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# Oral history interview transcript with Marilyn Elliot

Marilyn Elliot

Toni MacElroy

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**MARILYN ELLIOT**  
**INTERVIEWED BY TONI MacELROY**  
**EWU Women's Oral History Project**  
**EWU 984-0094 #26**  
**FEBRUARY 21, 1983**

**T. MacELROY:** This is Toni MacElroy interviewing Marilyn Elliot for the Cheney Women Oral History Project. Her topics concern 4H, the Women's Center and the Red Barn Program. The date is February 21st, 1983.

**M. ELLIOT:** How do we know if we're getting it?

**T. MacELROY:** The tape? How do we know if we're going to get it? Oh, I tested it before I came over.

**M. ELLIOT:** Okay, you're so clever.

**T. MacELROY:** Okay. . .well, first of all I want to tell you our purpose again so I can have it on tape. The purpose of this interview is to obtain some more information that is relevant to your contributions to the growth and development of Cheney. So those are the kinds of questions I'm going to be asking you which I've gotten you familiar with already. Okay, first off I want to ask you: What were your reasons for coming to Cheney? What brought your family here?

**M. ELLIOT:** My husband's job. We had an opportunity to move to several different towns that particular year. We decided to move to Cheney because it was a college town and we figured that our children would get more of a diverse education and lifestyle with a university being there. Our children were at that time were almost 1 to almost 14. We felt that the change in the area would be helpful in their learning.

**T. MacELROY:** So you only had two children at the time? Is that right?

**M. ELLIOT:** No. They were between the ages. . . the nine children were between the ages of 1 and 14.

**T. MacELROY:** You had all nine of them? Oh boy.

**M. ELLIOT:** So we moved over here, the oldest girl was going into high school.

**T. MacELROY:** Some of them were relatively young.

**M. ELLIOT:** Yep.

**T. MacELROY:** Where did you receive your education?

**M. ELLIOT:** I went to high school in Salt Lake City Utah to the only Catholic high school there, Judge Memorial. I graduated in a class of 25 and then I came up and got. . . went to WSU for two years in 1948, 49 and 50 and then I finished I took several classes in between and then started again in 1980,81, and 82 at Eastern Washington University and graduated in June 1982.

**T. MacELROY:** What was your degree?

**M. ELLIOT:** In home, General Home Economics, Nutrition, Fibers, with a minor in Art and a minor in Women's Studies.

**T. MacELROY:** So your secondary education which I would call your college education ranged from between 1948 all the way through 1983. You took your time in getting what you wanted, huh?

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah.

**T. MacELROY:** Well that's good. That makes sure you got exactly what you want took a lot of time to think about it. Okay, now we've covered some of that past background that brought you to Cheney and what your education was. I want to cover some of the clubs and organizations that you've been involved with. First of all tell me about 4H and your involvement or your importance toward Cheney that you were in with that?

**M. ELLIOT:** Not much, we've been involved with 4H, we had been involved for about 10 years when we moved here so I kind of accidentally became a leader. I became a livestock leader for the East Cheney 4H Club and was the livestock leader for about 15 years, we had cattle and sheep mostly. My own children, they had sheep for about 25 years, and that's where I got interested in the sheep. I had helped my husband years before with the Future Farmers of America with his students that he had. In those days, they were all boys and I would take a team and he would take a team and we would go judging livestock or we would go to the different fairs and judge the livestock, so I traveled quite a bit with the livestock teams in the early days with the boys all over the state and also back to Kansas City to the Future Farmers of America Convention a couple of times. I had a lot of experience with the fairs, so I worked with the East Cheney 4H for 15 years and helped with the Spokane Junior Livestock show and the Spokane Interstate Fair. I took the 4H team from Spokane County to Portland to the Pacific International Livestock Show one year and we won first place 4H Livestock Judging contest among all the western states and Canada about 67 teams.

**T. MacELROY:** Wow.

**M. ELLIOT:** That was really fun, but 4H is a really good program. It kind of depends on the needs of the community, the needs of the young people that are in it and who they can get to help, and we felt it has been a very good program for the children around here and my own children. Several of my kids have gone to the national FFA convention in Chicago and won the national and state awards. Surprisingly through the Future Farmers of America and the FFA and the 4H, there are a lot of big business people who also feel that these things are very important and have donated lots of money. I was also on the Spokane 4H board for several years and went to some of the state 4H meetings, fair meetings. They were some of the most exciting meetings I've ever been to. They were all people who were working for free who were supposed to put their input in to running of the fairs and the state, and they were the most exciting meetings I've ever been to because everybody expressed themselves very clearly. They didn't have to worry about being fired. They didn't have to worry about anything, and it was very exciting.

