Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Arlynn Miller

Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
Philadelphia, PA
October 25, 2007

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AM: Arlynn Miller, Interview Participant
AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer

AR – Tell me a little bit about how you evolved, in terms of your feminist identity. How did that develop for you?

AM – My identity as a feminist was always encouraged by my parents. There never was a question in my home that women don't do "*that"* [have careers, etc.]. I know what women did, and I was expected to go to college and have a career. One of the earliest memories I have is an incident which took place when I was about four years old. My mother was on her hands and knees, scrubbing the bathroom floor. She has her skirt pulled up and I can see her underpants. I'm saying, "Mommy, don't lay on the floor. Get off of the floor mommy." She turns back to me and says, 'You don't like to see me on the floor?' I say 'No, no.' She says, 'You know what, you grow up, you make something of yourself, and you won't have to scrub the floor.'

AR – Wow.

AM – It was not 'Marry a rich man and he'll get someone to wash the floor." It was 'Grow up, make something of yourself.' That was the message.

AR – Wow, from the age of four.

AM – We were two girls, so there wasn't any question of a boy being the favourite, and my father never, ever, mentioned that he wished he had a son. My mother did. She said that when I was born she was hoping it would be a boy because she already had a girl and she wanted a boy, to carry her father's name. My mother encouraged drive, ambition, and independence. Those characteristics were considered masculine then, and even now. I was allowed and encouraged to do things and have experiences that most girls did not. I went on bicycle trips with friends overnight and sometimes longer.

I volunteered to work in a Nursery School at a settlement house and as a counsellor in their summer camp when I was in high school. In order to do this we were required to attend group sessions. It was actually a therapy group led by a psychiatrist, Dr. Ryeto. Since we were working with children they wanted to be sure we were mature and stable. For me, that whole experience was exceptional and enlightening and started me on my lifelong journey of self-discovery. {3:41}

AR – Yeah.

AM – My sister and I were both expected to "do something". But at the same time, we were expected to be Jewish housewives.

AR – And what were the messages you got about that part of life?

AM – Well you had to cook dinner, you had to sew the buttons on the shirts, that came first and the rest of it could be like a hobby. And that was my husband's attitude; that other women play bridge, my wife works. So in terms of [being] feminine, there were mixed messages.

AR – What were some of the messages after you graduated high school and did your masters in psychological services? Tell me a little bit about your masters and what that experience was like at City College.

AM – I lived in New York City, and so there wasn't any question that I would be going to a free college. There wasn't a discussion about out-of-town college. I knew that my parents couldn't afford that. In those days I was lucky that they didn't need my income and I could go to college.

AR – Oh I was asking you about just going to college and your experiences at City College, what that was like, being a woman.

AM – There was Hunter College, City College, Brooklyn, I don't even think Queens had started then. I would have gone to Hunter College but I had failed a math regents. They had the regents system, then. Every child in high school had to take regents examinations. They were like the fear of death. They were so terrible.

I was terrible in math and I remember in high school going to the head of the department's office with my parents, because it was very serious. I was so dumb I didn't know how to cheat. The head of the department, said, 'You know, we can't blame this child. This is a good honest child. We blame the system that made it so important.' So anyway, I cheated, but I failed anyway, and I had to repeat the math. As a result, I could not go to Hunter College. It was wartime and City College had only admitted men, except for the school of engineering. They always admitted students based on grades. My grades weren't that good, but for a period of time they gave an entrance exam and I passed that entrance exam, and was admitted to the City College School of education.

{7:40}

AR – Okay.

AM – If you go to the school of education, you're going to be a teacher, which pleased my parents because that's what women did; they became teachers. I was in the first class of women admitted to the uptown campus. There must have been two thousand in my entire graduating class. How many women? Maybe a hundred! They never changed the toilets for the whole time I was there. They changed the name on the door, it said women instead of men, but the urinals remained.

AR – Do you remember, of the women that you did your undergraduate degree with, was there any sense among you that this was something unusual that you were doing? The fact that they were letting women in, that kind of thing?

AM – The fact that we were going to college was unusual. We felt special about that. Most of my high school friends did not go to college even though it was tuition-free. Their parents

needed their income. The professors did not treat us any different than the guys. It was wartime and there weren't too many guys around, so we liked being the minority in school.

AR – Did you have any women professors?

AM – Not in undergraduate. You mentioned Ethel Tobach, and I'm sure that Ethel Tobach was in the graduate [school]. I graduated in 1946 - and that was unusual too. I entered in '43 and I finished in three years. It was war time, and somehow everybody was geared up. I went to summer school every summer, and I wanted to get married.

{10:58}

AR – So you were married during your undergrad?

AM – No! I graduated in 1946. I married in 1947. At that time I didn't want to teach. I thought I wanted to be an industrial psychologist. I didn't know a thing about industrial psychology that appealed to me. So I enrolled at NYU School of Business, since I was going to be in the "business world". My mother bought me two suits: a navy blue gabardine with three buttons and a skirt with a kick pleat, and a grey flannel. They were a lot of money, a lot of money. I bought all the NYU books and that was that. I was all set to go.

