

1982

Oral history interview transcript with Pat Coontz

Patricia Coontz

Lee Swedberg

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Recommended Citation

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PAT COONTZ
INTERVIEWED BY LEE SWEDBURG
EWU Women's Oral History Project
EWU 984-0094 # 16
JULY 14, 1982

L. SWEDBURG: This is Lee Swedburg interviewing Pat Coontz, Eastern Washington University Associate Professor of English and Director of Women's Programs for the Cheney Women's Oral History Project. Her topic concerns the development of Women's programs and of the peace movement in Cheney. The date is July 14th, 1982.

L. SWEDBURG: We are sitting here in the very lovely green and white lounge of the Women's Center, for which Pat is largely responsible. I'll be asking her about that later. Pat, give us a quick review of your background in education.

P. COONTZ: Well, it can't be very quick because it extended over about what, 40 years or something. First the University of Washington—well, first Pasadena Community Playhouse. Do you really want a quick review?

L. SWEDBURG: That's right.

P. COONTZ: Pasadena Community Playhouse when I graduated from high school for a year, and then Reed College for a year and a half in Portland, then the University of Washington for a couple of years in Seattle. Then I got married and went sort of took classes of and on between babies and moving to California and so forth. Finally went back to school. . oh no. . . the University of California for a year. . .took the Language courses and some Psych. Courses, and then went back full time in Salt Lake City when my ex-husband was a professor there. I graduated from there. I think in '60. Then I was a T.A. there for a year or two, and got my degree by the way not in English but in Psych. I got a B.S. in Psychology.

L. SWEDBURG: Psychology?

P. COONTZ: Yeah, and then I was given a T.A's job in the English department because I had written a couple of novels. . . unpublished. But they accepted them as evidence that I could teach English. So I worked there for 2 years and by this time I was getting a divorce. Then I came back home to where I was born in Olympia, and got my masters at the University of Washington in Seattle. Then I had 35 hours above that for my Ph.D. and I was offered a job here so I took it.

L. SWEDBURG: When was it that you came to Eastern?

P. COONTZ: 1964.

L. SWEDBURG: Okay. What is your position now?

P. COONTZ: Associate Professor of English and Director of Women's Programs.

L. SWEDBURG: But you didn't come here in that position?

P. COONTZ: No, I came here as an instructor, and there wasn't any Women's Studies or Women's Programs. I was an instructor here for an unconscionably long time because they made a practice of keeping women as instructors and I taught nothing but Comp. courses for the next two years. 3 comp courses every quarter. That no longer happens.

L. SWEDBURG: Okay. Is this or can you think of some other incident responsible for your interest in Women's Programs? Can you think of something in particular that made you aware of the need for Women's Programs?

P. COONTZ: My own history. I mean. . . I married for the wrong reasons. I thought I was in love. I dropped everything. I had been a very active, intellectually interested, organizer type in high school and even in college and then suddenly it came time to marry and I married in what, '42 and then for a long time I continued this illusion of romantic love I guess. But gradually it became obvious that I was sacrificing everything I had been and wanted to do for quote love unquote, and then when babies came of course you adjusted to that. But yeah, my interest in the women's movement and in women's studies came as a direct result from my own experience -- the transformation from an ambitious, independent young girl to a dependent, afraid older woman who couldn't face the thought of going out into the world by herself. That's what did it, and then when my husband became an obvious alcoholic . . . he'd been an alcoholic for a long time . . . but when I recognized that he really was and things really became intolerable, I went back to school **finally and was shattered**. It was as if it was *actually* as if someone had sucked all my insides out, as if there was nothing in there but emptiness. It's as if to me . . .nit's as if marriage and that supposedly admirable self-sacrifice that goes with it had robbed me of personality, brains, determination, guts, .really. So when I took this job it was not my first job. I had also worked when I was in Salt Lake City. But it was my first real teaching job apart from being a TA, and I was nervous; I was frightened. I had to have 2 cigarettes before I walked into the classroom. I had to have five hours to prepare myself. It was just incredible, and then, I think it was in '65 or maybe the fall of '64. . . no, that's when I started so it must have been in maybe the spring of '64 I read for the first time Betty Friedan's book, The Feminine Mystique. I thought, my God that's it, that's the answer, and so I tried to teach it in my next class. I was teaching a research paper class and I was very. . . I mean I was a very good English teacher and from the beginning I had no trouble with my students. They liked me; I taught very well. They learned very well, they learned a lot and told my bosses they learned a lot of stuff. I had this research paper class and I assigned Betty Friedan. We were going to do papers on Betty Friedan. I never got such resistance! I never saw such resistance in my life. There must have been oh, 40 people in the class, 30. . . maybe only 30. One young woman was the only one who would even listen to that. The men were hostile, and the funny thing is the young women were hostile. But this young woman had come back to school after being married. Her father was a Labor Union organizer I remember. She was the only one who understood what Betty Friedan was trying to do and what I was trying to do, so I dropped it.

L. SWEDBURG: Could you review for us very quickly what Betty Friedan says?

P. COONTZ: Well, The Feminine Mystique is the whole notion that you are a nurturer, a server, it was supported by science during the period and everything else. I've got some wonderful quotes from Ludberg, and biologists and psychologists and everybody in the scientific community that talked about the innate nature of women and how much more . . . well it was Freudian I suppose in its conceptual . . . conception of women. But she sees women as during the 50s and then actually after the World War, after the second World War when they took us out of the factories. She sees us from then on as being put into the position of taken out of the work force and being told that the

most important thing in the world was to be a wife and a mother. You face yourself, **every true woman** she must do anything to avoid what Freud would call 'penis envy' if she does try to . . . if she feels the need to assert herself, to achieve, she is guilty of destruction of her man that -- she's competing with him. I've actually had a psychiatrist at the University of California tell me that I must adjust to the fact that I was a woman and therefore that I shouldn't be striving, suggesting to me that I drop psychology except for child psychology and go into home-ec, and that's the truth. Believe it. Looking back, I cannot believe it. But anyway it was Friedan's book that started me and I think so many other women in my generation suddenly looked at it and said, "That's it". I mean that's exactly what happened to me.

L. SWEDBURG: I certainly understand that. The same thing happened to me as a matter of fact with Friedan.

P. COONTZ: It's incredible.

L. SWEDBURG: There came a time then when you felt the need of a course beyond the composition course that you were using. . .

P. COONTZ: Yeah. Well finally, other women in the department, especially one other woman said -- two other women said, "You cannot keep Pat teaching Comp. much longer." **Cause she.** . . so they let me teach a creative writing course and then gradually everything else . . . short story, **pre manages**, everything. Of course by this time the peace movement had begun and women in the peace movement had rebelled against always making the coffee while the guys planned the strategy. So actually it was out of that, the kind of rebellion that occurred within the anti-war movement that really began people. . . young people -- at least -- thinking about it. I think the middle class -- I think us. . . middle aged women, middle class women -- had been started by Betty Friedan's book. But I think the young people were involved in a struggle and the women were being treated as if they were servants instead of co-partners.

L. SWEDBURG: Can you think of any special incident that occurred here at Eastern that reminded you of this need?

P. COONTZ: Well, I suppose . . . you mean with students or with. . . ?

L. SWEDBURG: Well, either. Were there any particular incidents that crystallized the need for women's programs?

P. COONTZ: You know I'm not sure that there was any particular incident. It was a whole new view. It was clear that women, that females, were very active in their opposition to the war in Vietnam and then to be treated as if you were servants, only in the background of it, except when they needed you to organize, really -- do the calling and do the work for it. I think that bugged me. Of course once I was exposed to Betty Friedan, I resented it. I began to resent the fact that women did not appear in history and that young women were treated often as if they didn't have good sense, and I hear my colleagues make jokes that I now know were sexist jokes but I didn't realize it at the time. I just vaguely kind of resented it. One time, I remember, we had a woman poet come to interview for a job and they had the nerve to ask her if she. . . if her poetry. . they said, "Your poetry seems to be mostly about women, and a woman's feelings and so forth. . . why. . . don't you think that's a little limiting?" I thought, "Why. . . my God, for years they've talked about a man's feelings about women and about himself and no one's ever said to him, 'Don't you think that's a little limiting?'"