**T. MacELROY:** You know FFA, does it tie into 4H or is it a different organization?

**M. ELLIOT:** No. The FFA is the Future Farmers of America and that's run through the school. My husband taught Agriculture, Vocational Agriculture and that's how we got involved with that first. But since my oldest child was a girl, there was no way she went into 4H because that was available to young children. See, that was for younger children. 4H is until you're 10 and by the time they got to high school, they can stay in 4H or they can go on into FFA. Now the girls are allowed to go into Future Farmers of America, but when we started out they weren't, 4H was always for girls and boys.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh I see. Okay, let's move on to your involvement with the Women's Center. It says on my paper that you were involved with the beginning of the Women's Center. What did you do to help out with that?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well, I was asked to be on the board or on the group that started that because one of my daughters was up there at the college, my second daughter. She got to know Pat Coontz who was going to be the head of the Women's Center, so we kind of got together and since I kind of represented a different side of the women's group perhaps I felt I was important because I had probably represented a different group. When one talks of women's rights or ERA or all these things that have to do with the Women's Center, I'm brought in probably the most. I don't fit the mold because I'm very family oriented and nobody speaks for me I speak for myself, but there's things that I disagree with very strongly in some of the women's programs. However at that point I had two of my daughters and my twin daughters were in athletics down at Washington State University. We were seeing some interesting comparisons with the women athletes as compared to the men athletes. So my consciousness had been raised considerably seeing how the difference in amounts of money that was doled out to the men and not to the women. In fact, since that time, they've taken the University to court down there and won the case and my children are just now. . my two girls are now filling out the forms from that court case.

**T. MacELROY:** How long ago was this?

**M. ELLIOT:** Oh, it was about 70, 60, 77, that was '77, 1977. So my problem with the Women's Center was that I have always known very strong women and I had known the programs they had at the community colleges in Spokane. Spokane Falls and Spokane Community College had had very strong women's program for a long time and I was familiar with those because my husband worked with those people at the community college at that time and I knew those programs were so good for the returning women. When I went up here to Eastern to sit on the first couple of board meetings, I was quite frankly appalled. At the spot, Eastern Washington University was, with their program, women's program I really never thought they'd get it off the ground. It was bad. But the women involved and the men that were helping them were just outstanding. As well as, taking full time jobs and having full time families, they were doing this by pulling themselves up by their boot straps with very little help as far as I could see from the administration, or even the community, and I feel that they did a very excellent job with their programming in there. I've heard other comments about it from people I know very well that didn't feel it was what they thought it should be. I feel, probably since I stuck with it and went through it and got to know the people that I felt they did an exceptionally good job in building that program up. Every class I ever took in the women's program were some of the hardest classes I ever took and some of the most interesting with some of the best teachers that I had at the university.

**T. MacELROY:** What were some of those classes?

**M. ELLIOT:** The good ones, Pat Coontz's class. Women's Literature and Sociology and History were the best classes I ever took at the university. It was everything about everybody and specific. It was an excellent class. The History of Women in the United States, the History of Women in the West, Psychology of Women, a marvelous class, and surprisingly enough I learned a lot. Even though I have seven daughters, I was amazed at

all the interesting things I learned in the women's programs as well as of course the other things at college. But they were all fine classes and very difficult, mostly because they were full of so much information that had been completely unavailable, almost through anybody, before the women's program. It's just like black history, there were no black people in history. We didn't know the women had any history. They just had tons of history. They were half of everybody of course.

**T. MacELROY:** That's what I was going to ask you. Did some of the information you learned through these classes kind of shock you?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well, it just reinforced what I've always felt about women which was, all my relatives are really strong women. My great grandma came over the mountains on a wagon train and met her husband in a little town in Montana and he spoke Italian and she spoke English and they got married and they had 10 children, you know, they're just remarkable people. There wasn't anything wishy-washy about them or anything. So I thought that yeah, the strangest thing I thought about the women's classes was in the psychology of women. She said think of a book that you liked when you were young and write it down. Something you can you know, kind of relate to, and over half the women, and these were educated women and women who were one would say probably you know at an advanced stage of womanhood, you know.

**T. MacELROY:** Yeah.

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah, and over half the women said Cinderella was their favorite book as a child. That to me, it blew my mind and I couldn't think for a long time and I couldn't even think about a book that I liked, then I realized I was thinking wrong. My favorite books were adventure books: The Call of the Wild, The Jungle Book, and Tarzan. Those were my books and I mean, Cinderella? I mean it just . . .

**T. MacELROY:** Quite different than women. . .

**M. ELLIOT:** It didn't seem you know, someone would come to just take you away, you know and everything would be right. But I don't know. But anyway that was quite a shock to me. I guess other people probably got a whole lot more out of the class than I got out of it.