My father was very smart and said 'What do you know about industrial psychology?' I had been a babysitter for the children of the President of the American Chicle company. When I told him what I was going to do, he said, 'Well, I'll give you a job and you'll work in the factory.' My father said, 'You never were in a factory in your life. Don't you think you ought to go see what it's like?' I went to the American Chicle Company and they gave me a job on the "flying squad". That meant that wherever you were needed, in terms of somebody not being able to do his job, or having trouble with it, or with a colleague, you would be assigned. The first day I went to one task on the assembly line, and then another. This was not very exciting. You didn't use your brain at all. Sometime around early afternoon, they sent me to the Sen Sen room. Sen Sen, (I wish I could buy some now), was made by the American Chicle Company. Sen Sen were teeny tiny, pellets of licorice packed in a little paper envelope, for breath control. In this room there were ten or twelve women, with white hats on their heads, holding children's beach strainers. These women sat all day sifting Sen Sen, like you would sift flour for the impurities. I said 'Oh my god, that's not for me.'

I withdrew from NYU – we couldn't return the suits. I wore them on my honeymoon. Then I enrolled in Teachers College. The professor in the one course that I took was Ruth Strang, a very well-known sociologist. There were 250 people in that class, and I had come from City College where there were only eight in a psych lab.
So after the first semester, I quit. I quit Columbia, Teachers College. At that time, City College started the first Master's program in psychological services. It was free, and that was for me. I spent the next year there. I did not attend my Master's degree graduation because I got my mother's [degree] at the same time. My father said, "You were so pregnant they thought that you would give birth, so they gave you the degree".

AR – Wow.

AM – In graduate school, as in undergraduate at CCNY, we women were not treated any differently. They called us by our surname when they called the roll. We were not a threat to the men; men never thought about women as a threat until later.

AR – Well during your Master's, what was the gender ratio at that point? There were men coming back from the war by this time.

AM – Not in school. We were such a minority that we just didn't count.

AR – So there were very few women in the program.

AM – Oh yeah. I don't know the number. It was only in the school of education. A few women were in the school of engineering, but they were up on some pedestal. Maybe there were 10, but I could get that information from City College, find out how many women got Master's in the year that I did.

AR – So once you got your Master's, and obviously you're about to give birth, what did you figure would be the next step for you?

AM – Well what did I do? My son was born in 1949, so that's when I got my Master's. What did I do after that? Well I didn't do very much. I took a maternity leave and then I went back. Oh, I had been teaching, I had been teaching first, second, and third grade. But before I took the maternity leave, I had already switched to what they called the CRMD, classes for mentally retarded, so it was special education. And I did go back after my son was, must have been six months, whatever you get for maternity leave. And I remember thinking with the start of the guilt; here I am with a graduate degree and the girl that's taking care of my child probably didn't graduate from public school. She was a nice person, but she wasn't me. And I had felt very guilty.

{19:50}

AR – Guilty about leaving your child?

AM – Yeah, yeah. But the reason I went back was because I needed x number of months for tenure, and my mother and my husband said 'You really should get tenure. You never know, you should get that.' I really wanted to stay home, and after awhile I was bored staying home. I mean the baby was adorable but there was no stimulation, intellectual stimulation, except trying to figure out things to do with him. And I remember doing, kind of like psychological experiments. I would drop him on the bed from a height, or I would scare him, or this or that, just to see his reaction, from an intellectual point of view. So I did go back to school for another three or four months before I became pregnant again. And I remember announcing it to the principal of the school, and she said, 'That's terrible. Why did you come back for such a short time?' I mean which I had planned. And she said, 'If you knew you were going to be pregnant, you shouldn't have come back.' (21:15) [So I didn't pay attention to her]. By the time my daughter was born, my husband was changing jobs. Well, you go where your husband goes, and we went to Gloversville, New York.

That was interesting. I was the only person that knew anything about psychology, or anything of that nature; people didn't even know how to spell psychologist. And I had a Master's in psychological services, so I knew testing and so forth. I became the school psychologist for the

Mayfield – boy you're bringing up all kinds of memories here! Wow, this has been great. My children will love to have this when I'm dead. I became the school psychologist. And it was a rural area and I would be called upon to test the children. There were times when I tested them in my car because there was no office.

AR – Wow.

AM – One time I was called upon to test someone who was in prison. I really didn't know the WISC [Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children] at that time, but I got a hold of it and I studied it. I had to go to the prison, which scared me. I was really very nervous about going to a prison, but this was an adolescent, I guess someone of about 17. At the prison I introduced myself. They gave me a space to work in, and I tested the young man. He was more scared than I was. I didn't know the test that well, so I was with him for an hour and a half. Nobody knew I was there. When it was time to go, an official came and said, 'Have you been here all this time?!' It is against the rules. In Gloversville, I worked as the school psychologist, and occasionally part-time whenever testing was needed (at the same prison). I did leave my kids when I worked. My son was in nursery school and my daughter had a babysitter. I don't remember feeling guilt when they were both toddlers, the kind of guilt that I felt later. I loved living in Gloversville. I was what we called "Diploma Elite". I had a Master's degree.

