

***Our Bodies, Ourselves:***  
**Liberating Minds and Bodies**  
Interview with Jane Pincus

Chelsea Whittaker  
February 9, 2004

“The Personal is Political”



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[Statement of Purpose](#)

[Biography](#)

[Historical Contextualization](#)

[Interview Transcription](#)

[Interview Analysis](#)

[Appendix](#)

[Works Consulted](#)

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The revolutionary book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* significantly contributed to the women's liberation and health movements during the 1960s and 1970s by empowering women and teaching them about their bodies and minds. The purpose of this oral history, through an interview of Ms. Jane Pincus, a co-founder of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and a women's rights activist, is to gain a greater understanding of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, thus understanding the women's liberation movement, and to provide an insightful look into the feelings and history of a woman involved in a time of radical social change.

### Table of Contents

## BIOGRAPHY



Jane Pincus was born in 1937 outside of New York City and was raised in a white middle class community in Westchester County with her two brothers and parents. Her father owned a business in Manhattan while her mother stayed at home to raise her children as well as take part in political and community organizations. After completing her high school education in a private school in New York, Jane Pincus studied at Pembroke College at Brown University. In 1959, after studying in France during her junior year, she received her B.A. Afterwards, she studied art for a year at Columbia University in New York City. The following year, she married Ed Pincus, a filmmaker and film teacher. In 1961, they moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In Cambridge, Jane Pincus received her M.A. in teaching French from the Harvard School of Education and taught at Wellesley Senior High School and Northeastern University. She stopped teaching soon after her daughter was born in 1965. While active in the anti-war and civil rights movements, Jane Pincus joined the rising women's rights and health movement through a consciousness-raising group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology sponsored by the Bread and Roses organization. In 1969, after her son was born, she researched and wrote the pregnancy chapter of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a women's health book published in 1970. In 1975 Jane Pincus and her family moved to Vermont for five years but returned to Cambridge in 1980 through

1983 to edit the 1984 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. She was involved in editing and rewriting the 1970 edition to the 1998 edition. During her work on *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, Jane Pincus was active in supporting abortion, creating Vermont regional conferences for women, raising her two children, and making Batik art. She received a M.A. in visual and fine arts from Vermont College and taught art in 1980. She now resides in Roxbury, Vermont with her husband Ed Pincus and continues creating art and supporting women's health.

### [Table of Contents](#)

## HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

### Liberating the Women's Sphere: A Historical Contextualization of the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the Women's Liberation Movement

Through their cries of freedom and equality within their literature, protests, and organizations, the underlying goal of women during the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s was "to make the personal political; to create awareness (through shared experiences) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared" (qtd. in Freeman 154). Confined by domesticity and their "feminine" roles as wife and mother, women over the past two centuries have struggled to gain rights and equal representation. Through their activism and involvement in civil rights, anti-war, education, and other reform movements, women learned the skills to fight for **their own** rights. But it was not until the 1960s and 1970s, during the second wave of the women's rights movement, that women began to understand that their feelings of complacency and discontent with their roles were shared by most women worldwide. Despite this common feeling and goal of creating the personal political, individual women and organizations chose different issues to advocate. Organizations, and in particular their literature, educated women on different issues and inspired women to take control of their own bodies and to make choices independent of men. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, written by the women of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (BWHBC), was one of these influential and revolutionary pieces of literature which strove to "empower women with information about health, sexuality and reproduction. We [BWHBC] work in and for the public interest, promote equality between women and men, and build bridges among social justice movements" (*Our Bodies, Ourselves*). Both

the women who wrote the literature and the women who were empowered by it were significant to the development of, as Susan Brownmiller wrote, “a vivid piece of radical history that changed the world” (10).

The emergence of the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s occurred as a result of the many social organizations women joined. The 1960s and 1970s was an era of social change. William H. Chafe noted that “no movement shaped the 1960s generation as much as that of black Americans to secure full equality and justice” (Cott 531). This movement became known as the civil rights movement and was largely supported by women. Many women joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to fight discrimination of African Americans in a peaceful manner. Although the women were active in SNCC, they felt discriminated by men and were not able to hold prominent leadership roles (Cott 549). Women also felt disconnected and sexually segregated in the organization of Students for the Democratic Society (SDS). SDS also wanted to change the moderate ways of earlier decades and end racial and social injustices (Cott 531). Despite their efforts to end these social injustices, “Women made peanut butter, waited on table, cleaned up [and] got laid. That was their role” (qtd. in Cott 552). The women who participated in SDS and SNCC and other social reform organizations and movements learned the skills to lead a women’s rights movement. In May 1969, Nancy Hawley, a women’s rights and health activist, gave a workshop to women in which she explained the evolution of the women’s movement.

