

Interview with Mary Pat Linck

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Women's Center in Marquette

#### START OF INTERVIEW

Jane Ryan (JR): I'm Jane Ryan and I'm going to be introducing to you Mary Pat Linck who has been involved with Women's Center since the early days of the 70s and she will give us a bit of her personal background, what brought her to Marquette and what drew her to the Women's Center and then the role that she played in that over some years. Mary Pat, Welcome.

Mary Pat Linck (ML): Thank you. Back in 1972, when I moved here, I'm still Mary Pat Stacy and that's how a lot of people knew me. That was my married name, I've been married for short time, had a small child and my husband had died, I moved here with the friend whose husband also was killed in the same accident and we needed a place to go. I had just gotten my degree from the U of M Flint College and I was anxious to go move out east. But my friend Colleen said, "Well, I don't know if I want to go that far." She had three small children under the age 5, so, and her brother who lived in Marquette, who worked at Northern. So we came up here and found houses to live in and we thought it was a great little town, had a university and it was much better than the place we came from which was really small. It was a little small farming community, Brown City, down in the thumb. So we settled in and I figured I'd stay a year or two and then move onto bigger pastures but somehow, I never got out of here. It would have been September of '72 when I actually started my first job up here. So sometime during that winter, and I don't recall who said something to me or what I might have heard that there was a bunch of women get in together at the old Guild Hall talking about a Women's Center. I had been a member of the Detroit Women's coalition, Liberation Coalition and was just getting involved in feminist ideas and workshops and so on. So I was kind of looking for that at the time. I remember going there and to the best of my memory, there were probably 25 women there and I think Holly Greer, Gail Griffith, Sally May... there were few other Sandra \_\_\_\_, a few people and

somebody said something to Mary Soper and she came up to me and said, "Oh, somebody told me there's another young widow here." And it was like we had that little,

JR: Bond...

ML: Oh, you too, me too, you know, and got talking in that was my first meeting with women from the Women's Center and it was a great, I just...that is just going to work. We just started, I don't remember we had frequent meetings or not, we didn't have a sender. We were not at Northern yet. So Guild hall was pretty much the place that we would gather together. During that...

JR: Would that have been considered the consciousness raising group stage cause that preceded the Northern?

ML: No. We were talking about how to get a Women's Center going and I know that Gail and they are talking about and Holly wasn't even a director yet. I don't believe.

JR: No.

JR: Talking about who to hire, so it was kind of organizational. But along with that, at the same time we got a lot of women who wanted to do the consciousness raising, we used to meet in the basement of the, it would have been the Presbyterian Church, where the Marquette co-op nursery was also? And we would meet there once a week. I remember sitting around the circle around the floor with Christina Saari, and Sandra Passenen, and Yolanda Soldana and all these people. And we would just talk, meet each week and if somebody had concern, or a problem or something, we were working through, we dealt with that... kind of an outgrowth of that maybe. We did then, once the Women's Center got more fully established, we were doing a lot of outreach. And that was always my interest and I worked a lot with Mary Soper, Victoria Cosby, a few other people. There was a program that took us into the high schools and we would generally go in groups of three. And we just basically would go and present our story of things that we had overcome or things that we were doing, talk about the role of women and all the changes. And just kind of try to go to the corners of the U.P. and give some bigger perspective to high school women.

JR: Was that as volunteers?

ML: That was just volunteer, absolutely. And I remember we, well just this past winter I decided it was going to clean up my basement and I started throwing stuff away that I just should never kept this long and I came across these letters from the counselors or whatever at Iron Mountain and different places around the U.P., thanking us for coming and talking to their girls, you know. Over in Negaunee or whatever. So we did that probably for a year or two, I don't know how long I was involved with that. The other thing we did was we were doing goal-setting workshops. We had a lot of different kinds and I remember that would be a whole afternoon you would teach a group of, a small group of people how to set the short-term goals and long-term goals. I remember working over Northern with women and one of the dormitories. I think Frida Waara was one of my students at the time.

JR: It worked! It worked for Frida and her projects.

ML: I remember teach them how to visualize how to make long and short term goals. So we were working in different capacities.