L. SWEDBURG: This was a committee in the interview.

P. COONTZ: Yes. I couldn't believe it. I was still so kind of . . . impressed by the masculine world in which I worked although there were more women in English than in any other department that I didn't really. . . I didn't really voice my objections until later when I thought about it and said, "Are you really gonna be a coward and not object to this?" So I finally did but I had to force myself to do it.

L. SWEDBURG: Well now were you picking up allies along the way, here?

P. COONTZ: Well, I think.

L. SWEDBURG: Other than the one student who. . .

P. COONTZ: Other than that one student in '64, well that, the women's movement wasn't then of course. I mean, it wouldn't and nothing happened as far as how the women's movement went here at least until probably '69 or '70. '69 maybe '70 they imported a young woman from back east and . . .

L. SWEDBURG: You mean they hired her?

P. COONTZ: No, no. It was a student who came from back east, and that wasn't Gail either. That was another young woman who was appalled at the . . . [laughing] backwardness of Cheney. I can't remember her name and she didn't last long either. But there was . . . there were a few young women who were active. Kathy Logan for one. Kathy was some kind of a student but. . . oh she was head of girls - they didn't call them women - they called them girls something or other. . . association. She was the president of that and she and Gail Branner and Joan Ellen who was a student body officer who now works here were active in changing that girls association, student body association into what they called the Women's Caucus. So they took it out of the associated student body. As it turned out, I mean they thought it was a very progressive thing to do and it was, but what they overlooked was that they didn't get to take half of the student body money with them -- which they had as the girls association. So in the long run it turned out to be a disadvantage, but they objected of course to the kinds of things that the girls association did like running for princess contests and you know, being pompom girls and being a receptionist always for people who came on campus and always dressed up. . . so this group objected to the activities of that traditional girls association. As I recall, Betty Ohrt was women's . . . was girl's advisor at that time. Notice they still called it girl's advisor. They didn't see. . . they did however say Dean of Women. But they called her girl's advisor.

L. SWEDBURG: You had no official association with this group?

P. COONTZ: I became it -- Betty was their advisor when they first broke and she didn't approve of the break, as I recall. Then the next year, I was asked to be girl's advisor. I mean, this was when they began to demand a class -- some kind of classes.

L. SWEDBURG: Did that demand come from the students?

P. COONTZ: It came from the students first you know, because one of the students in political students was allowed to teach a class at night and she had, I think, six students or something like that and George Durrie actually supervised that class. He was in -- it was then—political science; it was called political science I think. But the first real class in Women's studies was probably in '70 . . . '71. Jerry Darngren had a class in history, and I had a class. . . The Road to Feminism he called his. Then when I came back from my

sabbatical in '71, '72, in the fall of '72 I introduced Women's Lit. (Women in Literature class.)

L. SWEDBURG: Did you have allies among the faculty or were you standing alone? You had some from George Durrie but actually as a whole, how do you feel about. . .

P. COONTZ: Women's studies? Not very friendly. I'm trying to think who else did. . . Kathryn Snipes, in English, was friendly and there was a new woman who came a year or so after, Coreen Morrell in English who was very active. Jo Nieman when she was hired but see, they weren't hired that early though. They weren't hired in '71, '72.

L. SWEDBURG: What seemed to be the prevalent attitude towards the early women's studies practice on the part of the rest of the faculty?

P. COONTZ: Oh that it was trendy and not academic. That was the first objection, even from women. I mean many, many. . . well, there weren't very many women to begin with at all and there still aren't but -- you know, several of the women who had been here for a long time, objected, I mean, would have nothing to do with this -- in the beginning.

L. SWEDBURG: Are those people still around?

P. COONTZ: I . . . I don't know. I don't really. . . I don't think so. At least those two women have come around. They now sit on boards with the women's movement and so forth. So I suppose some of that feeling was there.

L. SWEDBURG: Well what were your . . . what were your first steps in starting the women's program? What did you do? Did you go. . .?

P. COONTZ: Well the first thing was getting course approval for a Women's Studies minor. Well, after we had three courses, we decided maybe we could do a women's studies minor. I remember going to the proper committee and Hank Stiener introduced me and I explained the necessity for this . . .

L. SWEDBURG: What were those three courses again?

P. COONTZ: Road to Feminism

L. SWEDBURG: That was the history course.

P. COONTZ: The history course. Psych. of Women. No it can't have been Psych. of Women, could it? Yeah I think it was called Psych. of Women and then my course, which was then called Women in Lit. Well, they accepted that as a minor. That was under Emerson's jurisdiction [President Emerson Shuck]. Hank Steiner was very supportive actually. You know, my dates are certainly hazy. I really can't remember. I know that the women's study minor came before the Women's Center.

L. SWEDBURG: But we're now dealing with the first part of the '70s.

P. COONTZ: Yes. I was on sabbatical in 71-72 and then when I came back in '72, I taught my class. By this time you had two women graduate students in history who were very interested in women's studies. You had Coreen Morrell in English. . . I mean in Ed. who was very good in sex role stuff. That's right, she taught a course, Sexism in Education. Not very long after this Marianne Nelson was hired and began noticing that there was a great deal of sexual stereotyping in children's books, so she . . . began to include that material in her class on children's literature. From then on, I'd say from '72 on, you had a gradual increase in the consciousness of women on campus -- students included; women that were very skeptical in the beginning.

L. SWEDBURG: Did you see at this point. . . did you see a whole program? Did you have a strategy in mind? Or was it just growing?

P. COONTZ: It just kind of grew, I think. Then once it became obvious that students were taking the courses, then departments began to search around for somebody who could teach a women's course and they introduced it. Jerry Donegan taught as a male and George Durrie for several years until the movement became strong enough so that we were able to have two women then who were graduate students in history teach the class. Jerry did a good job but of course he limited it to the feminist movement, not to history. Not to women in history, in the broad stream of American history. I think that was the biggest change that occurred when the two young women came over.

L. SWEDBURG: Who were the two young women?

P. COONTZ: Pat Horner and Dixie Massengale -- and they still of course teach for us.

L. SWEDBURG: Now when did the women's center become part of the program?

P. COONTZ: I'm always confused about that. I think now if George Frederickson came in, what did we say, '76? The fall of '76, okay, if he was hired in the fall of '76, by this time we had community women involved. I called together a group of community women that I had known -- that Betty Ohrt had known too, and students, who by this time were interested, and other faculty women and within the department. . . within the Division of Letters and Sciences. Dean Hoekendorf was extremely cooperative. He let us use his conference room for meetings. I remember the first meeting we had, there must have been 30 people there. Several of the community women were adamant that we should have a women's center.

L. SWEDBURG: That idea came from the community then?

P. COONTZ: Well, partially yeah. Yeah. Marion Elliot for one was very verbal and then some of the people from that group -- the Beta Group. **Beta Groups in town.** Also some faculty wives were involved too.

L. SWEDBURG: So they saw the future women's center as being something of a community center?

P. COONTZ: Community and as well as a school, and we . . . with Bill Hoekendorf's full approval and help, we talked about strategies and I must say that [Vice President] Phil Marshall was extremely cooperative giving us money early. Hank Steiner was cooperative and Bill Hoekendorf. Then when George [Frederickson] came, the first thing we did was meet him practically at the door in January when he moved in on campus January '77, yeah, -- and Marion Elliot and a bunch of the others went to see him. Then a bunch of students went to see him and I wrote him a little note and so forth, and he agreed right away that we could have a women's center. So we began to make plans for that and we asked Louise Prugh and Carolyn Olafson. This time we also had, by the way, a very strong force in developing this for administrative women -- the few that we had like Patty [Patricia] Case, Izzy [Elizabeth] Green, and Carolyn Olafson. So Carolyn Olafson, Louise Prugh and who else did I say. . . ?

L. SWEDBURG: What were their positions. . . Patty Case?

P. COONTZ: Patty Case was at that time working with Extended Programs -- Continuing Education.

L. SWEDBURG: And Carolyn Olafson?

P. COONTZ: Carolyn Olafson was a benefits person which she still is. Izzy I think by that time, yeah, was out of the community, was out of continuing ed. and was in . . . no she was still in Continuing Ed, and Melanie Bell. . . who was not Bell then but something else but anyway. . . and she was not the registrar but she did most of the work and she also was very outspoken and interested in establishing a women's center and a women's program.