**T. MacELROY:** Now you said 1977, was that when the women's center got started? I'm unfamiliar with that.

**M. ELLIOT:** I couldn't say for sure. It was 1976 or '77. It's been 5 or 6 years now.

**T. MacELROY:** Okay, and you were mainly a board member.

**M. ELLIOT:** I was a board member but I wasn't going to school at the time. I was a board member for several years before I went back to school.

**T. MacELROY:** Okay, let's move on now to. . . I know your involvement with workshops. . . or you were involved with workshops on the spinning and weaving. Why don't you tell me some things about that? Like when did you teach it and where?

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah well I've always been interested in weaving and in the old days, weaving was all there was. As far as I knew. . . and so my first. . . when I went to WSU, the only class I was interested in was the Weaving class and you had to have three or four prerequisites and I finally got into the weaving class. Well, then I got married and had all my children. I always wanted a loom and I always wanted to get back. We raised our sheep. Anyway, my dear friend, Ruth Beal wanted to buy some fleece from me because she was teaching weaving and spinning at the community college so I sold her some

fleece and then I got interested in the class and I just took the class. I just loved it. We learned spinning and weaving and natural dyeing and off-loom weaving and that's. . . off-loom weaving is where you make your own looms.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh.

**M. ELLIOT:** Instead of using big looms. So after 5 or 6 classes from her at the community college in on-loom and off-loom weaving and lots of natural dyeing, a workshop on natural dyeing one summer. So finally she wanted somebody to be a person to do some spinning. They were having an open house or something. I thought one of the dear little students would want to do this but no one raised their hand and no-one. . . so after the class I said, you want, would you like me to do this? [laughs] I said, "If no-one else asks, I'll do the spinning for you for the open house." So then I did the spinning and it was so much fun. So after that I've done a lot of spinning for groups, for schools; I spin for the fair, the interstate fair every fall. I also teach workshops and I taught at the Red Barn Program for Eastern Washington University, spinning, dyeing, and also weaving. At the Community College I taught a quarter, and this was all before I had my degree. There's a lot more people in this particular field now than there used to be, everybody that raises sheep. . . an awful lot of the women who raise sheep do spinning at their fairs and this kind of thing and teach it. I got into raising black sheep because, when you're spinning, most of your wool is white and you want to get black and gray and brown colors.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh, I see.

**M. ELLIOT:** So I got into that. So now we show all over the state and our black flock is a registered flock. That's been really interesting breeding for about 10 years, black sheep. But I raise them for the hand spinners, whom I kind of know. I've shipped wool to California, I've shipped wool to Alaska, all over the west. It's very interesting. The people are the most interesting. Everybody, I've never met a person that likes to spend. . . to weave that wasn't just most interesting and just fun to know.

**T. MacELROY:** So you raise all the sheep yourself?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well, most of it. Occasionally I'll buy a fleece for myself but I generally use my own fleeces then I sell my extra fleeces. Fleeces that aren't good enough for spinning I sell at the Wool Pool in Spokane, where the regular wool is sold. It's sold back east to a client. So that's been real interesting and I've been a lot of places with that and I've met lots of people like at the fairs. I think the most interesting place we worked was at the Expo '74, the World's Fair in Spokane. They begged us for about 6 months to bring our sheep into the Folklife Festival so they could shear the sheep, and I said, "The sheep will be sheared by the time the fair is on," and they said, "Oh. . ." They didn't know that. Anyway, we negotiated and negotiated and finally I said, "Well, someone will have to be there all the time. Because people feed sheep candy bars and strange things and they die a lot you know if someone isn't right there." So we finally negotiated all my family could come in and eat there at the Folklife Festival and we would bring the sheep in and people would watch them and after they were sheared we'd have to take them home that night and bring in a new bunch the next morning see. So this would go on for a week, and at that time I didn't have too many black sheep so we took in I think 6 white sheep and 1 black sheep every day, and the man sheared them by hand and we stood around and we talked to the people, all these thousands of people would come through the

Folk Life Festival, and that was really neat. I wouldn't mind doing that every day of my life. Seeing all the people and talking to them like that. That was really fun. Whoa.

**T. MacELROY:** That's great.

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah that was neat.

**T. MacELROY:** Have you sold a lot of your, or any of your work?

**M. ELLIOT:** No I haven't. I . . . my work that I do, I usually give away. I'm hoping to have more time now and make some pieces perhaps to sell, but most of my pieces I've given to my children. They've been too expensive for anybody to buy.

**T. MacELROY:** Probably. Things tend to be that.

**M. ELLIOT:** One tends to need to be a little more efficient than I am. But I love working with wool. The wool is like working with clay. You start with a soft product and work up and when you're through you have a finished product and you can just start dyeing if you've done that, and it's really neat.