JR: Did you find that those kinds of skills basically were lacking in many of these young women? I mean, it really was a need that they might not have realized, that this was important.

ML: I think it's lacking even the day in a lot of people. You know, who's out there teaching you how to set realistic long term goals and short term goals. And we had, and I don't know where the workshop materials came from but we had trained in this and basically there's really specific things that you can do to relate, decide if your goals are achievable, believable, and realistic and how have you go about setting your short term goals so that they enable you then towards your long term goal. You know to really think and kind of plan out your future, what you really want to see in yourself.

JR: That's helpful. I don't know that this is come out in any of the previous interviews. There really were some printed guidelines that, for your training. It wasn't just hit and miss then.

ML: No. this was a goal setting workshop. And I don't know where the printed materials came from. I don't have them anymore. But there were two separate, there was short term and long term and there were specific things we've been take them through you know, visualization, everybody just laying down with their eyes closed and that would have taken them into the future and back we would had them write things. We just it would be a full day workshop.

JR: Okay. That was right. It wasn't just like after school.

ML: No. This was a, this would be like on a weekend or something, this would be like a Saturday workshop that took 4 hours or something and those were fun to do. I was always more involved with the outreach. I did, we had our office at Northern during that time then at some point, I remember going in out of there a lot and Judy Russell was the counselor at the time did some work with us also, cause she was little more professional than we were. Of course she was our paid person. The other thing I remember doing that was really fun was at one point, we got calls from Traverse City and they wanted to start a Women's Center. So I can remember at that point, Victoria Cosby and Mary Soper and I went down as three-some and spent a weekend down there with some women who were trying to get this going and help them get their work their center started, they did get a center. I don't know if it lasted, if it's still there, if there is a Women's Center in Traverse City or not. But at that time, that was another thing we did. We were doing at outreach to help other places start Women's Center. So it was all about outreach and education.

JR: Was there feedback, you obviously enjoyed it. What made it meaningful to you as you went through that? I mean, cause it involved quite a commitment of time and...

ML: Yeah, but you know it wasn't a huge commitment. I mean, I guess I had more time than that I have now. It's harder now that I'm retired. Being in a new place I was making new friends, it wasn't a full time job or anything because I did work. I know I had job but it was just something I really enjoyed and I didn't have a full of extra curriculums going on because I was new to the community and also this just became this was my thing. And it was very rewarding especially when you would talk, I would talk with high-schoolers, young women. And you can tell when you have their attention and you can tell when it makes a difference and that to me was very rewarding. And after we kind of lost focus with some of that, the outreach kind of and I'm not sure why it lost focus. But the following years like end of the 80s and 90s, I became less involved. And that was more about domestic abuse and the women's shelter, so on. And I feel like [pause] lost their some place was the whole connection with that next generation. Who's talking to the young high school women today and women in college about things, I mean, there's a lot of talk about sexual assault and safe behaviors and this sort of thing, but what about the real radical ideas that you don't have to be real sexy and to be successful. It just seems like

the goal setting and the thoughtfulness and the seriousness somehow is gone. I don't know, we've lost something. I feel like that's what's kind of slowed down the Women's movement. There's lot of young women benefitting from a lot of the changes that came across in the 60s, 70s. But it's just part of the landscape and that not really involved in it. They have no skin in the game it's just...

JR: So if you were having a wish list, you would see the value in resuming that kind of activity?

ML: Oh yes, yes. I don't think anybody's doing that today. I don't think that anyone is out there talking to young women. And you know, kind of like telling them, I mean they know kind of that they can do a lot of things that they want to do that maybe we didn't know we could do. But it's kind of like well, what are those things? The...I don't want to sound dull or anything, either. Is it that important to be sucked up into just a lot of trivial stuff? You know, it's the sports, it's the fashion, it's Facebook, it's electronics. It's all this kind of meaningless, a lot of it, chatter that just feels of your time and a lot of it is just mundane. And that's what's filling up a lot of time for people instead of...and to me, it sucks of lot of energy, takes a lot of space. So you're not thinking really like some of the things that could really make a change in your life. You are just being just kind of entertained all the time.