L. SWEDBURG: Had you courted these people or did they come to you? Was there a rising spontaneous feeling for the women's movement?

P. COONTZ: I think once there was a "play" once something was happening, like the courses—there was a group of faculty and administrative women – "Caucus" I think we called it to begin with and that group of course was looking at salaries and comparative wages and conditions and so forth. I mean it all just kind of burgeoned from all sides. Then George agreed to The Center and then he put Phil Marshall in charge of it, so I dealt mostly with Phil in terms of money. That summer of '77, we were given this room, and it was just a shambles. It was the storehouse for every broken piece of furniture that any department or anybody had ever had anything to do with and it had been. . . previously it had been. . . the black student union had used it. I think it had a ridiculous history. Oh, and the Chiron Program had used it which was the first interdisciplinary program at school -- at Eastern, and it was a mess. The wallpaper was stripping off in great chunks and the blinds, if there were any, they were on two of the windows and the curtain rods were all breaking and hanging down. It was a [mess] and all the furniture had broken legs and broken springs and everything. So that summer, Louise and Carolyn Olafson. Louise designed the color scheme and everything, and she and Carolyn arranged to have the furniture. . . Helen must have been talked to -- I believe -- they had the furniture sent off to Walla Walla to the prisoners. We bought the material and the prisoners would do the covering. Yeah and I'd come over every once in a while from Olympia and pitch in and help. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Why don't you describe very quickly what the women's center looked like. [tape ends]

>>>>>>End of Side 1<<<<<<<

>>>>>Beginning of Side 2<<<<<<

L. SWEDBURG: Why don't you describe how the women's center looks now.

P. COONTZ: Well I always call it a very handsome room because they don't like to call it pretty and gracious and so forth because it sounds sort of feminine. There's nothing wrong with that but still. . . anyway, it is a handsome room. The walls are light green and the drapes are matching flora, and there are two perfectly gorgeous skylights, if you keep them clean, with old, old glass in them. At first they wanted to take those out and Louise Prugh just had a fit and so did Carolyn Olafson and so they didn't do that. We have green wall to wall carpeting and that's kind of interesting because . . . I don't know really whether I oughta tell this or not -- but we were supposed to have wall to wall carpeting and then George decided that that was too expensive and so **Carolyn and I came over here first and somebody and the beginnings of the alterations** had been made but we made everything look worse. We pulled down one of the curtains and there

weren't new curtains or anything and we pulled an extra strip of wall paper and then we went and got George by the arm -- one of us on each side -- and we said, "George, really you have to come look at this now. You just have to because really you just can't . . . you just can't not give us that carpet. You come over here and look now." So we took him by the arms and we brought him over here and we showed him around and we showed him what was gonna be you know, what the drapes and everything were going to look like and did he really want this place without wall to wall carpeting because wouldn't he be embarrassed to have those floors showing up like that when the rest of it was going to look so nice. So he got us. . .he nodded his head and so forth and he got us out to the edge of the hall and said, "Well, all right you can have your wall to wall carpeting -- all except this hall right here. Out there we've got linoleum. I think he didn't want to just give in to us all at once that's all. [laughs] **His outlandishments**, he wasn't gonna sell out completely. But he did let us do a very good job with this. But I wouldn't . . . well I think both administrators, Phil Marshall and George, both were very good. George did allocate a lot of money for it. Well, a lot, at least certainly enough. He has been extremely supportive, really.

L. SWEDBURG: Well, can you describe now what the program has evolved into up to 1982?

P. COONTZ: No. What's it evolved into? How many classes? I'm going to have to ask you since, well, first we have the director of women's programs and that is I. We have the coordinator of women's studies and that is you. That is Lee Swedburg. We have a program assistant, Sherri Helm, and a half time secretary, Sheryl Westrom. We have about 3 work-study students working for us and we have a policy advisory board which is the first thing that we had, by the way, in terms of organization -- which includes the president of the Academic Senate, the Dean of Arts and Sciences used to include the academic provost, but doesn't anymore because we feel that it's a conflict of interest probably. [laughs] We have a cooperating arrangement with a group of women students, the Women Students Action Organization, and women's . . . I forget what they call themselves now. Administrative women and faculty women meet here. We have a library. We have a support group's meeting. We have returning women, off and on we have a returning women support group. For a while there they were very strong. They seem to be declining now and I'm not sure that we know why. Maybe the Depression. Maybe husbands aren't as willing to spend money on a wife's education. Maybe jobs are more important -- immediate jobs are more important than coming back to school. But there are not as many returning women as there were. What else can I say about where we are now?

L. SWEDBURG: How about the committee structure that underlies women's programs? Why did you set it up that way?

P. COONTZ: Well we thought that it was a very bad mistake to separate Women's Studies and the Women's Center and we still do because one program feeds the other and I think that the academic offerings wouldn't be half as strong if we didn't have a support base in the Women's Center to work from, and an economic base -- I mean, financial. To keep Women's Studies going I think we need the kind of support both financial and pressure kind of support that you get from the visible Women's Center which is actually

doing things like oh. . . psychological counseling and various other kinds of . . . of support that we do and. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Do you use that same philosophy with regard to those committees that underlie women's programs like the advisory board and the curriculum committee and the hearing committee.

P. COONTZ: Well, you mean try and keep a broad base? Yes we really do because it seems to me that's how we got where we are in the first place and I think especially with these financial cuts I think we better preserve a strong, wide base on the campus.

L. SWEDBURG: Will you try to keep administrators, faculty, and some. . .

P. COONTZ: Students . . .

L. SWEDBURG: Community women, students . . .

P. COONTZ: Community women, admin, women from just staff women as many areas of the campus as possible.

L. SWEDBURG: Representing all these committees.

P. COONTZ: Yes, in times of financial crisis like now I don't know what will happen.

L. SWEDBURG: But you feel it is helpful to have the broad base of support?

P. COONTZ: It is essential yeah. We would have never gotten here in the first place if we hadn't. So,

L. SWEDBURG: We teach how many courses? About 27?

P. COONTZ: 27 courses. You understand of course whoever is listening to this tape that the coordinator of women's studies is asking me these questions, she knows full well! [laughs] It's 27 [laughs]. Do you know what I said the other day to somebody it was 35? I wonder how I got that figure, I don't know. But anyway that course was proliferated.

L. SWEDBURG: All the ones that have ever been taught might. . .

P. COONTZ: Apparently, yeah. Yeah that's probably true. But now of course you . . . we have a . . . our minor includes the introduction to women's studies which is called what? A Woman's Changing World? Yeah. At first it was called Introduction To Women's Studies. I didn't mention that Gail Hicks and I taught it as a team several years in a row. That was a lot of fun, to team-teach it, a class like that. But now Lee does most of that, don't you? Yeah, the introduction? The other one of the core courses in my mind is mine, Women in Literature and Social Change, which changed its name from Women in Literature. Then the other one is Women in American History.

L. SWEDBURG: Which is still taught by. . .

P. COONTZ: Which is still taught by Pat Horner and Dixie Massengale, the original yeah. . . instigators of the course.

L. SWEDBURG: Didn't we ever talk about what goes on at the center? What the center is for?

P. COONTZ: Well it's a source of information for students about scholarships. All sorts of issues. ERA, planned parenthood, many students . . . now many professors of course include a little bit at least about women in their classes and have accepted as a legitimate field of study many of the issues involved in the women's movement like papers on the ERA, on equal pay, on planned parenthood are fairly common in such classes and other kinds of classes and we have quite a file on those academic kinds of

subjects. We have a scholarship file for women, and we have a library. We take women's study journals which are useful for students who are writing two papers and they're also used for professors in their own disciplines. The Center cooperates with the academic Women's Studies program in those ways of course, and then the curriculum committee structure. . . did you want me to talk about that or mostly what the center itself does?