We have participated in seemingly endless protests against the Vietnam War and have shown our contempt for the puppet government in Saigon and our support for the popular National Liberation Front.

Yet we are only beginning to recognize how *we* as women have been oppressed by those same corporations, and how *we* as women have been treated as puppets by the male dominated Movement we've fought to be part of. (1)

Women were not only inspired by the injustices they faced in social organizations to join the women's liberation movement, but they were also motivated by the legislation passed during the era of great social change. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbade injustices and discrimination based on race. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, "discrimination in employment on the basis of race, creed, and national origin" (Evan 276) was prohibited, but Title VII did not include discrimination against women. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created under the Civil Rights Act but did not have the organization and power to effectively end discrimination of women in the work force. The failure of the EEOC and the discrimination of women not protected under Title VII, further motivated women to unite and form their own organizations devoted to their rights.

In addition to the social change beginning in the 1960s, there was a great cultural change from the 1950s. As Brett Harvey explained in the introduction of *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History*, women during the fifties were taught that "independence equaled loneliness" (xviii); therefore, they married at younger ages and had many children to occupy themselves. Despite legal changes which allowed women to work outside the home, during the 1950s a woman's role was to give up her dreams and to value her job as a perfect wife and mother (Friedan 18). Historian David Halberstam explained this cultural expectation for women in his book *The Fifties*, "the laws about married women

working might have changed, but the cultural attitudes had not” (589). The constant struggle to live up to “standards of feminine normality, feminine adjustment, feminine fulfillment, and feminine maturity” (Friedan 31) made women tired, bored, and discontent with their life, making them feel as if they had no personality or identity, and constantly questioning “Who am I?” (qtd. in Friedan 21). Feminist Betty Friedan answered their questions and taught women to challenge their traditional roles by leaving home in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan believed that women were confined by the “feminine mystique” of marriage and motherhood and they struggled to carry out their femininity (Foner 295). Friedan called this problem, the problem of a narrow women’s sphere, “The Problem That Has No Name” (Friedan 15). *The Feminine Mystique* liberated women to join social organizations and to leave the home to fulfill their lives through non-domestic work. The book influenced women so greatly that even after a year in publication, Joan Cook explained its impact in the *New York Times* saying, “in [*The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan] advanced the notion that modern women have been sold a bill of goods, domestically speaking, and there is a big difference between what women are and what they ought to be” (30).

Inspired by the social movements of the sixties and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, women of the 1960s and the 1970s began to lead their own liberation movement. Although the goal of the movement was liberation, within this one movement women debated on what they were liberating themselves from and how to achieve this liberation. In the historical book, *No Small Courage*, about women in America, William H. Chafe explained the differences within the women’s rights movement.

From the time the women's rights movement started...there had always been a division between those who believed fundamentally that women were *individuals* and should be treated exactly the same as men and those who believed women were different, biologically and psychologically, and should be allowed to act *collectively* to implement their distinctive mission" (Cott 554).

Because of these differences there was not only one aim of the women's liberation movement. Women wanted equality, abortion rights, availability of birth control, sexual freedom, better education and job opportunities, child care, better doctors and health care, and access to accurate health information.

In order to achieve these different aims, women joined organizations. These organizations, both national and local, "opened up the area of women's private lives to political analysis" (qtd. in Stalcup 195). There were many national organizations but the most influential, the National Organization for Women (NOW), was created by Betty Friedan in 1966. NOW declared that its purpose was, "To take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men" (qtd. in Evans 277). Through its activism, particularly with abortion and discrimination against women in the work force, NOW extended Betty Friedan's ideas to liberate women from their traditional role as homemakers and to create a society where men and women were equal. National magazines, such as *Ms. Magazine*, started by Gloria Steinam, also significantly contributed to educate and persuade women to join the liberation movement. "Unlike women's liberation newsletters, which were limited to a readership of insiders, *Ms.* extended the movement's message to a wider audience of unaffiliated sympathizers,"

wrote historian Nancy Woloch in *Women and the American Experience* (517). Just as NOW and *Ms.* did at a national level, local consciousness-raising groups also educated and encouraged women to join the movement. In consciousness-raising groups, women would share their personal experiences and “a group would learn to regard personal problems as ‘common problems with social causes and political solutions’” (qtd. in Woloch 516). By making the personal political, consciousness-raising groups allowed women the freedom to talk about the issues that were of most concern to them and provided the language and setting to do it. Although the aim of these groups was to create a solidarity and connection among women, many led to national organizations and publications. The most significant publication to the women’s health movement produced by the women’s rights movement, *Our, Bodies Ourselves*, emerged from consciousness-raising groups in Boston, Massachusetts.