JR: Well, and that fits into this theme of the reason for Archiving history is so that people of new generations can learn from that experience and if it was working so well and we've had person's interviewed who've benefitted from just what you are describing that we need maybe to take another look and revisit some of that.

ML: It's easy, you know. You can keep people really occupied with a lot of superficial stuff and you know, looking at pictures of food that everybody's eating on their iPhone, and what's going on with this and that sport, and you get so involved with that. Then you really not much of a threat to anybody, are you?

JR: Interesting point. Very interesting point. So as the program that you were most involved with faded, did you literally lose track of the Women's Center? Do you have any perspective on what was continuing here, cause you stayed in Marquette, right? Throughout this time...

ML: Right. No. I always kept track of the Women's Center in, I knew people like Sue Kensington that became, that came on as the director and the people that working in there, I was

in and out of the Center a bit on South Front Street. I'm trying to think what I did there few years ago, I was in there for something too. So I was kind of involved, but not directly a lot with the Harbor House and then I have really now at this point, I don't have much contact with the Women's Center at all as far as knowing what they are doing, and being involved in meetings and I did get a little side-tracked or just was time ...

JR: different thing.

ML: at that point, then I think what I did was I turned on my energies into another other direction which was the Marquette Food Co-op and that's where in the 90s then and October, recently I was really involved in very active...

JR: This is a bit of a tangent but a lot of young people involved in that business at every level. Right? The Food Co-op...

ML: Oh yes.

JR: What would be your take on young women's roles there? Do they...

ML: Oh, you know, that's some kind of almost mini-culture. Very, I see some really, really interesting people from being involved with the food co-op. Our employees and the different members and so on are the closest, I think I can come to saying what it was like, what we were like back in the seventies.

JR: Really?

ML: They are very active, they're very politically aware, they're very, are much, not just about food, but about a lot of other things too.

JR: And issues connected to food but it draws... into the food.

ML: And issues connected with food and food is politics and so was a lot of things so there environmentally aware and their activists. There is, I mean, there is I'm not saying that everybody doesn't care about anything anymore. They are very much active and aware...

JR: Well, and again, this is my own perception maybe based on a lot of these interviews but there are segments in any generation of society that if they aren't exposed to some of these things, aren't going to know about it either from the culture of the community or their families or

whatever, so that if the educational system can provide some of that through the kind of workshops, we maybe catching a cohort of young people that otherwise might not have that...

ML: Maybe that's why I love this Co-op so much. And I think about it now because our classes, everything from education to cooking classes, they are just full. And the Co-op is filling a huge niche of the awareness and education in this community. Mostly it, of course surrounding food issues but CFOs that confined animal feed organizations and safety of your food and political things and everybody that cares about that sort of thing is involved with the Co-op and so maybe that feels to me these days like you know, the Women's Center kind of felt like to me in the 70s. You know it's a happening place, a lot of young people involved and there's a lot of energy there.

JR: Good. Well, and people in the Women's Center may view that as we're sharing the burden because as you and I had talked previous to this, a lot of the retracting of some of those programs was pure dollars and cents, that the grants that used to fund that kind of thing aren't there anymore.

ML: Just aren't there anymore, it's too bad.

JR: But I think for folks like you to feed that back to the board again, that there is a cover the people out there that supported that concept might light some fires...

ML: Well, you know, people can get excited and interested and energetic when it comes to like environment or food issues, there's no reason you can't also be energetic and excited about, you know, I mean it's all part of politics. Women's roles, you know, I was very much dead-center in the women's movement and that has spoken more deeply for me than civil rights movement did of course at that point. Because I did not grow up in era where I had any people of color around me or anything and I just, you know. So the women's movement was huge and then the food movement is huge also, but they all, I mean, there's enough energy there for everybody.

JR: Well Mary Pat, is there anything we haven't touched on that you'd like to cover in relationship to?

ML: Not really. Because my focus was pretty much the 70s and it wasn't that huge, I guess. It was, didn't take that long to cover it.

JR: It was good. No. This is good. Thank you so much for your participation and we're hoping that people watch and listen to these interviews.

ML: Well, thank you because it sure was fun kind of jogging my memory and thinking, wow!

JR: Here we go.

END OF INTERVIEW