{24:38}

It was fun. When you're in a small town, everybody knows you. There were always social events. People were called upon to bake, bring cookies or something. I remember saying, why don't you ask me to do something that other people can't do; I'm a lousy baker, but I'll be glad to speak. I became principal of the religious school, (Sunday school). I prepared the kids for their confirmation. We went to Gloversville because my husband got a job there. In the course of time, he started a business. We were happy there. After awhile, the business didn't do well. He was offered jobs by people locally but he didn't want them. Wives didn't have an influence then; you know, we did what our husbands wanted to do. I did not want to leave Gloversville; I felt like the big fish in a small pool. It was better for me to have left because I never would have gotten a doctorate.

So we left Gloversville and came to Haddonfield, New Jersey. This was a turning point because they had just changed the requirements for school psychologists in the state of New Jersey. They changed the requirements to a Master's plus thirty credits, which equals a doctorate.

AR – Right.

{27:08}

AM – If I wanted to be a school psychologist, I had to get those thirty credits. I enrolled at Temple University. I applied for the doctoral program in the school of education. I had the interview with the Dean of the School of Education. This is important! He said, 'Oh, Mrs. Miller, I see you're married.' I beamed and I said, 'Oh yes.' Then he said, 'And you have children?' 'Oh yes, I have two children.' 'Isn't that lovely,' he said. 'And you have a job?' I said 'Yes, I work for the Camden County Child Guidance Clinic. He said, 'Lady, what more do you want?' I was absolutely crushed. I left his office with tears. In the elevator was one of the professors. She said 'What's wrong with you?' I told her. She said, 'Come to our department (she was head

of the counselling department) and we'll get you into a doctoral program.' That was Eleanor Isard, and she became my major professor.

That was very rewarding and exciting time, preparing for the doctorate. It was a lot of work. We had a big kitchen and a separate dining room. For six months we did not eat in the dining room because all my books were there, all of my stuff for the dissertation. I started the dissertation in October and I got the degree in May.

AR – Wow.

AM – I worked every day. The kids would leave for school and I would sit down and work on the dissertation. I worked at the Child Guidance Clinic two days. So the days that I didn't work [outside the home] I sat down at the dining room table, did the writing, and outside research. The dissertation was "A Personality Study of Achieving and Underachieving Eighth Grade Students". I even coined some phrases. The groups were achieving, underachieving, reluctant learners, and "willing students".

I didn't want to do that dissertation. I wanted to do A Personality Study of Achieving and Underachieving Women. I had been talking with Betty Freidan. I wanted to do a doctoral dissertation relating to women. Do you want to hear the whole letter that she wrote to me?

{32:30}

AR – Sure, sure.

AM – "Dear Mrs. Miller, Thank you for your letter. Undoubtedly I will be coming to Philadelphia sometime during the year. My next book is going to be about women who have moved beyond the feminine mystique, so I will be interested in the material you gather about new problems, patterns of self-realization, etcetera, etcetera." The inscription says, "Good luck to all us mutations. We need it." Signed Betty Freidan. And that's what we were- mutations.

AR – When did you first pick up *The Feminine Mystique*? How did you become aware of it and when did you pick it up?

AM – I don't remember, probably as soon as I heard about it. I did have opportunities to sit and talk with her. I even have her phone number!

AR – That's neat.

AR – Well tell me about the professors, do any of the professors stand out in your memory?

AM – In undergraduate, the famous Kenneth Clark, and A. Gordon Melvin. In graduate school, Eleanor Isard, my major professor, was absolutely stupendous. She became my mentor and role model- an accomplished woman. Dr. Smith was professor of statistics. Math of any kind has always been a problem for me. I guess I bought the myth about women and math. Now I had to take an exam. So I joined a study group. I am sure they do that now.
[gap in pages]
This is a good story because it has to do with the myth, I suppose, of women and math. I can remember, well the story is, I skipped – in those days, if a kid was smart, they let them skip a whole six months. There wasn't a year for each grade, it was 3A, 3B; so third grade, the first

half, and B would be the second half from December to June. The story is that my birthday was in December, and in order to go into kindergarten, I guess you had to have been six, or five, whatever it is, in September. Well my mother, she said she wanted to get rid of me because, I was not hyper, I just was active I suppose. And so she took me to school and registered me with the right birthday, figuring if they make a mistake and take me, at least I'll be there. So they did make a mistake and they put me into kindergarten, and then discovered their mistake. So by the end of the first six months they discovered it, and I guess they made me go to kindergarten another six months, not that I wasn't smart enough, but I wasn't of age. At the end of first grade, no, it must have been around that kindergarten time, my mother went to school and said 'Well why should she do this again, she's okay' and so forth, and I must have been there at the interview, and the story goes that, seated with my mother and the principal, they said to my mother, 'Well there are no options, this is what we're saying; she's underage and so she's going to have another six months.' And I spoke up and said, 'Well, if you don't want me, I'm going to the Catholic school across the street.' And the principal said, 'You know, six months in a Catholic school wouldn't hurt that child at all.' I don't know that has anything to do with feminism, maybe it does. I never was afraid to speak up, never. Not that I didn't get punished when I talked back to my mother, but that was just me. So, what's the question?

AR – Well the question was influential professors.

AM – In undergraduate, A. Gordon Melvin was the outstanding professor. He was like a manager of the little red schoolhouse in New York, which was the first liberal education. Learn by doing, the Dewey method.