In May 1969, a women’s rights group, Bread and Roses, sponsored a consciousness-raising group at Emmanuel College in Boston called “Women and Their Bodies.” In the discussion, women talked about their experiences with the health care system and their complacency with it. During the 1950s and 1960s the medical system’s “primary focus was on treating the disease, not the patient” (Freeman 151). Patients, in particular women, had little input on their treatments and were not given enough information about the treatments and their health; therefore, women felt alienated and confused about their bodies (Freeman 152). In the 1971 version of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the women wrote about this discontent.

We [women] have been given inadequate and often incorrect information on how our bodies function. We can’t get birth control, so thousands of us die each year

from illegal abortions. Childbirth is often a terrifying and inhumane experience.

These problems...are the results of a system designed to make profits, maintain a professional elite, and treat certain sick people, rather than deal with the problems of human beings and their illnesses. (123)

The women also discussed what a “good” doctor was, and discovered that there were none; therefore, they decided to learn about their bodies themselves (Boston Women’s Health Book Collective 1).

After researching assigned topics through medical textbooks, medical students, friends, and nurses, the women shared their topics to the group. Not only did their research contain medical information, but it “became illuminated by the personal stories of the researcher and of other women in the discussion group” (Freeman 156). In order to share their information and personal experiences, a collective of twelve women taught courses to other women about their bodies. The original intent of the courses was to give a course to one group of women who would, in turn, give a course to other women (Boston Women’s Health Book Collective 1). In addition, the twelve women wanted to educate women more broadly by publishing their research papers. The New England Free Press published their work in 1970 and the book educated women on contraception, abortion, sexuality, female physiology and anatomy, venereal disease, birth control, pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, as well as shared their experiences and political opinions. Women were nationally recognizing the importance of the book within years after publication, such that, in 1973 Elenore Lester wrote in *The New York Times*, “...the book is intended to be more than an updated self-help document in its field – it is issued as a manifesto stating that women are taking a step toward throwing off their chains by

daring to think about and write down their own version of their bodily experience” (1). The twelve women changed publishers to Simon and Schuster and incorporated to become the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective (BWHBC) in 1972. They continued to grow and add new medical information and new experiences throughout each edition. The 1973 version of the book proclaimed that “We are women and we are proud of being women. What we do want to do is reclaim the human qualities culturally labeled ‘male’ and integrate them with the human qualities that have been seen as ‘female’ so that we can all be fuller human people” (6).

Through *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, other consciousness-raising groups, and national organizations within the women’s liberation movement, women were empowered to take control of their own bodies. Women’s personal aim to control their bodies was made political through their struggle to nationally legalize abortion. Despite large controversy over the morality of abortion, many women wanted the legal right to choose to become a mother. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* educated women that “Abortion is our right – our right as women to control our bodies” (Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, 1971 ed., 61). However, due to restrictive laws, hospitals and doctors, high prices, and miseducation of women by the medical community, women were not taking control of their own bodies. The BWHBC also expressed their anger toward the double-standards of society in the 1971 edition, “The same public whose sex-filled media urge her to be sexy turns on her with a moralistic disapproval which isolates her and forces her to deal with her problem in secret” (61). The women’s health movement which *Our Bodies Ourselves* influenced, finally achieved one of its goals in the Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* in 1972 when Jane Roe challenged the Texas law prohibiting an abortion because her life was not in

danger. On October 11, 1972, attorney Sarah Weddington persuaded the court to legalize abortion during the first two trimesters of pregnancy. Weddington argued that “Abortion now, for women, is safer than childbirth” (qtd. in Hurley 148). Weddington reasoned that under the Ninth Amendment in which American citizens were given the right to life, liberty, and property, individuals have the “right to determine the course of their own lives” which included abortion (qtd. in Hurley 151). She also explained that pregnancy disrupted women’s lives, if unplanned, because women had to quit their jobs and were not guaranteed a job after the baby was born, women resorted to illegal abortions or self-abortions which had serious side-effects, even death, and many schools forced women to quit school (Hurley 149).

