

June Freeman Interview Summary
First Person Plural Project
9 May 2014

Intro-

CM Start with family background, how parents met and their education

JF Parents met in Newark, New Jersey
Father went to college, was a pharmacist and later started his own business, "manufacturing chemist"
Oldest of four children, only child first six years
Mother was a high school graduate, was a homemaker
Describes Newark, changed demographic now, when I grew up - cosmopolitan
Excellent school system, museums, colleges, 10 minutes from New York
Fortunate that way
Depression house foreclosed, four-family house
We continued to live there
8 or 9 years old, moved to a three-family house
Then a one-family house, old house, wonderful house
Bathroom remodeled, multiple showerheads
Mother to sanitarium several weeks, medical condition
Second sister born year later, then rest of siblings
Our houses always different than other peoples?
Her father [my grandfather] a carpenter/builder – personal touches, lot of warmth
Every time we moved, better place – suburbs, South Orange, senior year high school
Could see Newark city skyline from bathroom window
Grandparents, family on Sunday

5 min

Paternal grandmother helped to support family

CM Helped with younger children or around the house?

JF Wanted to help, especially with brother born when I was 13, but not required to help
Close attachment to sister who was 9 years younger, now deceased

CM Family involved in any political organizations or other groups?

10 min

JF No political organizations, father wanted me to go to new school. He made arrangements

CM Any favorite teachers or subjects in school?

JF Talented in art, 2nd grade teacher Miss Dietz, suggested art school on Saturday
Enjoyed school

CM Did parents expect you and siblings would go to college?

JF Education exceedingly important
Mother had to stay home and take care of father after mother died
Parents admired people who were well-educated

CM How did you decide on psychology as your major?

JF Always interested in that, interested in art, too
Father said I couldn't make a living with art
Art Institute in Chicago on Saturday
Accepted into grad school in psychology
BS in biological sciences

15 min

CM Friends growing up, when did you start dating?

JF Didn't date in high school
A lot more freedom in the big city then
Friend for life, Janet Lippman, met in 4th grade
Play was creating a library or putting on a puppet show
Had to take a bus home, didn't hang out with other kids

CM How did you decide on a college?

JF Started college in winter 1946, not a lot of opportunities after the war
Had friends there, heard it was hard to get into
Father thought it would be a good place to go
Never went to Chicago beforehand

20 min

CM Did you expect to get married after college or get a job and use your degree?

JF Got mixed messages, mother concerned about me getting married, father, 'will pay for education'
Met husband at the end of first year of grad school
Seemed like key to my future
Moved to AR, didn't finish grad school
Husband called back into service for the Korean War, back to Pine Bluff afterwards

CM Job with your degree?

JF Hard to do, needed to finish PhD
Nice white women didn't leave their husbands

Checked out UAPB and UALR
Oldest child in 1954, second in 1957, got Masters afterward
Helped to establish Mental Health Center in Pine Bluff, worked there part-time

25 min

A "kept woman," didn't contribute to family income

No daycare at that time, no family to keep children

CM Worked for the Pine Bluff paper?

JF Didn't work for them, my husband did
Wrote a weekly arts column for nine years, paid a small salary towards the end

CM Interest in architecture

JF Started lecture series
Wanted Fay Jones to design new house
Basic interest in arts

30 min

Contacted Dean of U of A about starting lecture series here
Given me a lot of pleasure, I've enjoyed that

CM Describe your typical day

JF Early riser
Taking care of the house, need somebody to help organize
Involved in lecture series
Work from home, a lot of correspondence – room of my own
Four children: one in Little Rock, one in Dallas, one in Phoenix and one in New York
and six grandchildren
I take life seriously
Steve Wiesenthal, campus architect at University of Chicago, "this is where fun dies" I learned
to multitask there

CM Talk about moving from Chicago to Pine Bluff

JF It was lonesome. AR is far removed from many things
Telephone calls expensive, corresponded with mother
Play bridge? Church? I was Jewish, Northerner, educated at University of Chicago
It was hard

CM How did husband's family feel about you being Jewish?

JF Family told him a family secret, both his great-grandfathers were Jewish
Considers herself atheist
In-laws grew to respect her, note from her mother-in-law

CM Relationships built after writing column and helping with Mental Health Center

JF League of Women Voters
Junior Auxiliary, art classes

41 min

Little Firehouse Community Arts Center, city funded

Fay Jones exhibit, first he ever had
Southeast Arkansas Arts and Science Center in Pine Bluff
Served on the board and then as President

CM Still involved in Pine Bluff?

45min

JF Townsend Wolfe offered job at AR Arts Center in Little Rock
Almost cried at being offered a real job
Started Artist's Registry at UALR

CM Differences in the way men and women contribute to community organizations?

JF Men have option or opportunity to belong to "good old boy" network
Harder for a woman to do things that a man can do, women try harder
Women do a lot multitasking
More options for education now
I had an identity in the community, being married into a respected family
Started sister city program in Pine Bluff in the early '80's
Met men at their level, didn't ask for permission to do things

50 min

Women were more alone years ago
Few women in government at that time, especially in this area of the country

CM What is Pine Bluff's sister city?

JF Japanese merchant's house in Boston
Pine Bluff international port city
Japanese industry in Pine Bluff
Iwai City, Japan
Dinner in Japan, all men and me

CM Remember a movie, book, person changed your life?

JF Husband changed my life
People influenced my life and the way I thought about things
Helen Keller, succeeded against all possible odds

CM If you could relive part of your life, what would it be?

JF High School
If I had lived in a different area, it might have changed my life

CM In what way?

JF Might have found a different school that served my needs better

CM Anything you want to add?

54 min

JF Daughter has a career, we have a good relationship
Public art
My eyes on the world, she lives in Phoenix
Nobody has asked if I have any marital advice, I've been married 62 years

CM Do you have any marital advice?

JF Have to accommodate to each other
Have to help the other become who he/she wants to be
Husband retired, wants me to give up some activities
I can't leave things
Pictures of Iwai City, Japan, been there 5 times
Took all the kids to Japan, now the grandchildren
These are my parents, probably about 40 years old here

CM Off to the races from the start

JF Lots of practice with this

Think I'll interview you now.

CM Thank you very much

JF Thank you, it was a pleasure