AR – Right.

AM – And so I learned how, that was methods of teaching, very important. And so, you know, if we wanted to teach math, we would make the kids measure a bookcase or measure to build a bookcase. So I had, they called it, progressive education, but he was very influential. In my Master's, Smith was the statistics professor, and City College was so highly valued that when I was taking my doctorate, they accepted the Master's level statistics course to fulfill the requirements. So as a result, not that I really knew anything, I just got away with not doing that. I failed trigonometry in college, that's the one I cheated on. I was terrible in arithmetic, I counted on my fingers, I still count on my fingers. So here I am now getting a doctorate and I have to qualify for the statistics exam.
AR – Oh yeah.

AM – We took old exams and studied them. The night before the exam, the statistics exam, I was in bed with my husband and I said 'Do me a favour, just ask me these questions.' He said, 'If I gave you the answers, you'd know the question, you know it so well.' I said 'Ask me once more.' So we picked one of the exams and he asked me the questions. In the morning, I accidently sprayed hairspray into my eyes, I could hardly drive, I was so nervous. I wasn't nervous about the clinical stuff, just the statistics. I opened up the exam booklet. It was the exact examination that I had studied at 11:30 the night before. I knew every single answer!

AR – Wow.

AM - I filled it out and I left three answers blank. You couldn't have a hundred percent, and I told Eleanor Isard. And she said, "You did nothing wrong. That professor Smith, he didn't even change the order of the questions."

AR – Okay.

AM - There was one person in my doctorate who had a lot to do with the clinical stuff. I loved him. He was wonderful, but he gave me a C, and it was the lowest grade that I got, in an important course too, Psychotherapeutic methods. It was hard. The doctorate was hard because I was also working, doing something for myself and taking away from my family and feeling very guilty.

One semester, I needed a particular course which was only given at six o'clock on a Tuesday night. Well Tuesday morning, after making the beds, breakfast dishes, and so on and so on, I would cook the dinner or have it all ready – we did a lot of casseroles then; we had timers on the ovens. So the casserole was all ready, the timer was set, the salad was made, the jell-o was made, the baked potato was scrubbed, and candles were on the table. I didn't put candles out every night but I wasn't going to be there, so I had to make it up to them. The timer would go on, the table was set, actually all they had to do was take the food and eat it. Now the interesting thing is, if I had said to my husband "take the kids to McDonalds", he would have, and they would have loved it. But that would have been a fate worse than death; that would have been terrible. A good wife and a mother would not do such a thing. More than once I came home, we had a dishwasher, but the dishes were still in the sink.

AR – Wow.

AM – And I didn't like that. There wasn't too much I could say about it because I was doing something that I wanted to do and you're not supposed to do that. That was the mixed message from my mother; Do! Become! Make something of yourself! At the same time, you must be a good housewife and mother.

AR – Right. Do for others as well.

AM – Your family, yes. You have to; I mean that's what you have to do, what comes first. Did I tell you the story about when I thought there was going to be a fire?

AR – Tell it now.

AM – I was writing the doctoral dissertation, I had a scheduled meeting with the major professor. The night before, my husband was away on business, and the kids were dancing around. I remember the group was "Freddy and Dreamers", and they were dancing. My daughter tripped and fell and must have sprained her ankle and she couldn't walk; 'Mom, I can't walk, I can't walk!' I said 'Go to bed and we'll see how you feel in the morning.' In the morning she said 'I can't walk, I can't get up.' So what am I going to do? I called the doctor, and said 'If I don't bring her in until 11 or 12 o'clock, do you think that's alright? He said, 'Sure, just keep her off her feet, we'll do an x-ray once you come.' So I got her all set. She must have been 11 or 12, so she could stay in the house in the daytime by herself. And off I went. I said 'Forget the parking, just park in front of the college, you'll get a ticket, doesn't matter, get in there and get out.' I got in there and there was some miscommunication because Dr. Isard was not there, I left right away. I was so upset that she wasn't there, that the kid is home alone. All the way home I'm saying 'What kind of mother is that? What kind of mother leaves her child bedridden? Suppose there's

a fire, suppose a burglar comes into the house.' I thought the house would be burnt down, the kid will be gone, and what kind of mother am I?

AR – Wow. Well you graduated with your doctorate in 1965. By the late 1960s, the second wave of the women's movement was really heating up. What are your memories of that, as the kind of backdrop to your life at that point?

AM – I remember more about the earlier days. We weren't aware that we were being mistreated or that there were rights for women. We just weren't aware. I remember one of the issues for women at the time was that the gynaecological examinations were degrading, you have to put your feet up in the air and so on, and I remember thinking, 'Huh, so what?' It never occurred to us, or to me in those years, that things like that were degrading. I certainly was aware of discrimination; certainly my entrance to the doctoral program was real discrimination. Until things really heated up and there were women's organizations, NOW and all those organizations, I and my cohorts, were not aware. Once my awareness was roused, then I could see all the things.

{49:48}

AR – And how did your awareness get aroused?