The women’s liberation and health movements’ fight for accurate and widespread information about women and their bodies is best illustrated by its demand for safer and labeled contraception. In 1920, Margaret Sanger championed the use of birth control through her founding of the first birth control clinic and the National Birth Control League. Sanger wrote in her book, *Women and the New Race*, “No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother” (qtd. in Stalcup 153). By 1960, the Food and Drug Administration approved the birth control pill and the use of “the pill” was widespread, making “it possible for women to separate sexuality and procreation” (Evans 282). *Our Bodies, Ourselves* reported that in 1969 women took \$120 million worth of birth control pills (ed. 1971, 40). Despite the widespread use and availability, drug companies did not label the product to inform women of the potentially hazardous effects of contraception. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* further educated women by

explaining, “It has been estimated that 132 is fewer than the number of women who will die in 1970 from the blood clotting by the pill” (ed. 1971, 40). The book, as well as the work of other organizations, such as the National Women’s Health Network, and other authors, including Barbara Seaman in her book *Women and the Crisis in Sex Hormones*, motivated women to demand warning labels on contraception (Donovan). In 1977, after the Food and Drug Administration urged drug companies to put labels on “all drugs containing estrogen,” a suit was brought against the FDA challenging its authority to require labeling but the court ruled in favor of the FDA saying that “female patients have a right to know that the oral contraceptives and estrogen replacement therapies prescribed by physicians contain substances known to cause cancer and blood clots in certain people” (Donovan). With the help of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the women’s liberation movement furthered the ability of women to have children and to take control of their sexuality through safe, effective contraception.

The aims of the women’s liberation movement to make birth control more accessible and safe, legalize and make abortions affordable, allow women the freedom to be sexual, create a better health care system, and the various other aims of the movement, were created from and built upon the previous achievements and failures of women in the prior two centuries. Abigail Adams, the foremother of the women’s rights movement, attempted to persuade John Adams to give women representation and equal rights under the Declaration of Independence in 1776. She wrote, “Remember the Ladies...if particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation” (qtd. in Stalcup 27). Despite her efforts, from the beginning of the

United States of America, men were deemed the superior sex. Thus began the struggles of women to be equally represented.

In the nineteenth century, it was thought by Professor Thomas R. Dew and most men, that due to the physical strength of men, they had more active roles, while a woman's naturally weaker body "confine[d] her within the domestic circle" and made her more passive (qtd. in Stalcup 49). Despite their limiting domestic sphere, women challenged their roles in the first women's rights movement during the mid-1800s. In 1845, Margaret Fuller wrote in her book, *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, "there exists in the minds of men a tone of feeling towards women as towards slaves" (qtd. in Stalcup 58). As women fought for the freedom and rights of African Americans, just as women later did in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, women in their organizations began to understand the repression of women and their confining roles and developed the skills necessary for their own movement. The women of the first women's rights movement, in accordance with the women's liberation movement, did not have one common aim to liberate themselves and gain rights. Women such as Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Blackwell, the first female to receive her doctorate degree in 1849, advocated educational reform and higher educational opportunities for women. Other women were active in dress, job and working conditions, and marriage reform. But the true foremothers of the idea of making the personal the political during the women's liberation movement were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. In 1848, these two women, with the help of other activists, gathered a group of women together at the Seneca Falls Convention to discuss the problems women faced and to encourage and teach women about their rights. They drew upon the Declaration of Independence to

create a Declaration of Sentiments which listed women's grievances and declared that "there could be 'no happiness without freedom'" (qtd. in Foner 81).

The Civil War during 1861 to 1865 ended the first women's rights movement as women focused on the war effort. However, the resulting Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments granting suffrage to African Americans influenced the aims of women to advocate women's suffrage. As Historian Nancy Woloch said, "the suffrage movement became the center of an unparalleled spurt of feminist activism, just as the vote became the symbol of women's rights [and] the greatest testimony to the symbolic power of the vote... was the length of the fight to achieve it, longer than any comparable reform campaign..." (Woloch 325). This movement started in 1860 and lasted until 1920 when women were finally granted suffrage through the Nineteenth Amendment.