**T. MacELROY:** Sounds like that's your love, the love of your life.

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah that's kind of my vice. One of my vices I guess. I really enjoy it.

**T. MacELROY:** That's great. I heard you say something about the Red Barn Program. In my list it says you were a . . . you worked with the Red Barn Program for one summer. What is the Red Barn Program first of all?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well the Red Barn Program was a program they had up at Eastern a number of years ago and they don't have it anymore. It was a . . . I think it's when they had more money and it was in the summer and they had all kinds of interesting classes people could take. They weren't just academic. You know my class was listed with home economics, with art, and with science, cross-listed. You know, because with the natural dyeing and the fibers and the weaving. But they also had how to do a garden, how to make a windmill, this kind of thing. They had all kinds of interesting classes that you don't ordinarily get.

**T. MacELROY:** How long ago was this?

**M. ELLIOT:** Oh, it wasn't that long ago, it wasn't ten years ago.

**T. MacELROY:** Was it in where the Red Barn is now?

**M. ELLIOT:** They were going to have it in there and then they couldn't fit the classes in there. Because of the fire hazard so they put it other places but they called it the Red Barn Program. It was after the Red Barn that's up there.

**T. MacELROY:** Yeah, I was wondering where they got that Red Barn from or what made it look like a red barn or.

**M. ELLIOT:** Well, that Red Barn has been there a long time. My mother-in-law who graduated in 1915 or '16 from up here remembered the Red Barn. It was there when she was going to school, so it's an old, old . . . when we first moved here there was a house with a Red Barn and they tore that down and the college bought that property, tore the house down. So the house was there at least 15 years ago. It was the house that belonged to the Red Barn and they tore that down about 13 or 14 years ago I think. That was one of the original . . . the old original buildings in this town. But, one of my sorority sisters owned the land up there where the football field is. Oh, she's a very wealthy lady and that's been bought since we were here too. The lady didn't sell the property, she traded it.

**T. MacELROY:** What did she trade it for?

**M. ELLIOT:** Oh, more land someplace else.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh I see.

**M. ELLIOT:** All that property up there has just been acquired in the last 15 years. On that hill on the other side of the access road there, that particular property belonged to one of my sorority sisters. Yep.

**T. MacELROY:** Okay, let's move on to your involvement with Has Casts.

**M. ELLIOT:** Has Casts.

**T. MacELROY:** Now what is Has Casts? What do those letters stand for?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well, I'm not sure what they stand for but it's a high school group in the summer, a two week high school group in the summer. Dr. Lockenheiser can tell you exactly what that stands for. Where they have all the high school kids from the whole state that want to come and they have classes for them in music and theater and art and drama and. I did fiber arts for them. These students who are not interested in basketball and the FFA and Home-Ec and all those things but are interested in the arts come and they can get help, take classes, take all kinds of classes from people who teach the things they are interested in, and they're a most interesting group of students. My fourth child, Ivan, and her husband have worked up there as a house mothers for Has Casts. . . house parents for Has Cats for the last two or three years, and he's in music and she's in drama, and . . . but I did off-loom weaving for them one year and since then they usually use teachers who are teachers at the college but that year they didn't have anybody who could do what I could do so I taught for them, and that was very interesting. Students they're so quick, I had some boys in there that I'm sure had never had a needle in their hand, we did weaving and things and they were just excellent. It was fun to do. It was a good group, it was an interesting group of students.

**T. MacELROY:** Is that a relatively new club?

**M. ELLIOT:** Has Cats has been up there, Has Cats must have been up there at the University for 10 years I think. I'm not sure how much it was before that. Of course if you didn't want to go to basketball camp you go to this camp, this place for two weeks and learn all these fun things about music and art things.

**T. MacELROY:** You brought in some more information you found towards professional society/organizations that you've been involved with. Could you tell me a few of those that you've been involved with and then talk about them a little bit?

**T. MacELROY:** Okay, well, I'll just read em off here. Spokane County Sheep Growers Association, Natural Colored Wool Growers Association, that's the black sheep group, Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority that's one I belonged to a long time, Washington State University Alumni, Washington State Grange 25 years I've belonged to Washington State Grange, PTA Treasurer, Eagle Scout Mother, oh, I was on St. Rose of Lima's Church board for three years, and the home. . . local Home-Ec Vocational Advisory board at the Cheney high school, and there umbrella advisory board. Nothing very exciting but they were groups that were interesting to me, especially the farm, the ones that have to do with the sheep and the farm.