AM – You go to meetings and you hear things, lectures, the media. Of course this is later, this is '63, so by then we all know what's going on. As I said, in college, from 1943 to '49, when I got the Master's, we didn't know we were not treated equally; let's put it that way.

AR – So what happened to kind of bring your attention more to women's issues, feminist issues?

AM – Most of all, when I was working. Sometimes I thought the discrimination was because I was a psychologist. Sometimes I thought it was because of [discrimination against] women. For example, I already had a license to practice, I already had a doctorate – let me side track that a little bit. Even now, mail is addressed to Mr. Arlyn Miller, not Dr. Arlyn Miller. If I wanted an airline ticket, 'This is Dr. Miller' and they forget that it's Dr. Miller, and they say "he." Does he want this, does he want that. I still get that, everybody does I'm sure, and from women. Also, it truly has not been totally accepted. But in terms of professionally, there were good things and bad. The bad thing was the salary, the good thing was getting the job to begin with, and, 'Oh she's a woman. She has to leave early because she has to get her kid.' Yeah, I do, so I could get away with that. The Psychiatrists, in Camden County, were most unfriendly and unprofessional. I would call them to make a referral. I want them to evaluate the child, for medication [I would say] let me know some feedback; they never gave me any feedback. The message would be, don't call me, I'll call you. This was discrimination on a professional level as well as a feminist issue.

AR – Yeah, so refusing to kind of collaborate with you professionally.

AM – Yeah, in spite of the fact that I'm ----

AR – Giving them business.

AM – Giving them business. Oh, if they needed me for a panel, that was okay. I guess it depended on the individual. Some professionals equal to me were accepting, and others were

kind of a struggle. I get the feeling like they're saying, 'Well, what does she know?" I was taking an intensive course in hypnosis at University of Pennsylvania. There were about 75 people, only three women. The speaker, no matter who he was, would address 'you men.' They never would address us as women. But, when they were giving examples of neurotic people that they had treated with hypnosis, they would give examples of women, hysterical women.

{55:00}

AR – Did it occur to you at that time that this was stereotyped, as you're sitting there in this session, are you feeling like what's going on here? Or was it still so regular?

AM – No, we knew that. I knew that. And we weren't happy about it, but what do you do? I don't know that we tried to do anything except our job.

AR – Well tell me about your post-doctoral work. You started off working in the school system? Is that accurate?

AM – Yes, I was a school psychologist – no, that was pre-doctorate. After the Master's I worked as a school psychologist for what was originally Delaware Township School System, which ultimately became Cherry Hill. I was the first school psychologist in that area. That was the beginning of the Teams; a psychologist, a social worker, and a reading specialist. And the head of the team was a woman who had been a reading specialist; she was not a psychologist. I had some difficulty with her. I was the school psychologist, she was the head of the team, and for example, everything that you said and did had to go through her. And her comment was, 'I want everything funnelled through me.' Very symbolic.
[Recording stops for a break – Interview resumed on DVD 2]

AR – So you're working as a school psychologist, and was this full time at this point?

AM – No, I always had this thing where I never wanted to work – I never worked on Friday or Monday. On Monday the cleaning lady comes, and on Friday you kind of have to prepare for the Sabbath and the weekend. So that was one of the advantages of being a woman I suppose. What happened? I did not have a doctorate when I was working as a school psychologist. When the woman who had been in charge of psychological services [decided] she was going to retire, I was offered that position but I decided that I wanted to finish the doctorate. So I left the school system, got the doctorate, and then the license, and my license in New Jersey was number 240; I was the 240th person with a license for private practice.
{1:54}

AM – I had an option at that time. It was kind of a crossroads. Do I stay in private practice and part-time university? Or do I do the reverse, full-time professor, and so forth? I was not what you call a team person in those days. I had had a little experience as an adjunct professor at Temple, and the politics and the back-biting and the jealousy that I observed was not for me. I want to do it my way. In the long run, economically, it probably would have been better [to become a professor] because you get all your benefits. When I take a vacation, not only does it cost but I lose money from salary. But doing things my own way allowed me to be very inventive, very experimental. I just finished a survey that somebody sent out about satisfaction in your work, and I really think that I was able to get the most satisfaction because I was my own boss. I discovered that I was also a good business manager. One of the things they always say is

that 'If you're in private practice, aren't you lonely? Don't you miss colleagues?' Well, I went to every conference, international, local, always had lots of contact with colleagues.

AR – Okay.

AM – And I still do. Just two weeks ago I had an issue with some clients and I didn't know quite how I wanted to handle it. So I spoke to two colleagues and asked 'What would you do in this case?' and so on and so forth, and I kind of combined both of what they said and threw in a little of my own. I was very concerned about – these were two lawyers, and I thought "Oh well, if I tell them what I need to tell them about what I need to do, and so on, I could be in trouble.' So I taped the session and one of them said to me when I said I would like to tape the session, 'Well what for?' And I said 'Well I would just like to have it so that I can be sure…', and that was my innovation. The rest of it I got from colleagues. So I was in private practice. One of the things that I did at that time, it was in '71, I was divorced.

AR – Okay.