L. SWEDBURG: What happens in the center?

P. COONTZ: Well, it's a place where you socialize for one thing. It's a very nice room. We have a refrigerator where people come in and leave their lunch. We always have coffee. So it's a place where you socialize. We have programs here twice a week, programs that are of interest not only to women but to men, to the entire campus. We do political programs, we do self-help programs, we do . . . raise parenting programs repair. Want to learn how to repair your oven, or whatever, we have that. We have finance. What do you know about IRA's. We have not just during elections but other times we have political speakers come in. We think it's very important that women become a part of the general life of the nation and the community. They should broaden. . . we feel that it's important that they broaden their interest to be better citizens, to help build a better society. So we often do things on the environment, on public power, on . . . well, alternatives to capitalism for example, is a program that we have coming up. Some people view the present state of the capitalist society as far from satisfactory and so many, many disciplines, in fact, academic disciplines look into the future and wonder if the system that gave to private property. . . private profit rather than to the needs of human beings. . . really perhaps shouldn't be modified in some ways. But in order to preserve it. . . so we do these kinds of programs. We've had debates between planned parenthood and the moral majority. What else? Lots, very wide range of programs and noon time programs.

L. SWEDBURG: So it's not just women's issues but. . .

P. COONTZ: Oh no. Yeah . . . we have poetry readings and. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Is there any other place on campus that does this?

P. COONTZ: Nothing. No place at all. It's one problem.

L. SWEDBURG: How does this center compare with other university centers? As far as in Cheney?

P. COONTZ: Well most people tell us that ours is the largest and the prettiest and the nicest at least in this state. We've had people from out-of-state say the same thing. Too often the Women's Center is separate from the academic and that of course isolates it. Makes it sort of a . . . off in the corner somewhere kind of thing.

L. SWEDBURG: This Women's Center is supported by the university itself?

P. COONTZ: Yes. Yes, we get our funding from. . . actually the funding comes from the academic provost, which is a little different although the most successful women's centers in the country, I understand that is the case. They are inseparable from. . from the academic area. There is some talk that we should separate the two functions. That women's studies should be part of let's say for example Bill Hoekendorf's operation, or Bill. . . or be under Duane Thompson, the academic provost and the Women's Center should be under student services. We don't agree with that concept at all. We think that

they are part and parcel of each other and they are absolutely necessary for the functioning of either one.

L. SWEDBURG: Each would then languish without. . .

P. COONTZ: Each, yes, would really be not half as strong as it is without the other.

L. SWEDBURG: Have you been [clears throat] active in national women's studies affairs?

P. COONTZ: Well. . .

L. SWEDBURG: I mean beyond this university?

P. COONTZ: You mean like in NOW?

L. SWEDBURG: Or in . . .

P. COONTZ: I belong to NOW

L. SWEDBURG: Professional (inaudible), the beginnings of the professional. . .

P. COONTZ: [laughs] Yes. The National Women's Studies Association, yes. I was at the first founding meeting and was actually on the board of the first National . . . I forget what we were called then. We were called The Women's Studies Association and I was on that first national board. I have been active in the state; I have been on the board of the state of the Northwest Women's Studies association which includes the Northwest. . . Northwest states, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, etceteras. I was at the founding convention in San Francisco and I was state representative for the Northwest Women's Studies Association and on a panel this year [Indecipherable: sounds like arcada]. Yeah . . . and that's been very important for us too because it's given us a statewide and national access to a lot of material. Educational material, organizational material, and national issue kind of material that comes to us from the national office and from the feminist press which is up until now has published a national newsletter.

L. SWEDBURG: Was Eastern one of the first universities to go into women's programs seriously or did it stand in the middle or where did it stand in the national scheme?

P. COONTZ: I think well we were the first one east of the mountains to have a Women's Studies minor. I believe that the University of Washington had a Women's Studies minor before we did. They were the only ones that did. Like Bellingham didn't come into it until later. Evergreen still doesn't have that but then they don't have a lot of the traditional things that other people do. In fact they've done the best job of all of integrating material on women into the regular curriculum which is of course what we're trying to do at the moment which nationally we feel that it's very important that women's studies scholarship over the next ten or twelve years become a part of the knowledge of every student, not just those who are interested in . . . in . . . isolated women's studies. So now the big push is to get the introductory history courses to incorporate material on women. Not just the occasional mention of a woman's name who was important, but the actual part she played in the economical development, in other kinds of history, in development of the family, in all sorts of areas: history, English, a drive is made to present the woman's viewpoint in literature. Women writer, women's forms of writing when publishing of novels or plays was denied them . . . they very often excelled in private diaries, poetry and things like that. All of these things are benign . . . we're trying now to introduce into the curriculum and our national organization has been vitally important in helping us do that.

L. SWEDBURG: Would you say that this is your goal for women's programs? Or for women's studies?

P. COONTZ: My yeah. . . I don't think Women's Studies as a separate entity should necessarily work itself out of existence. Some people say that Women's Studies will have succeeded when it no longer exists as a separate unit. But I think there's still room for Women's Studies as a separate unit. For example, that course with the subtitle of From [laughing] Menstruation to Menopause which the department objected to her saying. [laughs] So what do you call it? What's the course now?

L. SWEDBURG: Biology of Women.

P. COONTZ: Biology of Women and then the subtitle is From Menstruation to Menopause isn't it? But for example that course should probably always be a Women's Studies course. I mean, men should understand it but it's not likely that they would be fascinated with that aspect, and then there's women's health problems and there are lots of things that I think should remain. . . that will make the existence of Women's Studies legitimate for a long time to come. But what we really of course would like to do is to incorporate the other half of the human race into the record of civilization. I mean, women have been around and have played an important part for a long, long time, even . . .

L. SWEDBURG: Not necessarily the same part.

P. COONTZ: Not necessarily the same part. No. Women have been extremely active in the business world. In my course we talk about the home industry and the importance of women during the time when they were partners in the process of production 14th, 15th century, monopolies of many the trades, sub-trade, pin making. Brewery Brewsters for example. Lot's of things, like the same thing in America. I was talking about Europe but in America too. The women who teach American history talk about. . . talk about the same thing. The importance of cottage or home industry and women's contribution and of course there's another thing that economists are interested in and our economists often include this: the importance to the growth of capitalism of women's free labor in the home. I mean that this should really be counted in the Gross National Product. That women that should be part of the Gross National Product. I mean, so there are all sorts of areas and disciplines where Women's Studies. . . material on women would fit very easily and should be included as an integral part of the study of civilization. I think Soc. tries . . . Sociology does probably the best job of any department. It's important in psychology. I mean, the psychology of women should be introduced in every psych. class. It shouldn't be confined to just one class, the psychology of women. It's important that men know the differences and the similarities too. So, where did we start?

L. SWEDBURG: Well. . . what kind of a . . .

P. COONTZ: You, no . . . [tape is stopped and then started again]

L. SWEDBURG: What changes do you see having occurred here at Eastern? Since you came here, when you started your role here. . .

P. COONTZ: Well, there's the affirmative action, the support of the federal government certainly has resulted in more women being hired. Last year they hired 3 women all of whom are feminists, which is a great change. I mean, the very fact that, you know, that these women are interested in feminist issues, call themselves feminists, recognize sexual stereotyping, recognize sexism when they see it and hear it. That is

progress and I think students. . . women students generally can accept the fact that they probably will have a career or they probably will have to work at some time in their lives. They also accept the fact that they really should not count on getting married as the sole way out of their. . . the sole method of . . . of living their lives. I mean, the fact of divorce is a very real thing and I think most of them now think of preparing themselves for a possible widowhood or. . . or divorce. Now this doesn't mean that the women's movement encourages divorce, far from it. But one has to face facts and I think that the change in my colleagues in the English department although I could hope for a lot more, they do now assign poetry by women other than Emily Dickenson. . . modern women. They do talk about women writers. They are included in the textbooks. I think there's been an impact on practically every discipline that I can . . . yeah. I think probably there has.

L. SWEDBURG: You feel that you have had a lot of personal input in the change?

P. COONTZ: Yeah, I suppose I do. I . . . [tape is stopped then started again]

L. SWEDBURG: Pat I believe you were also an actor in a Christmas play? [next word inaudible due to the tape recorder moving around] Is that correct?

P. COONTZ: Yes.

L. SWEDBURG: I guess we all know that that movement was involved with the Vietnam War. What was it that first drew your attention to this movement?