After women were given the right to vote, the aims of women were, yet again, broad. Some women, such as the "flappers" of the 1920's were "more interested in private life than in public affairs, more attuned to competition than cooperation, more interested in self-fulfillment than in social service" (Woloch 381). Other women focused on factory reform for all, temperance, and prison reform. In 1923 the National Woman's Party, led by Alice Paul, proposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), wanting men and women to have equal rights at home and in the workforce. The ERA was never passed but many women during the women's liberation movement furthered Alice Paul's work by continuing to propose the ERA to Congress.

The foremothers of the women's liberation movement established a path for the women in the sixties and seventies to follow. Women learned from these founders the concept of organizing and joining together to make the personal political, the idea that

women can fight one movement through different organizations, aims, and literature, and the vision to not only change their “piece of the pie [, but to] change the recipe [for all human beings]” (Norsigian 18). When writing *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective explained this goal of the women’s rights movement, and the goal of their book.

The goal of this pamphlet, and of the Women’s Liberation movement, is to help us move toward a world in which human relationships can be more free, more satisfying. This means freedom from the damaging effects of a traditional sexual caste system; it means freedom from class and racial oppression, and it means freedom for all from want and from alienating work. (ed. 1971, 24)

Just as the women activists of the liberation movement were impacted by the women activists of the first women’s rights movement, so are the women of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century influenced by the work of the women’s liberation movement and the women who wrote *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. “There was nothing else like [*Our Bodies, Ourselves*]. This book had changed how women all over the world view their bodies and their health care” wrote Jenny Ogier in *Whole Life Times* (1). The most significant contribution of the book was to educate women, empowering them to control their own bodies and health through self-help, and to make women aware of the problems with the health care system, empowering them to better evaluate health institutions (Ogier 2). “Health and health care are no longer the preserves of specialist.... Researching the people’s health means attending to many voices and making use of multiple perspectives.’ We see a blurring of the distinction between ‘the people’

and ‘the professionals’” (qtd. in Freeman 165). The Boston Women’s Health Book Collective not only focused on self-help through *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, but they created health care clinics, became active in the National Women’s Health Network, and helped establish the Office of Research on Women’s Health within the National Institute of Health. They also wrote various other books, pamphlets, and translations within the United States and internationally and continued to update *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to include menopause, growing older, homosexuality, nutrition, relationship between mental and physical health, and various other health chapters. Members of the BWHBC, Judy Norsigian and Wendy Coppedge Sanford, wrote about the work of the BWHBC and how it contributed and fit into the women’s liberation movement.

In both our work and our way of working, we see our group as part of the larger women’s movement....running through our work on health and parenting issues is a wider vision of social change – a dream of eliminated the exploitation and suffering that result from racism, sexism, classism, and oppressive economic and political systems. (18)

Although there were many aims of the women’s liberation movement, the movement in its entirety took steps to give not only women, but all people more rights and control over their bodies. The women of the movement accomplished this through organizations and literature to protest and advocate change, bringing personal problems into public analysis. The Boston Women’s Health Book Collective influenced these changes through *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the many other organizations and

publications they were active in. Their work, along with the work of other activists, is best illustrated through a women's liberation and abortion song in the 1970s.

My body is mine to control

And my mind defines the rage inside me

Every woman is my sister and my leader when she says

That she will stand and fight beside me (Pincus)

Through songs and other literature and women's groups, the women's liberation movement allowed women to come together to make changes and to question their rights and roles in society.

## [Table of Contents](#)

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

**Interviewee/Narrator:** Jane Pincus

**Interviewer:** Chelsea Whittaker

**Location:** Gillie Campbell and Mike Seltz's home, Alexandria, Virginia

**Date:** January 4, 2004

This interview was reviewed and edited by Ms. Pincus

**Chelsea Whittaker:** This is Chelsea Whittaker and I am interviewing Jane Pincus as part of the American Century Oral History Project. The interview took place on January 4, 2004 at Gillie Campbell and Mike Seltz's house in Alexandria, Virginia. What was your childhood like, particularly being a girl growing up in the 1940s and 1950s?

**Jane Pincus:** Ah, childhood. I grew up outside of New York City, about twenty miles outside of New York City in Westchester County. I lived in a large, old farmhouse. A fairly isolated life. My mother and father's marriage wasn't particularly happy. I had two brothers. Let's see, what specifically do you want to know?