AM – Around this time the most pivotal event in my life took place- my divorce. The 70s are referred to as the sexual revolution. I was divorced in 1971. For me it was sexual evolution. That was a big impact on my life as a woman. I was devastated. I considered myself "sexually marooned". I remember going to a conference in Washington, Albert Ellis was a presenter, and Bob Sherwin was a presenter. Now that he's dead I can tell this story. The conference was "Loss of a Loved One Through Death or Divorce," that certainly was for me. I got there on a Friday night and had a long conversation with a colleague. My way of dealing with stress is to talk. At the end of our conversation he said, 'If it would be helpful to you and your acceptance and recovery, I would be honoured to take you to bed.' My husband had left in December, this was February, I said to him, 'Thank you, it's a tribute to my femininity, but I'm really not ready for that.' The following day was the conference, and Albert Ellis was a presenter. I do not know what I said, but they told me that at the question/answer program, I got up and I gave an impassioned statement, saying that everything I was geared to be, a wife, mother, housekeeper, I wasn't anymore. And as far as my career, I was only a part-time psychologist, and I was devastated. The audience was moved by my statement. When the program was over, Ellis came up to me and said 'Would you like to join me for lunch?' Well I thought, 'My god, heaven was opening up!' The famous Albert Ellis had invited Me to lunch. On the way to lunch, he asked about another conference meeting in the hotel. Naively, I said I have the program in my room. Shall I get it? He replied "we'll get it later". After lunch he said, "Let's go to your room and get that Program". In those days Ellis believed that sometimes sex with a patient could be Therapeutic. Now here I was, I had been married for 25 years, I was a virgin when I got married at 21, I was not even ever aware of being interested in another man, I mean you didn't do things like that, and here I am with Albert Ellis. After my divorce, I had had dreams of having sex with the rabbi, with Kissinger, so here came the biggest authority. And so we did; it was perfunctory. But that whole experience was very significant. It helped me mature sexually. Prior to this, I only had had sex with my husband. Now that I was single, I didn't know how or when I would be sexual again. So I can thank Albert Ellis for that. He helped open me to new experiences.
AR – Oh wow.

AM –And I remember his mother very well because there was a meeting in our home, and I must have been about 8 or 9 years old, and so children then came in and said hello, sometimes they recited a poem, and then they went to bed. So it was time for me to go take my bath and then I came in to say goodnight to everybody, Mrs. Ellis said, 'Oh sweetie, you left your jewellery in

the bathroom.' And I said, 'Oh, I didn't have any jewellery.' And she said, 'The ring around the tub!' I'll never forget that. So I talked with him about that, his mother, but this meeting was in Washington, and in those days it was at two hotels, once across from the other. Now Bob Sherwin, that's another story, a very important person in my life. He died in my apartment.

AR – Oh wow.

{12:05}

AM – That was kind of an exciting time. At that time a widowed friend of mine and I started Singles Seminars, which were the very, very first in the country of any organization of that type. We both were single, and frankly, we were looking to meet people, so we started this Singles Seminar. I was in charge of the professional aspect of it and I ran it like a convention; I got speakers and so on. And she ran the social part like her son's bar mitzvah.

AR – Right.

AM – We're still friendly, we talk about it. We did it for about three years, we charged $25, and on a Sunday we got maybe 200 people at a time. We did it about three times a year. And I hired – sometimes I bump into some of the psychiatrists, and one of them has remained a very good friend, his whole family – they were residents, for $25 or $50, to run the workshops. And the workshops were surviving a divorce, special issues of widows, sex and the single person, and they would come on Sunday morning and have workshops, have lunch, at a hotel in Cherry Hill. And there were lots of weddings as a result of it, and it was a wonderful wonderful program. It was great.

AR – Right.

AM –We got a lot of publicity; we were on the radio, television. I did a lot of radio in those days, a lot of television.

AR – Tell me about some of the major themes. I mean from your CV it looks like divorce, living as a single person, sexual harassment in the workplace.

AM – Well that came later. The divorce was, you know, a result of personal [events]. Then I started being interested in the sexual aspects and started taking courses. When you apply for AASECT, you need to recommendations. Albert Ellis was one of the people who recommended me!

AR – What is AASECT?

{16:03}

AM – American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. And that is the certifying organization; we don't have a license, we are certified. So I am certified, and as a result of that, I got involved with the sexual harassment in the workplace. I think as a result of that. That was very interesting because I did a lot of expert witness for TASA, technical assistance for attorneys. I did that for a period of time.

AR – Okay.

AM – You know, it's interesting. In terms of my practice and my experience, people say to me, what kind of a therapist are you? I have a listing in *Psychology Today*, and at the end I say, 'People ask me what kind of a psychologist are you. And I say 'A good one,' since I always worked for myself, it seemed like I started out with what I knew best, which was children because I was trained and had experience as a teacher. As a result I realized that you cannot work with children without their mothers. So then I would include mothers, had mothers groups. Some of the mothers groups are still in touch with me. From there I moved to family therapy and martial therapy. My divorce had a great impact, I started studying, writing, and reading about divorce. My publications have been [on] divorce, the single parent, guidelines for divorcing parents. I then certified as a sex therapist. So my work has always kind of followed my life.

AR – Developmentally kind of.

AM – Yes, and changes, and new things. Now, it's not following my life but I get referrals from the LBGT community.