P. COONTZ: Well, if you'd ask me what first drew my attention to Vietnam because that's what drew my attention to the peace movement was in. . . I lived in England in '51 and '52 or '52 and '53, I can't particularly remember. But for 18 months actually. At that time we were quite well acquainted with a lot of drama people; writers and actors and so forth, in London. I remember a play dealing with the French war in Indochina, and at this time of course France was fighting with Ho Chi Minh and so there was this marvelous play out of. . . not in the London, not in the west end but in the . . . we call it off Broadway theater in London and so our friends took us to that. It was unforgettable and bombs were going off in the stage and you saw the kind of oppressive things the French had done prior to their . . . to the war breaking out, to the war for freedom breaking out in Vietnam. There was a character actor playing Ho Chi Min, who I had never heard of before, and it was a very very effective play and everyone in the audience was crying at the end of it. So when I got back to the United States and over the years of course, the United States began gradually helping the French, and when France finally pulled out, the United States apparently saw their chance to pull in, and early, very . . . well, late in the '50s even, we were fiddling around in Vietnam.

L. SWEDBURG: You don't remember the name of the play?

P. COONTZ: No, no. So I was conscious of it all the time. Then when the war heated up, we . . . I mean I was opposed to it from the beginning because it was obviously a war for liberation and independence and they wanted their own country for themselves. So France gave it up and the United States stepped in and it seemed just piling misfortune on misfortune for those poor people. So of course from the beginning, I was opposed. I remember when I was in graduate school at the university even '63, '62, people were talking about it and they were saying we ought to do something, we ought to, you know, we ought to do something. But I'm not sure that anybody did anything quite yet. I think when I came to work here in '64, that was the time of the free speech movement in

California, and that was very shortly related to opposition to the war in Vietnam. You remember the civil rights actions; the marches in the south were going on at that same time. So there's this outburst of . . . of political protest after the period of the '50s when it was very reactionary and the McCarthy period and the extremely conservative period. Then in the '60s it seems to me all sorts of activities, protests came together. So you asked when I first heard about . . . got concerned about Vietnam, it was a long time ago. Here in . . . it's just hard to talk about Vietnam without talking about the civil movements in conjunction with it.

L. SWEDBURG: Yeah, by all means, we heard of those also.

P. COONTZ: Well, my first year here was traumatic in a sense because the first thing that happened was my daughter got arrested in a free speech fight in California and hauled off to jail along with 500 other student protesters. She called me the night that the kids sat in Sprague Hall and she called me from a pay telephone as they were sitting there and the police were charging, coming up the stairs, tearing . . . grabbing kids by the arms, then grabbing them by the feet and pulling them down the stairs and I could hear over the phone the bumps as their bottoms hit the floor. Cement, I mean, you know, marble stairs, and she said . . . oh . . . they're coming closer. Now they're beginning to put stuff over the windows so we can't see them, and of course I'm going, "Oh honey, are you all right!?" Then suddenly of course, "I've gotta go mother" bang went the telephone. Then it was all over the news that they had 500 arrests and so forth [laughs]. So that was my first year here.

L. SWEDBURG: Did that change your thinking about . . . of the war or about the movement or . . .

P. COONTZ: Well, I immediately started to gather petitions supporting because it was all over the press and parents were beside themselves from all over the country to have this happen at Berkeley. So they were organizing all over and I got a petition here and several students and professors signed it and we had a meeting. [end of tape]

>>>>>>End of Tape 1<<<<<<<<

>>>>>Beginning of Tape 2<<<<<<

L. SWEDBURG: Tell me about some of the other people who were involved along with you.

P. COONTZ: Well there. . . I can't really remember and besides at that point, it wasn't exactly safe to be involved, and I of course didn't have tenure but I remember my department head defending my activity. That was Dick Miller at the time. We called him our fearless leader and he was a marvelous . . . he was just marvelous with his faculty. He would defend you unless you'd just done something you know, really, really bad. But he viewed this as an academic freedom and not only academic freedom but just a citizen's right. So we gathered petitions and gathered money and phoned the governor of California and protested the imprisonment of those students. Another interesting thing, one of the lawyers here, Merritt Johnson, who was a very conservative Republican, actually offered to defend Stephanie, my daughter on the basis of . . . I may not agree with what you say, but I'll defend to the death for the right to say it. He said, "If you need a lawyer, Pat I'll defend her for free, and I was very impressed by that. It was a remarkable

thing really for him to do. But he didn't have to. They hired lawyers down there and of course they got them out . . . I think they were jailed a night and a day and when they went to release them, nobody could move on the road. There were a thousand cars out there with donuts, coffee to pick up the kids and take them home. It was remarkable. But it was after that then that people began to do something about the war. I remember Carol French coming on campus. She was in English. . . she was hired in the English Department too. She had a little bug [Volkswagen], and on the back was this huge sign, Stop the War Machine, and this little bitty bug. . . [laughs]. I think probably the first march in Spokane was in '65. Maybe '66. Yeah, it probably was '66 because we worked for a while just going to meetings and so forth. Either '65 or '66, but in the first one there were about 12 people and we assembled underneath the jail in Spokane, 15 at the most, assembled underneath the courthouse. The jail was on the top. . . the top floor and the . . . the convicts were all up there leaning out and waving and screaming obscenities at us and throwing anything they could tear loose at us calling us communists and just here is these people in jail for God. . . rape or whatever . . . just having a fit because we were exercising our right of protest. Somebody threw an egg that day and hit Professor Tom Chambers' whiskers and he was sticky for the rest [laughs] of the day!

L. SWEDBURG: It seems funny now but was it frightening at the time?

P. COONTZ: Was frightening. Yeah it was and I remember a couple of. . . a year later at least that by this time, within a year, the student peace movement had developed terrifically. There were a lot of students in the movement, and by '67 when there was a Lilac Day Parade, heavily military . . . Dode Simms and I and numerous students and I suppose other faculty members but Dode and I were together distributing leaflets against the war, the Lilac Day Parade, and this guy came up and grabbed all of our leaflets. . . . grabbed the leaflets from Dode and stamped on them. . . stamped them into the ground and threatened me, shoved me and shoved. . . I mean, it was really scary. People who knew us wouldn't speak to us. I mean they wouldn't look at us, they didn't want to be embarrassed by our talking to them. It was unbelievable.

L. SWEDBURG: Were there other women in the movement with you?

P. COONTZ: Yeah, Carol French. Yeah there were and there were lots of. . . there were professors' wives too who were there. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Can you remember some of them

P. COONTZ: Oh, Vi [Violet] Nicol and Frank [Nicol] and Kay Robinson and Stan Robinson and of course Kay since. . . they were my. . . they were the closest to me; we worked together a lot. Hank Steiner who was then by '67 probably '68 but he was active. He was in every march that we ever had and that's kind of impressive, your acting in provost marching. Then of course there was Phil Marshall who was the vice president of the university who was a Quaker and donated money against. . . donated money to the peace movement from the very beginning. , and came to parties and so forth. That was very interesting.

L. SWEDBURG: Well, than that makes it unnecessary then the question about how the administration viewed your activities in the peace movement.

P. COONTZ: Well, some of the administration. President Shuck was not happy at all, although he probably himself opposed the war in Vietnam. He was getting all sorts of pressure from . . . I mean, I'm not sure that he did but he was getting all sorts of pressure

from town when we had. . . because the size of the demonstrations grew and grew and grew and they were really really large. At Kent state there was quite a demonstration and I remember Emerson Called me on Kent State and asked me if he should appear at the demonstration or if there would be violence did I think. I said well I think it's all right if you appear but you'd better not. . . I mean you better abhor what happened. If you appear, you know, if you say a shocking display of violence on the part of the students, you . . . you're gonna be in trouble. But if you express opposition to the war and by this time of course that was getting real popular. I mean marches were literally hundreds of thousands of people marching all over the United States. So he agreed to do that and he spoke a few brief words and people received it. . . the students received it rather well. Of course the . .

