

Oh, they talked to me in the hospital. The only thing they wanted to talk about was, "Let's not put her on a respirator." And I said, "You haven't let me see her yet. I don't even know what kind of shape she is in." No, I'm not signing papers, I want— Oh, they sent over the religious person, the chaplain. I don't want to talk to a chaplain, Izzie was not religious, and I'm certainly not. "No, let me

in." Well, this is what had happened before I started wailing loudly. So, we got her there, and it was a fairly peaceful death.

Raiskin: Did Doug stay with you, or any nurse?

Ironplow: No, no.

Raiskin: By yourself?

Ironplow: Oh, yeah. And we prepared things so that it would work. And then when she finally died, she just took her last breath. That was it. But she was in the store. I just felt good about that, and mostly, women are really glad that that, you know, it's encouraging. But to die in one day like that, it's just— but you know, that's what she would've wanted, she hated being disabled. Both Kylene and I have gone through long periods of being immobilized by various problems. If you read the thing I wrote it just goes on. And that's what our lives are about right now as older people, as old women, is that supporting each other, supporting other women, that's our lesbian community right now. And there's an art and tea group that I talked about. And there's a, we call it the pod, but we're a group that just can't hardly figure out what to do with our lives now that Trump's been elected, and we get together. And, that's another lesbian community, but supporting each other intellectually and with physical, you know, like they came when Kylene was in bed and couldn't walk for months. They came and helped me with food, they came and kept her company when I needed to go do something.

Raiskin: And who is this group of woman?

Ironplow: They're all lesbians, but that's what I'm saying, my lesbian community is not like people I work with at the bookstore, and it's not like a community appeal through the community email list any— You know, that's, we used to have that. Now, it's people I know through these groups, and that's the kind of lesbian community we have.

Long: And Kylene is your partner now?

Ironplow: Yes.

Raiskin: Okay.

Ironplow: Yeah, Kylene's my partner. We got together in 2011. The way we know that is because we look on Facebook, because we couldn't remember. But I'm not even on Facebook, but she is.

Raiskin: What do you imagine is possible for an aging lesbian community in Eugene?

Ironplow: Well, a lot of us are still— you know, like I'm right now able bodied again. I still have some trouble with balance, but otherwise I can do a lot that I couldn't do. And there was a time in my thirties when I couldn't hardly move either from that bad doctor. So, I see it, for me, able bodiedness is something that comes and goes. And I have friends for whom that's not true either, one direction or the other.

But, I think health certainly has been— is a bigger part of what support looks like. I would love to be making progress on thinking a way out of the boxes that Trump and friends are making for us. But, I don't—

Raiskin: What do you mean by that?

Ironplow: Well, they're trying to reinstate a new set of categories that are very restrictive, and pro huge corporation, anti-democracy, anti-worker rights. It's like worse than I dreamed was even possible. I thought Bush was bad, but wow, he looks good in retrospect. I said that about butch too, but butch is better than Bush.

I think that if the community was more— less critical of one another, that— we had those gatherings, dances, I forget the name of the place over in Springfield, where those used to happen regularly. A woman named Pauline got those together. But—

Raiskin: Hot Flash?

Ironplow: Yeah. But then some other women thought, "Oh, she shouldn't do it, we should do it." Well, then they did it, then they didn't follow through. She was at least making it happen. Well, why is that happening? I got in a lot of trouble because I was criticizing the decision making structure at Soromundi, well, wow, they didn't like that. It reminded me of high school popular girls. And, they all had legitimate point— I mean, Karm did a wonderful thing when she created that chorus. Lisa has the musical genius, and she's

doing— but why can't we discuss something and have a disagreement without fracturing?

I feel like that's a real obstacle. You didn't ask that question, but I feel like that kind of tendency to criticize, and then hang onto it for years. It's really hurting us. And we need more structure, not less. We need more ways to connect. And I had not been to the Saturday morning coffees for quite a while. They're still happening. I haven't heard what killed— but there was a time when— I mean, I know people who won't go because they felt like other people were talking about them, and they don't want to be there.

There's just, why are— I don't know if everybody in the country is like that, but I think maybe not everywhere. I think we have a kind of a local problem with being able to have disagreements, and then move forward. And I'm not even saying that I'm not part of it, I don't even know. I don't have a solution for that, but I think we could have more things happening if we had a way to include everyone without getting into, "Well, you were lovers with her thirty years ago, and I didn't like it." But, you know that happens. I hope you're laughing because it's happened to you.

I would like to see that. And I do think healthcare is a biggie, and especially now that they're trying to destroy even Obamacare, which is already too expensive. There's really no material reason we can't have a big middle class with enough money to live reasonably well, and there's plenty of resources, and we haven't figured out how to make that happen in this country. And they

certainly have in other countries, although that right wing shifts seems to be worldwide. I don't know if that adds anything to our—

Raiskin: Yeah, what your future vision for just the possibility in Eugene as people get older.

Ironplow: I would be satisfied with very little, actually. If I could stay healthy long enough, and my list— I mean I keep breaking things, I keep falling down. If I could just stay healthy long enough, I really would like to have more intellectual relationships with other lesbians. And I think we could think of things that we can't think of when we're all dealing with our own— But I spend a substantial amount of time supporting over the phone, or text or whatever. And physically going and helping friends. That's a substantial part of my daily life, and that relies on lesbian community and as a really valuable thing.