AR – Oh interesting.

AM – I've worked with cross dressers, transvestites, and so on. I'm doing a workshop in two weeks about treatment for sexual offenders.

AR – And how did that kind of referral source come about, the LGBT clients?

AM – It started with working with women. So, lesbian women would come, from there the word spreads. I'm listed as someone who does [work with LGBT issues]. I mentioned my birthday, I am going to be 82 in December. I think it is important that I think I'm alive in part because I'm a psychologist. Now I'm telling you this not by complaint, but I've had three major cancer surgeries. I had uterine cancer, two and a half years after my divorce. I absolutely believe, and I learned it from my study of psychology and now everybody else is catching up with it, that stress causes illnesses. I remember reading John Bowlby's Theory of Attachment. He said that the kind of people who can't take no for an answer have the most difficulty with separation. I'm the kind of person who doesn't take "no" for an answer, but I don't stamp my feet and get hysterical; i.e. They wouldn't take me in the doctoral program for the School of Education, so I went to the counselling department. In the divorce, I had to take no for an answer. He wanted out. A year later he wanted back in, but by a year later I had revived. It was difficult. I didn't know it at the time that I was depressed, but I knew it when I came out of the depression. Suddenly colours were in the world, people were in the world. My work sustained me because when I went to the office, all the rest of my trouble was gone, and I could really concentrate on my work. It's interesting that I got uterine cancer in relation to the divorce. Virginia Satir, famous social worker, once said to me, 'Arlyn Miller, you should listen to your body.' And I've learned that.

AR – Yeah.

{23:15}

AM – The next thing, four years later, was colon cancer. I believe that the colon cancer came as a result of the radiation for uterine cancer. The colon cancer then spread to the bronchial tube. So I have no uterus, half a colon, and one lung.

AR – Wow.

AM – That was all 18, 20, years ago. I now have lymphoma, and pre-cancerous cells in the vagina because of the radiation so many years ago. I think I survived because of early detection, positive attitude, behavioural techniques, and good medical care. I tell myself I'm in charge here, I'm not dying yet. I'll let you know when I'm ready. I also use a lot of the techniques that I learned; I use meditation, and visualization. Carl Symington, M.D. developed a method of visualization where you identify the cancer. You visualize a weapon which you use to destroy the cancer (I have used this over and over with people). I did visualization for restoring orgasm, after the divorce. Suddenly I'm single, and this was the 70s, you could do whatever you wanted. I could have all the sex I wanted, but I wasn't having orgasms. So I visualized it, three months in a row, I visualized myself having it happen. Now as a sex therapist I work with impotency and frigidity, and we use visualization. Well, I learned that as a psychologist. I don't know if that's a feminist thing; it's a survival thing.

{26:38}

AR – Right. Is there anything that I haven't asked about, that you feel would be important to have on the tape, about your life, your career, your experiences as a woman in psychology? Any of the above.

AM – One of the highlights of my career was an invitation to address the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society. The topic was "Divorce and the Three Generations". I thanked them for inviting me and said, "You have come a long way- honouring a Psychologist, a woman and a divorcee!" I have had a very full and exciting life. I have been to every country that you could think of.

AR – We haven't talked about your travel actually.

AM – Well I've been to Timbuktu. I've been to Katmandu, all of Europe, Africa several times. A lot of the travelling was work-related. I gave workshops in Europe on "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace". So a lot of it was tax write-offs, a lot of it is just going places.

And I'm still going places. An interesting thing happened recently. I had a collection of clothing, Victorian, Edwardian, some from the 20s, and even one from the 40s, my collage prom dress. I'm a collector. I gave a whole bunch of artifacts to City College. I collected these clothes, just gave it all to the University of the Arts. We had a big opening and reception.
AR – Oh neat.

{29:30}

AM – What else can I tell you? I love being who I am. I'm trying to think of things that are negative. It might have been negative if I was obliged to take a job somewhere, but always being able to be in private practice and still doing a little bit of teaching suited my personality. Knowing what was best for me, and I think that came from knowledge of psychology.

AR – Would you have any advice for women in psychology now, as they kind of make their way? Something that you've learned from your experience having 50 years, or more, of experience.

AM – Know thyself. I knew that to work in a university, is very prestigious, it would have been wrong for me. I could have done the job, but that's not who I am. Know yourself, don't be afraid, and bring others into your life. I'm friendly on a professional and personal level with many psychologists. I continue learning. I have to for my license. Now I am semi-retired. My years of experience have made me confident, and I still feel very sharp. I love my work.
Was I a feminist? Am I a feminist? What is a feminist? I am a daughter, a mother, a grandmother, and a great-grandmother. I have been a wife and a lover. I am glad to be a woman.

AR – Great. So if you could just hold it up and I'll zoom in.

AM – This is Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and there's her inscription. "Good luck to us mutants. We need it." And I guess that's what we were because over the span of years we have developed the way mutants have; when they first come out they're questionable, people are suspicious, but then as the years go by they become accepted and how could we have ever done without them?

AR – That's great.

AM – The date is in the letter. This letter came after I had met her and after she had signed the book. This was August 7th 1963. And that was just when I was beginning to work on my dissertation, which was declined by the Association of University Women.