**T. MacELROY:** All those things must have kept you very busy.

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah, they were kind of extra. My main job has been my family I guess. It was definitely what I wanted to do and what I chose to do and what I planned to do

since I can remember, was to have a large family and that's what we did. My husband had always had two or three jobs to support us and I always worked in the home and then I worked 10 years part time, but it seems many times we wouldn't make it with all those kids. But we did. We had cows and chickens, horses and dogs and gardens and I learned to cook and save lots of money and I'm a great cook. . . [tape ends]

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

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

**M. ELLIOT:** It's important for the girls to be able to have some way to support themselves, if they needed to, or if they wanted to, or if they chose to, and it's a little harder for girls to go to college. They still don't earn as much as boys do. A lot of the scholarships aren't as much like the athletic scholarships still aren't as good for the girls as they are for the boys, but that's changing I think. We've been real happy with our girls and boys getting a good education and wide ideas, a wide variety of ideas and lifestyles. They all seem to be so different and that's very, very, good I think in a family. It would be easy to all think alike but they don't. As my husband says, there are no followers just people who ask lots of questions, and I think that's good.

**T. MacELROY:** So all your, all of your children have been able to go to college?

**M. ELLIOT:** Bill is a senior in high school. He's been accepted at Washington State University for next year.

**T. MacELROY:** Where did most of them go, half and half or all over the place?

**M. ELLIOT:** Four or five went down to WSU and my son has his masters from there and daughters have graduated from there. Three of them. . . .four of them. Some of them have gone to Eastern Washington University and graduated, one to Bellingham. My one daughter has got her masters from McMasters University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and she's now getting her doctorate in Germany.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh boy.

**M. ELLIOT:** They've all been interested in a wide variety of things and I think that's very nice, and a couple of them have gone a couple of years and not been overwhelmed with college and they've gone on and done other things that were very interesting. But they've all had the opportunity to go to college. I think they all appreciate the . . .

**T. MacELROY:** Chance?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well, the chance to learn no matter where they are. I think a person needs to keep learning.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh sure.

**M. ELLIOT:** No matter where they are or what they're doing.

**T. MacELROY:** So all of their interests vary towards their involvement to school so much?

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah, yeah. Our son, Margaret was a Vocational Home-Ec teacher and Jack's in Agricultural Economics on a farm now. Marie's in Sociology, Yvonne's in Drama and Art, and Patty quit after a couple of years of college, she's at Dutch Harbor, Alaska, which is in the middle of the Aleutian Island Chain in the Bering Sea where the two boats went down last year, last week, lost 14 men. It's the richest seaport in the world. Theresa graduated from WSU in Community Planning. She's down in New Orleans now working in a hotel. Laura's interested in nursing. Sheryl is interested in

hotel/motel management. Bill built a telescope last year. He's interested in science and astronomy and things like that.

**T. MacELROY:** So having all of your nine kids involved in so many different things probably really keeps you interested in a whole aspect of different areas.

**M. ELLIOT:** Oh yes it's just so wonderful.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh yeah.

**M. ELLIOT:** We got to go to things we never would have before. Yvonne did the make-up for the Spokane Opera and Orchestra society when they did their Operas and things, she did the makeup for them. So of course we went to the operas, which we wouldn't have gone to otherwise, and of course we enjoyed those. You know, it's that kind of thing. When your kid is involved, you go and we've been to the place where you look at the stars because Bill's interested in that. We've gone up and sat and watched the stars go by up at the colleges and all from the ground, and it's really neat.

**T. MacELROY:** Well that's great. Okay, well that looks at least sounds like we covered if not most of your clubs or organizations and interests and societies you've been involved with we've got about all of them. Somewhere along the line unless you think of some more that you rarely thought about. But lets move on now to some of history's events. Let's say World War II? Can you remember a lot about World War II?

**M. ELLIOT:** I remember everything about World War II. I was ten, December 10th. December 7th 1941 I remember that. The day Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and it changed our world. All during high school, well, till the end of it, we were very limited in our use of gasoline, food. We had ration stamps, gasoline stamps. I remember, I remember the day we heard on the radio that the first atomic bomb had been dropped and we didn't even understand what it was. I remember in our little Catholic school we had some Japanese janitors which I never thought about. They lived down in the basement of this old Catholic school and they kept the furnaces going and the sisters took them food and I never thought of that for 30 years I don't think and then they started talking about the Japanese being taken into the camps during World War II, and they, they were. I think those, those men were hidden there. I think there were people that knew they were there but they were there and they were, you know, they were citizens and everybody'd known them forever, and that was the way it was. In those days, people knew who the good guys were and who the bad guys were, we thought we did. Things were a lot easier then because we knew things were either black or they were white or they were good or they were wrong. Everybody worked with the. . . because of the war and everybody went to war and they wanted to go to war because there was bad things happening and it was just easier then. It wasn't like the Vietnam War, much easier. I remember VE day, end of war in Europe, VJ day, victory over Japan. Everybody went downtown and they milled around and like a great parade and everybody stopped what they were doing. I remember the first car I saw after the war, the new cars, there were no new cars during the war, no new anything. It was a Studebaker I think, and it looked like it was going both directions. All the other cars before then only went one direction. I remember, I remember, I remember we lived in Denver before we lived in Salt Lake City where I went to High School. I remember the airport in Denver. That must have been, 1937, 8, 9 maybe. A little airport in Denver and we'd go out and meet my dad and there was just the big one building. There were the prop airplanes come in, the two propeller airplanes that