L. SWEDBURG: This is at a demonstration.

P. COONTZ: Right, in front of. . . no here in front of Showalter.

L. SWEDBURG: I see.

P. COONTZ: Yeah.

L. SWEDBURG: When did you think that was.

P. COONTZ: Well, It would have been really close to probably '69. Because Kent State and this. . . I can't remember the name of the black college in the south. . .but this was the day after Kent State, and it was really. . . it was kind of scary. [tape stopped and started again] It was scary mostly because a group of right wing I don't know what's were running around the campus. They burst into . . . they . . . as Emerson was speaking, as President Shuck was speaking, they burst through the doors, ran up the stairs, I don't know what they were going to, oh they were going to take down the flag. . .? They tried to get at the flag for some reason whether to put up a black flag because the president of the college was . . . was opposing the war or at least was defending their right to oppose the war or what. But they were scary. I remember at our first teach-in that same group as Bill Waddington was reading poetry at the teach-in and they sat. . .they took a table right in front of where he was reading poetry and began to play cards, slapping the cards down just as hard as they could slap 'em interrupting the poetry with terrible remarks. They were scary.

L. SWEDBURG: Where do you think they came from?

P. COONTZ: I haven't any idea. Well, I have no. .

L. SWEDBURG: Were they young people? Old people?

P. COONTZ: One woman was very fat and probably about. . . very fat I mean and she was really pugnacious. She was. . . oh, I'd say 40, but . . .and some of the others could have been perhaps veterans. I'm not sure about that because we had veterans in the peace movement who were very opposed to the war. They'd seen it, and they were very young students. Some very young students didn't know. In face, I remember talking one time to my comp class about what was going on on the California campus and this was after the arrest, and by this time the free speech movement and the peace movement were you know, sort of melding all together and I remember describing the free speech movement, explaining what it was about and some kid in the back row said,. "You know what they oughta do? They oughta just drop the atomic bomb on that whole campus. They oughta drop the atomic bomb on those people!", and I'm going, gulp. I could hardly answer it. I mean the idea of dropping the bomb on a group of protesting students who were

protesting the war and demanding the right to free speech, and of course they won the right to free speech as you probably know and eventually they certainly won the war movement too. Forced the draw.

L. SWEDBURG: You mentioned the teach-in. Tell me about the teach-in.

P. COONTZ: Well, different faculty members would and students would do different things in the student union. What was it called then, the student union building? But it isn't the one we have now. It was in Isle Hall, and they would . . . they would read poetry or they would . . . I remember Dave Bell who was very knowledgeable about what was going on in Vietnam often spoke. He spoke for us quite often, sometimes in the malls. Sometimes out on the campus outside and sometimes out in the buildings. But he described the machinations of the American business for example and what they had to gain from the war in Vietnam. He described the dope smuggling that was such a profitable operation from Vietnam. He described the courage and the strength of the Ho Chi Min troops long before the papers would concede it. I mean, everybody was still trying to put a happy face on the whole thing and talk about how the United States was gonna run right through this small little country, and Dave Bell said no way. No way. [laughs] He was quite right but Frank Nichol talked about the defoliation. . . the deliberate defoliation and destruction of the food of the people and how it would be years before. . . years and years before they could recover and make the country productive again. The water supplies had been poisoned. Other people . . . oh who. . . one of the scientists . . . geologist or geographer? Oh, he lives out in the . . . he's still there. Oh, Rajalla, Rajalla who works with the state department told about how we got in it. , and how this imperialistic the war really was. See as the movement grew, more and more people began to speak out and less and less people were afraid. So we began the teach-ins were remarkable. Then I remember Bill Waddington doing the anti-war poetry and students the short story contest with students writing short stories to illustrate. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Were these teach-ins well attended by students?

P. COONTZ: Not at first, there'd be just a few. But in the end, I mean, as it went on it was very well attended and many professors would dismiss classes for them. They'd have a teach-in that would last all morning for example and people would come and go all morning long. it was effective.

L. SWEDBURG: Did you feel there was a difference in the role of men and women in the peace movement?

P. COONTZ: At first I wasn't conscious of that, really, despite my Betty Friedan -- but then it occurred to me that women were doing the behind-the-scenes work and men were doing the public speaking, and I, at that time, made an effort to learn to speak myself. I was confident always in the classroom but I certainly was not at all confident about speaking publicly, and it took a long time. Now my daughter on the other hand, who had been at Berkeley was an accomplished public speaker by this time and she was a leader in the anti-war movement in Seattle -- sort of the darling of the press because she was little and cute and very articulate. Now she -- a new generation -- had fought for women's rights and against the war and the free speech movement and she would take the podium and really move masses speaking. So I think with the young movement. . . the young women certainly by '70 were taking part although I don't remember any woman speaking here on campus.

L. SWEDBURG: You didn't speak here?

P. COONTZ: I did once. I spoke in Spokane at one of the movements, at one of the marches. Then we took people from here down to San Francisco for the marches. There were hundreds of thousands of people. That was very moving.

L. SWEDBURG: What was your primary role then personally. You circulated petitions?

P. COONTZ: I was advisor to the student peace group, Faculty advisor, which meant that I had to stop them from . . . stop them from doing some things that possibly do more damage than good to the movement, and then help them with getting petitions signed and getting money support. The faculty gave fundraising parties too so . . . and I suppose in another. . . and I negotiated with the administrations, and I helped organize the teach-ins. I remember one time after Kent State we had, you remember it took a while for the radical civil rights movement or the radical Black movement to reach Eastern. But when it did, it really reached here with a, with an explosive vengeance. It was. . . we were out recruiting people because of the affirmative action policies some people from Eastern were out recruiting from the ghettos of Chicago and from the slums of Los Angeles and bringing blacks up here who often had not even graduated from high school and, and this is a fact, . . . just to show their good faith in terms of bringing people up. Well, during the. . . of course it was a terrible mistake because there were all sorts of threats of violence and so forth because they got here and they weren't educated and they were thrust into classes with other people and any professor with a high conscious level as regards as his teaching or her teaching would have to discourage them by flunking. Well, no one told them that this was going to happen to them when they came, so there was real . . . there were really violent things. Of course many of the Blacks, the Black Student Union got involved in the peace movement too, and I remember one time the day after Kent State when we were going to have this rally out in front of Showalter, one of the guys, his name was Bell, Charlie Bell and I'd had him in a class, and he came in to my office and he said, "We're going out there with guns, we're going out there with guns. . . by God! The whole B.S. show is gonna be out there! and we're. . ." I grabbed him by the shoulders and I stood on my tiptoes and I reached up and grabbed him by the shoulders and I've had students describe this to me and I was so angry that I couldn't stand. . . I said, "Charlie Bell, if you ruin this demonstration, I'm gonna kill you!" [laughing] he just . . . [still laughing] . . . and he even smiled apparently. I didn't think because. . . I'm about 5'2 and he's about 6'6. [laughing] It must have been very funny. But anyway, I did warn him that he was not to cause any kind of disturbance that would detract from. . . and he didn't actually although they did go into the Student Union with guns. . . oh, they did go into the Student Union with guns and people were plenty scared and there was something of a scandal about that. But anyway, I've been going off in all sorts of directions.

L. SWEDBURG: Not exactly. If you had. . . do you. . . looking back on it, do you think that you did the right thing and it had the effect you wanted it to have?

P. COONTZ: Well, I certainly think I did the right thing. I . . . it was a thrill being part of a movement. Working with other people for something you really, really believed in and watching thousands of people join very gradually and all of you doing the same thing. I'll never forget I mean I know that I've told you this before, the San Francisco march and it must have been '70 probably '69, '70 by that time. But we marched. . . they

started from the Embarcadero and marched all the way up . . . up Market Street and then turned the corner and marched up one of the other streets out toward Golden Gate Park, the great big boulevard. We got to the top of the hill and looked back and as far as you could see for two miles, the crowd from curb to curb was crowded with people. I still can't talk about it without crying. It was, and people stood on the top of the hill with tears just streaming down their faces and hugging each other and . . . you know, because it was the first real massive march. By the time we got to Golden Gate park and walked into the . . . into the pavilion, people were still starting out at the beginning of the march. It was unbelievable. That feeling that you are moving and being moved together is quite a feeling, and a feeling I think that you don't get very often in a society that often encourages you in order to succeed in quotes to turn against your fellow human creature. To work together for something is a wonderful thing and I think that it's no more, I mean that it's probably more natural and more human than the so-called competitive or aggressive behavior that we display. Our society rewards that kind of behavior. But I still think that probably accounts for a lot of people in psychiatrists' office when you are force to turn against your fellow human creature, you suffer. So when we do get a chance to work together collectively like that, it's terribly satisfying. So yes, I did the right thing.