But, I wish that there was more— and that's what this pod group is trying to accomplish, is just, yes, we want to support each other, and also we want to do some political thinking here. You want to figure out ways a couple of members are active in Indivisible, for example, and find that help.

Raiskin: There a national organization called Organizing—

Long: OLOC.

Ironplow: Oh, yeah, Izzie was on the board of OLOC for years.

Raiskin: Oh, yeah, Old Lesbians Organizing for—

Ironplow: For Change, yeah.

Raiskin: Do you think that there's enough interest in Eugene for old lesbians to have a chapter here?

Ironplow: I don't know. We don't seem to have a lot of joiners right now. I think there's no group that I could initiate that wouldn't have substantial negative impact on the ability to get membership. I'm basically sworn off boards. I've been on a lot of boards, and I've accomplished things, but I'm not willing to be a target at this time in my life. And I am kind of an initiator, I have been. I don't who would do it. And I think people are afraid to be initiators, because they see that, you know, like what happened to Pauline.

Well, she's not the only one. I mean, Karm ended up dropping out of her own choir two different times for years, because of people challenging her role there. So, I think it's a— and it may be like I say wider problem, I don't know in other places, but I think maybe we have a specially bad problem here.

Raiskin: And, you've talked so movingly about the idea of living a life to find joy.

Ironplow: Yes.

Raiskin: What would you say was the biggest joy in your life?

Ironplow: Oh my goodness. Well, I described the joy of finding Mother Kali's. I only half described what was wonderful there. You know, there's the music and the periodicals. There were so many periodicals. I

loved *Lesbian Contradiction*, and *Off Our Backs*. And I was really kind of annoyed with *On Our Backs* for ripping off the title, which, I mean, it's a— I called it venerable and valuable. I mean, that has been a wonderful newspaper. And it's not socially useful to name a book *On Our Backs* when you're talking about feminists, I don't know. Even though a lot of the content they had was at least— I mean, the emphasis on sexual practices was of interest, but that political action of using that title, I just really— yeah. You asked me a question—

Raiskin: About joy.

Ironplow: Joy. I found a lot of joy in relationships, and a lot of struggle, both. When you're trying to change things, it's not all comfortable. And we need change not just for somebody else to make it, you know, but also, things need to change in order to make them better. And we're seeing a whole lot of change that's negative. It's like we've— I worked my whole life on social change, and lesbians can get married, which was never one of my goals. I think they should have the right— we should have the right to get married, it's nothing about that, I just, that wasn't my goal.

We have the right to get married, and abortions are almost impossible to get almost all over the country. Who would have dreamed? I never would've dreamed that could happen. And that's just a basic, if you cannot get contraception and abortion when necessary, how can you control your life in any way, shape or form? It's just basic, but people don't see it that way. We're going

back to this brutal power over everything. A few people get all the money, like the robber barons. So, joy. Joy is a little hard to come by, and it's more on a personal framework for me. But, you know what? Ice cream still gives me joy.

Raiskin: Prince Pucklers is still here.

Ironplow: Well, Kylene doesn't turn out to like that. So, and I've found other ice creams that are good. But I can go to Prince Pucklers when I want, it's true.

Raiskin: Is there something that you would, if you imagine somebody, a young person watching this video—

Ironplow: Oh yeah.

Raiskin: —advice from your life of your—

Ironplow: Oh yeah.

Long: Like, years from now. Visualize years from now. Somebody that [crosstalk 01:47:57]—

Ironplow: Yeah.

Long: —you know, a young student watching the video.

Ironplow: Well, don't believe everything they tell you, whoever "they" is. Don't believe everything you read in a book. Think about your own life, what's working and what isn't. And imagine that all the words you know, name things that are known about for a reason, they're

constructed by the people around you. And sometimes even by people with ill purposes, there are— you can think of categories that don't have names and name them. What I think of right now as "sexual harassment." That did not exist in 1975. We created that. I was part of the process of creating that.

If something is wrong, figure out what it is, consciousness raising still works. Find out what that is and do it. I just think that questioning everything, and learning about— and this is the good part of postmodernism, but we had it before they did. Figuring out what ideas from people who don't wish us well are right in the center of your consciousness and your thinking. If you figure that out, "Oh, here's the edges of this box they drew for me. I don't have to use that box. Maybe there's one right here, or maybe there's one over here that's more interesting, and that's what I should be talking about. And that's what would help make my life better."

Anyway, question authority, question your thinking, and really find other people to work with that have goodwill and honesty to struggle through and figure that out. Do better philosophy, and you don't have to call it philosophy and you do not have to read Descartes. You just have to think hard, and try something, and then see what happens. Learn from what you see. I still think that radical feminism has the best ideas about problems with gender that I know of. And, I'm glad if you disagree, but don't just dismiss it as old fashioned and limited and all the things they call it. There's some ideas there that you probably never thought of.

Long: Thank you very much.

Ironplow: You're welcome.

Raiskin: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]