came in. Those were the big airplanes, and now that's about the biggest airport in the world, if you're going to Denver. One of the biggest ones, and gosh I remember Salt Lake City Airport was like that, one big building. Well, we were there just last week, miles of Airport, yeah, and the roads were different then. The roads were like the mountain roads are now, two lanes, both going both directions and probably no shoulders. That's the way the freeways were. I remember the first freeways I saw in California and Portland. I remember the old highway between Cheney, up the Columbia River Gorge out of Portland, the old highway and I remember watching the new freeway being built down below. That couldn't have been, it was about 1951, and it was in the 1950s they built that road because I remember we went over that with some FFA boys going to Portland in the middle of the night. They were just windy and twisty and way up high all over the Gorge. All the way down to Portland. It was a nightmare to drive that. Now it's a straight shot and the roads in Montana. In fact I remember going around Montana, my folks were from Montana, and we'd go visit in the winter time or even in the summer time sometime and you'd go around the corners in the mountain roads and you'd have to honk to be sure there wasn't anybody on the other side. Then you'd stop and somebody'd back up and you'd go through this and probably in the winter when it was snow because you couldn't see around. Actually the roads in Yellowstone are very similar to the old roads except where they made some changes in a couple places in the highway. They're old highways in Yellowstone and I'm sure it's the same highway they used to have thirty or forty years ago, forty fifty years ago. Well, the roads were a lot different then, and the railroad train, the railroads were like the airports are now, the railroad stations.

**T. MacELROY:** The railroad.

**M. ELLIOT:** Railroad stations were the big thing. How you got places, by railroad, that's in the 1940s.

**T. MacELROY:** That was a major part of everybody's life?

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah, it's everybody instead of like the airport is now.

**T. MacELROY:** Okay, well how about the women's movement, the ERA? What do you remember about that? That was in the, that was in the 60s or. . .

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah

**T. MacELROY:** Oh no, that was earlier wasn't it? I'm not really sure.

**M. ELLIOT:** Well I never thought anything about it because I had always been treated equally and of course this is a state where property is divided equally. I thought all states were that way. I don't know why. I guess because I've lived here for thirty years, thirty-five years. Community property state, and I was. . . somehow I kind of thought that everybody was like that. So it never worried me a whole peak, my big problem was raising my children and hoping that I would live long enough to raise them and not have someone else raise them. I never really thought a whole lot about it. It seemed to make sense that the person should get the same amount of money for the same type of work. I didn't have any argument about it. I have arguments about other things that they advocate, but I think it was a. . . I remember the blacks of people and I remember when I went to WSU. . . now this was 1948, 49, 50. . . and no one will believe me. There were 8000 students down there and there were three black students.

**T. MacELROY:** Three in the whole. . .

**M. ELLIOT:** Three, and I think that two of them were from foreign countries and one of them may have been an American but I don't know that for sure. But I remember them that there was three. There was no black athletes. No. No. There were no black women. There was one older woman that went to University and this was 8000 people and I remember her because she was one. Her daughter was going there too. I think her husband probably had died, and she was an older student, she was around 40, much younger than I was when I went back to school. But there were three black people and one older person going to college in 8000 students. All the rest of them were young people.

**T. MacELROY:** How did that make you ...

**M. ELLIOT:** Well that's the way it was. Every school was that way. That was the way it was. So first you see the change in the black people and all that terrible uproar. Me, my mother and my sister went to Lewis and Clark in Spokane, and one of her friends was a black girl. There were maybe a dozen black people that were students at Lewis and Clark or a couple, and my sister was a tall girl and she'd twirl flags because she was tall and they had to be so high, and this black girl was tall and she'd throw high. Well anyway, my mother wanted to do something for these six girls that twirled the flags, and she took them, or she was going to take them to lunch or send them to lunch at the Crescent. So she called up the Crescent and she said, "Okay I want a private dining room for these girls coming in and one of them's a black girl and I don't want any problems." So they had this private dining room and she didn't say a thing to the girls or my sister. Not until way later did my sister find this out. So they said, "Oh yes, Mrs. Smith's party, we have a special dining room for you" and they took them in there and they had this lovely lunch and they just thought it was neat that they had this special dining room.