L. SWEDBURG: Well that might take us back even further than that to another time when we were working together. What did you do during World War II?

P. COONTZ: Well, first I was working in a garment factory at 14 dollars a week and then when the war really broke out, I mean, you know, when America geared up, within a week after I quit the garment factory job I went to work at the . . . in . . . at Boeing on the assembly lines doing wiring runs for the B-52s. I think my salary quadrupled or maybe even more than that. It was just unbelievable. I went from 14 dollars a week to like 60 or something. It was just . . . and and so I was so eager. My husband was . . . was . . . my husband, my first husband was in the Navy. He volunteered at Pearl Harbor, and he was in the Navy and he was doing his bet to protect his country and all of that and I was just eager to go in there and make those wiring runs quicker than anybody else and I was on the first graveyard shift into Boeing . . . graveyard shift that contained women. The guys sat around as we came in laughing and making cracks as we mar . . . walked in, punched in.

L. SWEDBURG: They had never seen women . . .

P. COONTZ: Never, well not on the graveyard shift. There had been for about a month, women in the plant, or a couple months, women in the plant. But graveyard shift they hadn't been on and I wanted graveyard shift. Because that would give me my days or my . . . depending . . . So anyway, I was terribly patriotic and I learned how to do my wiring runs really fast, and I . . . as soon as I'd finished with a wiring run, you know, you'd twist these little ribbons and you'd hammer them into a great big long board. The . . . they were the wiring runs for the bombers and so I just hurried as fast as I could because you're supposed to win this war right? So the first night, I'd run up to the foreman and say, you know, for the first couple of weeks, run up to the foreman, give me some more, I'm finished, I'm finished. So he'd grudgingly bring me more after making me wait like 10 or 15 minutes. Finally he just said, "For God's sake Pat," he said, "just undo it and start over again." I said, "What do you mean undo it and start it over again?"

It's perfect!" He said, "What the hell do you think the day shift is gonna do if you finish it all tonight?" I didn't understand this at all. So after a time, I secretly . . . and then after a time he'd tell me to go into the can for a cigarette. Then I finally couldn't stand it anymore so I went to the U.S. inspector, the government inspector on the job and said, do you know that. . . do you realize that we're being told to disappear rather than finish these wiring runs? He said, "Oh, that's terrible" and I was fired the next day.

L. SWEDBURG: You were?

P. COONTZ: Of course because they knew damn good and well what was going on. They were operating on cost plus 10 percent over cost. The higher you ran the cost the more profit they make. Then they cheated on the . . . I mean all of this came out later of course. All of the . . . like Boeing and the shipyards. Every place doing the same thing. I mean anytime and that's exactly one of the problems with the nuclear power industry: Cost plus. You get. . . you get your cost plus whatever percentage, it was 10 percent then it's probably 25 now. But how can you expect if. . . you know how can you expect any kind of efficiency. The higher you run your costs, the more you're gonna. . . the more you get. . . the more profit you're gonna make.

L. SWEDBURG: Well, what did you do then?

P. COONTZ: Well, then I went into the shipyard, worked at Todd's ship repair yard in Seattle and did . . . I had a little hammer, worked in an open shed, in the snow, with the snow blowing in . . . at marking patterns on steel with a little hammer and you pound, and I did this for quite a while. But then the day that I . . . my thumb stuck to the. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Au.

P. COONTZ: My thumb stuck to the plate and I tried to pull it off and I pulled off about an inch of skin because it was so cold. Oh, I quit. Then I went to work at the port of Embarkation which is loading ships for Alaska and well everywhere actually. I became head. . . well I worked there for a year and a half at least, and I loved that. It was really fast . . . your ship was loading and you had to get the manifest ready for your ship to sail and you couldn't get the manifest the list of all the stuff that was on the ship of course until it was just about ready to sail. So you get these moments of absolute wild where everybody would line up and run around the tables picking up a piece of paper and putting it together. It was just hysterical and when you finished you'd go "Ahhhh." You know, and then you'd sit around for a couple of hours. I really, I really liked that and I became head of my shift and about a month after I became head of my shift, I was called into the. . . well, my lieutenant came up to me and said, "Pat, you're wanted in the chief's office and he says you're gonna be fired!" He said, "I'm going with you!" So he went up with me and sure enough I was being fired. Apparently the reason was that they were organizing then at this time a union and I had talked to the union organizer. I mean, I don't know that for a fact but my lieutenant couldn't find out why I was fired. I was doing a marvelous job because he was just furious about it. I never have. . . I'm going to go through the government before Reagan forbids this to happen, I'm going to get my security records and find out why I was fired. There was another thing possibly might have been and maybe was, I'll go. . . I don't know. But I belonged to a radical student organization when I was at the University of Washington and me . . . in fact that might also be it. So. . . in fact it was the Young Communist League and I belonged for all of

what, a year or something. But... and this was in what. . . years later. I suppose that could be the reason. But most, what it most likely was the other. . . most likely was the union I think. So by this time shortly after this my husband was discharged from the navy and with ulcers. The war was approaching, and my baby was born. . I mean the war was ending was approaching and my baby was born in '44. At some point I worked in the . . . in the wooden . . . wooden shipyard and they converted from . . . from fishing. . . wooden fishing boats to submarine detectors . . . minesweepers actually.

L. SWEDBURG: Did you succeed in. . .

P. COONTZ: That was fun.

L. SWEDBURG: Did you see the attitude of men to women change over the war? They became used to women in the work force?

P. COONTZ: Well, I was a secretary at the ship deck. . . the final place I worked, at the Ballard Shipyard. So no. I mean. . . I don't . . . well I, see as a secretary, I wouldn't have told. I couldn't have told. If I stayed at Boeing, there would have been a difference. You know at Boeing and the shipyard, they played tricks on you all the time. They were always sending me to get a left handed screwdriver or a wire stretcher or. . . and then everybody would laugh and wire stretchers seemed perfectly legitimate to me. I mean it seemed to make sense because you know, lots of times the wires you were putting in were kind of curly. . . that's [end of tape]

>>>>>End of Side 3<<<<<<

>>>>Beginning of Side 4<<<<<

[did not allow for leader]

P. COONTZ: (inaudible). . . patronizing, all the time. But then I remembered the attitude in academia was pretty patronizing too. So. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Can you remember back as far as the Depression?

P. COONTZ: That's probably why I joined the Young Communist League because I was a sorority girl and I had to get my sorority house to the campus, I had to walk past a relief line and I can't remember whether they were being handed out food or they were being handed out. . . well, they certainly weren't handed out unemployment checks yet, were they? So it must have been food but. . . pouring with rain and they'd stand in this line about a block long, old people, and look at me and here I was all cute and dressed up and I finally got where I didn't go by that way at all. I detoured about 3 blocks out of the way so that I wouldn't have to pass that line of hungry people. I can still remember that vividly. I think probably I was a radical very young. I mean, a very socially conscious person very young. I've often wondered about that why. Reading or what?

L. SWEDBURG: What I was going to ask. . .did the Depression have any effect on your family personally?

P. COONTZ: No. My family stayed. My dad was in business. He ran a veneer plant and was partial owner, and we were in Florida when the crash came. He started a business there as a branch of the one in . . . in Holcwin (spelled as sounds). He . . . I remember he. . .we rushed to Tampa and I can remember the lines of people trying to get into the bank. That must have been the bank closure. I was about 10 or 11 I guess. Maybe 10 or 11. I remember my dad running across the street and he made it in. But all the way back to Washington State, we stopped in New York and saw plays and everything and my dad went back to his regular business which was the big one in

Holcwin which was a veneer box factory. I don't . . . I never we bought a new house when we got back. But I did have people in class with me that I felt sort of repulsed by and at the same time sorry for. Very sorry for if they touched me or if I went into their homes. I remember having schoolmates whose homes I just felt terrible about. So I guess it did affect me. But books affected me too. In fact there was a marvelous series of books called My Bookhouse and there must have been a very humanistic, very. . . oh, not to say what one would call a radical I suppose. I mean, a social critic must have had something to do with those stories because they were absolutely marvelous in terms of being conscious of racial differences and slurs and disadvantages to black people, and anti war. . . I mean, emphasis on fairness and equality in those stories, and I swear that that had something to do with it really. The fact that I remember one time on our way to Florida. My father said, "You can't play with little n, you're not to play with black students. . . people. . . with black children. They don't go to your same school, they're not to play with." I kept saying, "But why!? They're just as good. . ." I read this story in my book, a Louisa May Alcott story about little. . . a little black girl who had helped save. . . saved somebody at a lighthouse story. But . . . and I said "Why?" and I kept saying why until he just turned around and I was sitting in the back seat and he lifted his arm to me, the first time he ever had done that. He said, "Don't ask me why just do as I tell you!" he said, and that. . . you know, he wasn't able to answer the why obviously.