Additional Comments from the audiotape:
AM: When we went to Gloversville, in 1952, my husband went there for a job. He was there in advance. When he told people "My wife is a psychologist," it started some things going in their mind. When I got there and got to meet these people - particularly one family, they had a retarded child [children were called retarded in those days], and I had taught in New York City, classes for CRD, classes for retarded children. The child was 12 and in a residential school. There were no classes and facilities at all in Fulton County. I became friendly with these people and we started a chapter of the AHRC- Association for the Help of Retarded Children [I don't know what that's called now]. At that point, suddenly, people came out of the woods. In this small town, people were not aware of the number of children who required special training, special teaching. Either they were kept at home or sent away. As time went by, we had the organization and decided we would start classes. I trained the teachers and they were volunteers. We got the classes going. Children were brought back from their residential treatment centres. Finally, after about two years, we got the County to recognize these classes and absorb them into the public school system. That was a big accomplishment and I am very proud of the part I played in it. But what followed was even more exciting. As those children in the classes grew up and finished their education, we started sheltered workshops. As a result of starting that sheltered workshop at that time, today it is a model for the state of New York, with more than a million dollar budget. I am very proud of the part that I played in establishing that. Two years ago, at the 50th anniversary of those classes and the starting of the sheltered workshop, I was honoured by the group and I have visited the workshop, and it's great! So that was something that was accomplished, along with testing young prisoners in the jail in Fulton County in Gloversville in the 1950s.

Another thing I wanted to add in regard to being a feminist. People have said that I was a feminist before the word was invented. Actually, we had to have our consciousness raised, as they said, before we became aware of the injustices or the inequalities, which we always thought were normal. It just never occurred to us that things should be any different. So when our

consciousness was raised, and I believe that was in the time of Betty Friedan, maybe a little bit before, then we realized, and somewhere along the line, I wrote something which kind of summed it up, I wasn't sure the definition of a feminist I really didn't know whether I was or I wasn't . But once they called it a womanist, it seemed better; I was better able to accept that.

Another activity which I forgot to mention. I worked for year or two on an extensive workshop called "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace." I am going to enclose a copy of it, but I think it should be mentioned somewhere particularly since the objectives had to do with women. One of the first objectives was to present historical events leading up to the present situation in the United States at that time, in the women's movement, and its effect on the status of women in business and industry; on laws dealing with sex discrimination; on state and federal court cases, which were pending the Supreme Court case 93; Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas issue; and also presenting historical events related to guidelines for government, history and on services. I really enjoyed doing that. I don't know what caused me to do it. But once it was done, I presented that workshop all over the world, in Spain, in France, all over the United States. I realize now that that was certainly a very important thing to have done. I presented it to local psychological associations, state and APA [American Psychological Association] at an APA meeting, so I'm going to send a copy of that.

I am also sending you a copy of the fall 1976 issue of Women and Psychotherapy from American Academy of Psychotherapists. In addition, I am sending a copy of a personal statement that I made when I applied for fellow status in Division 52, International Psychology. The whole idea about feminist movement keeps coming up. I sent an e-mail to my niece, who is the historian and professor of women's studies, asking her when consciousness-raising started. She sent back the fact that this was an ambiguous kind of a thing and most people accept Betty Friedan's book as maybe the official start. However, in order for it to have impact, there had to have been women who had some kind of awareness before that time. So I am going to read to you what I sent back to her when I thanked her for her information. I said, "Thank you! You helped clarify my uncertainty. I was not one of the women with the unnamed problem. I was out doing my thing, not feeling depressed, or like something was missing from my life. Instead, I was caught in the middle, between proud and happy about my education, my work, and my life and feeling very guilty about "fulfilling" myself. The struggle between the self-fulfilment and the edict to fulfill the expectations of society and the mixed message from my mother that is "make something of yourself but also be a good Jewish wife," and that mixed message, and that fulfilling of expectations, persists even until today.

And one last final thing, I thought you might want to have that bit was, I recall the names of the people who were significant when I talked about my life after my divorce and separation and my friend Robert Sherwin who was the author of "The Compatible Divorce", the first book on how to get a divorce from legal, financial, etcetera [standpoints]. Anyways, through him I met Wardell Pomeroy who was one of the big shots in the Masters and Johnson programs and through that association [I] met Helen Kaplan who was another one of the four people in the forefront of sexual education. And Cliff Sager who was also important at that time. At that time when I was being so impressed with the elite psychological movement and people in New York City I had an opportunity to meet the nephew of I think Roy, I even had a date with the famed nephew from the Menninger Clinic. Somewhere along the line someone had mentioned to him that I had been divorced, I was a therapist. Believe it or not, in the course of our wonderful date, which was a concert at the Philadelphia Orchestra, when he came to Philadelphia, he asked me did I think that he should have some therapy. He was in the process of a divorce and you know,

coming along with the usual issues. When I look back at that time it was like a fairytale. People entered my life that I never dreamt would.

Maybe there is enough material for a book and if there is I'll flush it out with more names. I also have a niece who writes memories maybe she would help me. So save all this stuff and send back to me what you don't want. It's been great. I hope I have not overburdened you with more than you could possibly use and more than you possibly want.