**T. MacELROY:** They didn't know it was the plan.

**M. ELLIOT:** It was so there wasn't any problem because of the black girl and that was in the early 1950s if you can believe it. That's the way it was for the black people and so they went through their agony. I guess they probably still are. The women, they came later. That was never a problem because we were kind of a farm-oriented family. All the farmwomen I knew always worked, and all the men helped with the kids and the women helped with the farm and so there was none of this. I mean, everybody did as much as they could, everybody worked as hard as they could and you couldn't work any harder so some of it didn't fit with my lifestyle and I really began to be . . . my Marie who's the Sociologist, got interested in it up at the university and then my kids started. . . my girls were playing basketball, they just started women's basketball. We used to have to go take the girls up for basketball at 6 o'clock in the morning, they got to use the gym at 6 o'clock in the morning. That was really neat because they got to use the gym. Nobody ever thought that maybe they should be using it at the same time the boys were or alternating or something. It never occurred to anybody. We were just thrilled to get to use it. I'd get up in the morning and drive those kids up there and they'd practice and everybody was thrilled because they were getting the opportunity to play. But eventually, that began to sit a little wrong. Because, I mean, it was wonderful that the boys were getting to do those things, but I was paying the same taxes everybody else was. So that's I guess where we first really began to notice the difference, and when the girls would play basketball, we would take them, we would drive them, we would use our money to take

them. Of course the boys, they got the band and they got the busses and they got the, you know, the money, which was wonderful for them. I think they should have got it, but maybe the girls should have too, and so the questions you know, they just kind of surfaced you now. What I think is interesting is that my own girls, you know, who went through this and are now adults expect the same treatment. They would never settle for anything less anymore. Because they . . . and I think that's neat. However, I don't think they realize the sacrifice that a lot of women coaches, a lot of the people made for them to get them. . . a lot of people sacrificed a lot of their life for these girls to get the same treatment. . . the opportunity for the same treatment that boys had, same opportunity for grants and money. Like the girls said when they would go on their trips to play basketball, they would eat at McDonalds and the boys would eat at the Black Angus. Which was all right but, that's the way it was and they weren't happy to be doing it, but that's kind of the way it was. When you think about it that probably wasn't quite right, you know. We always assumed it was right because that's the way it was, and we went to a ball game over at Reardan the other night, we used to live at Reardan, watch the girls play and the boys play and they were both in the tournaments over there and there were the little cheerleaders and all and I thought oh, the cheerleaders are getting shorter and shorter. They're taking all the tall girls to play basketball now they're not tall cheerleading, and that was a called to mind the women's. . . I say my girls expect nothing but to be productive, to support themselves. All of the ones who have quit and they're having children. . . perfectly happy taking care of their children. They have a lot more I think, well rounded view of life and their abilities and their opportunities and my boys are very, not only strong, but gentle. I can't say the word I want to say. It means woman and man. I think there should be a lot more, you know maybe woman in us than man in us. The strength to hold pull that. . . and used for the world. I see that in some of my own children that they have developed that ability thinking like men and women both. Female in a male thought, we have traditionally been thought of in one way or another being able to incorporate that. I think that's real important. Though I think it will be more important. I think perhaps the women's movement has been useful in drawing our attention to human needs, not just women's needs, but the human needs of both men and women. Men have accepted so many things for so long that weren't very nice for them either and perhaps maybe that to me is where it's been most important is causing us all to take a look at our humanness and our needs and hopefully we'll all be better for it because it's been a growth. . . . I think in the long run it will be a growth. I say I'm sure they don't approve of everything I think and I don't think. . . I don't believe everything they profess to think but I think it's perhaps a step in the right direction and one that needed to be taken. If the human race is gonna survive. Because everybody should be treated of course like they should be treated. You know, only to their ability and to give what they can give, and not be caught up in some kind of trap.

**T. MacELROY:** It's too bad everybody doesn't think that way.

**M. ELLIOT:** Yeah, I've had some interesting experiences.

**T. MacELROY:** Well Marilyn, I've covered everything that I have down there. Is there anything that you would like to talk about that I haven't asked you about? Is there anything to add? Anything we might have missed?