L. SWEDBURG: You continue to ask why to this day?

P. COONTZ: Yeah, but to see him lose his temper like that meant that he couldn't answer the question, of course, and, of course, in Florida we lived in a. . . you know, the right side of town so you weren't confronted with that choice at all anyway, really. But I don't know . . . the very, the other thing as long as I'm on the subject of my father, he was a self-made man really, and one thing about him was that he was a Democrat in the sense that when my mother would say, "Oh, are you really going to bring that mechanic home with you? He's so dirty." Dad would say, "By God, if he's good enough to work for me, he's good enough to eat with me." That kind of attitude, the respect for working people despite the fact he was the boss, must have rubbed off too. So I don't know what made a protester out of me.

L. SWEDBURG: He was ambiguous in his attitudes?

P. COONTZ: Oh yes. Oh, yes. Very, I mean he believed that. He believed that if a man worked hard well, he bought the American Dream completely. I mean, if you work hard, keep your nose clean, you know, the old 19th century American Dream.

L. SWEDBURG: What country. . .

P. COONTZ: The craftsman . . . well, '29 was the crash and my dad. . . well, my mother and dad were married in 1903, and then he was working for Winford Brewery and he became a brewmaster. A self made man. Really. And . . .

L. SWEDBURG: Was your mother an influence on you?

P. COONTZ: She was very quiet and . . . well, yes. She was the one who did all the reading as a matter of fact. Yes. If she . . . and she was played exactly the role that I have since learned that the 19th century woman was supposed to play. She was more refined let's say than my father and tried to keep him refined, tried to make him more refined. She scolded him when he swore. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Helped culture (inaudible)

P. COONTZ: Yes. Yes, and inspired him and one time he was going around with bad companions, I guess that's before I was born, and well. . . bad companions, people who drank. My mother didn't nag or anything, she just picked up my brother and left. She was not about to tolerate . . . any kind of. . . that kind of behavior at all. Much more strength, you see, than I had, now under similar circumstances. I mean, she didn't buy the . . . I have to put up with anything bit at all. He came and begged her to come back and she did and he told me later, "You know, you've got to expect great things from the men you associate with because it's your duty as a woman to inspire them to do their very best, to be their very best. Then's when he told me about my mother, how she walked out when he was being bad like that, and he begged her to come back two or three times and she wouldn't until he was absolutely sure that he was gonna walk the straight and narrow like that.

L. SWEDBURG: So who taught you to . . .

P. COONTZ: He was so proud of that. She did exactly the right thing, he wasn't mad at her about that, isn't that amazing? That's exactly what the role of the 19th century woman's supposed to be according to the angel in the house and to various other 19th century literatures. She's supposed to inspire, and at the same time however be submissive. But she's supposed to represent these two forces and I think that's kind of interesting. What did you start to ask, I'm sorry.

L. SWEDBURG: I was going to ask who it was then who inspired you to expect great things of women? Your father told you to expect great things of men.

P. COONTZ: [laughs] Well, he also told me to expect great things of myself, and he was very disappointed with me when I succumbed for example to the 50s bit. Well, the whole. . . I mean, he was sure that I was going to be a famous newspaper writer or a famous dancer or a famous something; because he encouraged me to tell people off, to be extremely independent. It was just a series of contradictions.

L. SWEDBURG: Were you the first child?

P. COONTZ: No, I was the second child. My brother on the other hand was very calm and quiet but my dad liked me to be feisty and he encouraged it. Yet when I got married, the climate had changed. Interestingly enough, I think the climate had changed from the independence that my mother showed to kind of an expectation that you would indeed be a . . . not so much an inspirer any longer but a submissive. . .

L. SWEDBURG: A nurturer.

P. COONTZ: A nurturer, that's right and that I think is quite a difference. Looking back I wonder if the. . . if movies didn't have something. . . we didn't reflect perhaps the need of the culture too. But the whole business of romantic love. . . love at first sight. . . that whole sit, my mother would have howled at the notion of love at first sight when she was young. I mean, she knew that you married for other reasons, but by the time I made my choice, I'd seen Claudette Colbert and I'd seen. . . sometimes I see those old things redone and I can't believe this. I mean they look at each other across the room and wham-o, there it is, you know. But your. . . I mean I was. . .

L. SWEDBURG: Some Enchanted Evening.

P. COONTZ: Yes exactly and but that is so different from the strength of mother who was the daughter of pioneers. Women who when my grandmother taught at a prairie school in Wash, in western Washington.

L. SWEDBURG: Do you think. . . have you seen these changes occur in Cheney? How many of them have you seen like in. . .

P. COONTZ: Like what? How do you mean?

L. SWEDBURG: Changes in roles of women and the expectations.

P. COONTZ: I think young women are different. I think I said that earlier. I think younger women wonder what all the fuss is about because they've got it now they think. I'm not sure. . .you know, if that certainly isn't true, and they still only make 59 cents to a men's dollar. But they think what, they're encouraged often to go into the sciences because they. . . feel themselves on an equal footing with men on . . . in high school sports at least more so than they did. They seem to think that the fight's over, We're equal. . . I mean, we go out without chaperones and all that stuff, and we work and so . . . I mean, that's a change although with the Depression what's gonna happen? Women will be giving up . . . women will have to give way.

L. SWEDBURG: Do you think so?

P. COONTZ: Well, they will I'm sure, they'll be a conservative drive to give. . .to let men have the job. Except that again, as maybe in the 19th century by this, by the time in the 19th century when women went into the factories and so forth. They had been rendered so submissive that the employers would rather have them than men because they would put up with anything. I wonder. . . but see, will our young women put up with anything? I hope not. I hope that the feminism has rubbed off and their not going to do what the 19th century women. . . early 19th century women did.

L. SWEDBURG: Well, will the loss of the ERA help or hinder?

P. COONTZ: Oh I think it'll hinder. I think it's bad for women, of course. But. . .

L. SWEDBURG: But will the fight to get it keep going. . . will that keep progress alive?

P. COONTZ: I don't. . . I hope so but I think in this period that the ERA is doomed for a while. Unless they do make a supreme effort to win over the housekeeper, the woman in the home, and to activate, of course, more young women -- but the young. . . see, that's the trouble -- the young women think it's all going to be just fine for them. That they've got equal now. They've got Title 9 and all that stuff.

L. SWEDBURG: You are about to retire, is that right?

P. COONTZ: Yeah.

L. SWEDBURG: What do you see for yourself in the next ten years?

P. COONTZ: [laughs] Well I'll. . .

L. SWEDBURG: What kind of activities will you do?

P. COONTZ: I will be very active in the Nuclear Freeze campaign. I think maybe the best thing I could do is become a union organizer or an organizer for militant socialism or something. But I will be active in the Nuclear Freeze campaign and I certainly will be active in environmental issues. Zoning in our area in Washington. . . western Washington where we're moving. They're trying to make it a big industrial area, and you know, that will occupy me: clean air, etc., bird preservation on our own property even. Also I will continue to do things with women's studies because my daughter teaches at Evergreen and she's already spoken with Deans and whatnot so I'll probably be adjunct faculty from time to time. I'll be traveling and if the grant comes through for the

Superintendent of Public Instruction's office, I'll be doing workshops in educating teachers on non-sexist education.

L. SWEDBURG: It sounds like the rocking chair is a long, long way off.

P. COONTZ: [laughs] I hope so. [tape is stopped]

>>>>>End of Interview<<<<<<