**M. ELLIOT:** Well. I'd kind of like to if I've got a second more?

**T. MacELROY:** Sure you do.

**M. ELLIOT:** I think that . . . I wish I could tell the young people of the girls especially but the boys too that I feel we're missing the boat someplace in telling. . . in what we're telling people. . . telling young people about our world. We're saying you can do everything. Have a wonderful career and you can have a family, someone else can take care of your children, you can do this, you can do that. Maybe you can but maybe you can't do it all at once. Even a man can't do it all at once if a woman can't do it all at once, and I think we need to give ourselves a break. . . give the young people a break. They're trying to have families and they don't want families. If you're gonna want people to have families you're gonna have to make it so they can afford to have them, that there's a support system for them. If people don't have families, just what are important to those children are their parents, their support systems. I think we really have to take a look at what we're doing to our young people, and I think it's very cruel sometimes, what I see happening. They're saying, "Yes you can have a job, you can have a baby, you can have a husband. You can have all these things" and it isn't quite the way it looks on TV and in the books. I'm not saying gosh it's hard and you need to learn to cook, and you want to take care of your baby for 6 years, maybe you don't want your career for 35 years. Maybe you want it for 30 years. They're not. . . they're making it sound like there's only one way to do things and I think there's a lot of ways to do things that are good, and one way isn't right for everybody, and I hope our. . . I just hope somebody or something helps show the young people that they've gotta plan and that they've got to. . . that they don't have to . . . don't have to do things the way everyone else is doing them and maybe somebody wants to stay home and take care of their children and there's nothing the matter with that. Maybe someone wants to have a career, there's nothing the matter with that. Maybe somebody can combine both of them. Maybe the husband wants to stay home. I know several househusbands. I see with my own children, they're doing they're doing this. Farmers did this for years. They all did. They always raised their kids. I think you shouldn't count out the grandparents. You shouldn't count out the brothers and sisters. You shouldn't count out community helping to raise families. Even if you don't have children of your own, the world's not going to survive without somebody having children. Who's gonna do this? Who's gonna support those people, it's a lot of questions. I really feel that family's very important and I think that there's an opportunity now for people to change and to develop if they just don't get too bogged down in only one way to do things. I think we need to look at a lot of different ways of doing things, and I always wanted a family and I'm glad I had it and in the last few years I felt pressured for doing other things, like you should do this and you should do that. I've enjoyed doing a lot of other things but to me that wasn't important at that one point in my life as raising that family and the time I did it, I got a lot of support. It was okay to do that. But now, I probably wouldn't be unless you were a very strong person. In those days if you didn't have a family, you were ostracized. People didn't like you if you didn't have a family or if you didn't get married. That isn't right either. There's a lot of people were meant to be single people you know. So you know a person, I think we shouldn't judge people so harshly. In fact I don't think that we should judge people at all. I think this is a real good class that you've had and if you listen to all these tapes from different people, you'll get

lots of different ideas and that's the important part about something like this, to listen to other people. I know when going back to school, that's what I learned most of all was that all people with all these different ideas. Young people, old people. I think what's neat about the college now is that the average age is what, 28, 29 I think.

**T. MacELROY:** Between 20 and 30.

**M. ELLIOT:** In the old days it was between 18 and 21 or 2.

**T. MacELROY:** Yeah.

**M. ELLIOT:** Well I think the person has an opportunity to learn more.

**T. MacELROY:** Yeah.

**M. ELLIOT:** I think it would be nice if people would just automatically be able to go back to school easily. Every so many years or whenever it worked out into their schedules to learn more and give more. I think that would be nice for everybody. I have enjoyed talking to you. I hope you can get something out of this.

**T. MacELROY:** Oh, I'm sure we will. I thank you. I learned so much tonight in this hour. What I want to do though is maybe summarize everything a little bit and make sure I do have everything right. You're main reason for coming to Cheney in the first place was because of your husband's work? You wanted your children to come to Cheney, which was a more diversified area where they could go to the college and become diversified have different interests here and there. You belonged to so many clubs and organizations differing from 4H to your professional society and things like that. I think that's fantastic with you raising your nine children and being able to do all this, that's unbelievable. I really learned a lot, unbelievable. I think that's something that everybody who would be able to believe that a person could do all of that. That's really great. But thank you very much for letting me interview you.

**M. ELLIOT:** Oh, I appreciate it. I also . . . I should tell you I had some jobs. Besides being a shepherd, I worked as a meat cutter for Safeway's for 7 months. That was really interesting, I learned a lot. I worked at Tawanka in the food service for about 5 or 6 years and I really enjoyed that. I worked as an office manager for my husband when he was an executive director for 3 or 4 years and planned conventions and trips and stuff like that. That was fun. You should never work for your husband though, that's a bad thing. He's a gentle soul but not good to work for. Yeah, but always I worked around the home, which I felt was the most important thing. That was my thing and since he was able to have 2, 3 or 4 jobs why that worked out pretty well. But I've never been able to really do a lot on some of these things but I have been able to do a little bit.

>>>>>End of Side Two<<<<<<

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