**CW:** Particularly growing up in the forties and fifties?

**JP:** Growing up in the forties and fifties in a way was a lot simpler than it is now, at least for, I guess, white middle class people. I read a lot, about thirty books a month. My mother was quite liberal. She was a democrat. She is a democrat. She had a picture of FDR on her wall. And she was part of the United World Federalists, which had liberal political leanings. She was one of the people during the Second World War who would go out onto rooftops to check for bombers coming over us. So she did that kind of thing in the Second World War.

I went to a private school. It was a wonderful school, about a half-hour away from where I lived. Every year we studied a different culture, and we really immersed ourselves in the cultures. Third grade, we studied Indians, American Indians. In the

fourth grade, Egyptians. Fifth, Greeks and Romans. Sixth, medieval times. Seventh and eighth, American history. We worked at “arithmetic,” spelling, etc. in the morning. Then in the afternoon we had drama, we put on lots of plays, we did somersaults in rhythms, sang lots of music, had shop, things like that. It was a very exciting school to go to and it really stimulated our imaginations.

My dad was a businessman. He had a textile company with his brothers. He was away during every day and was very focused on getting money because he was marked by the Depression, as a lot of people were at that time. Many folks had just emerged from the miseries of the Depression, had been very poor, and were very afraid of not having enough money. They knew what it was like not to have money. So he was focused on making money.

**CW:** You mentioned your mother before. Did she have any influence on you to be involved in women’s rights and women’s liberation?

**JP:** She must have. She influenced me because of her liberal political leanings and her interests. In the 1960s, after I had left home, she became very involved with the civil rights movement because my brother had gone down to Mississippi to organize with African Americans for voting rights. She became involved with a group of parents whose kids had gone to Mississippi. So she always did something like that. So she influenced me.

My father probably influenced me in an opposite direction: Although he was a very kind and generous man, there were things he said he stood for I really couldn’t stand. For instance, he owned a small apartment building and had a hard time when African Americans wanted to move in. They even took him to a hearing, or to court,

because he was the landlord, and I was absolutely stunned that he would mind that, and that he would discriminate. So to counter his outlook, I did not want to act and believe as he did. I had my mother's, more or less, positive image, and a more positive direction. And thus, I was always answering my father, answered him back (laughs).

**CW:** You said your mom worked some...

**JP:** She didn't work, my mom never worked for money. She was always cared for by my father. He was the one who made the money, she never had to earn money. Her father was a Russian Jew who had emigrated from Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. He had been a peddler, had gradually worked himself up to own a real-estate business in Brooklyn, New York. During the Depression she and her family didn't worry at all, which was very rare. They scarcely felt it. And so she's always been cared for, in that way.

**CW:** When I was doing my research I had to go all the way back to the eighteenth century...

**JP:** Oh you did, really?

**CW:** and talk about women and their roles. And that is what I am focusing on – women's rights and women's liberation. The fifties was a time of regression and I read a lot about it. I read historian David Halberstam's *The Fifties*, and he mentioned the fifties as a "ten year PTA meeting." Would you agree with that statement?

**JP:** (Laughs) Going to high school and college in the fifties, what did we wear? We wore dickies under sweaters, and skirts, bobby socks, and loafers with pennies in them, or saddle shoes. If you went out, you had to put on hats, a garter belt, maybe a girdle, long stockings, and crinolines. You had to wear a slip. You were very afraid of body odor! I

would go to school sometimes with adhesive under my arms to keep from sweating. And it was a time when communists were scary and anti-communism was strong. At one of the high schools I went to, the teachers could barely whisper the word Russia, they were so scared, a lot of people were scared of being labeled communists and of losing their jobs.

But I was not that aware of politics. My mother was fascinated, as was a great part of the nation, by the McCarthy hearings on television. She was much more politically aware than I was. I do remember looking through the newspapers hoping to find a newspaper that didn't mention war. The Second World War was what I think of as my war, because it was the war I lived through as a child. We had blackouts, ration books, victory gardens, and lots of war news in the background. But when you're growing during a particular time period, you don't think of it as dull or "PTA meeting". You're growing up and you're falling in love, and you're having problems with your friends or good times with your friends, all the joys and plateaus and agonies of being alive. It's a very rich life. We probably ate much better food than people get to eat today. You had meat, vegetable, and starch on your plate each night. No way did people make the fine distinctions between foods that they make today. It just was a simpler time than now.

**CW:** You mentioned that your mom was politically involved in civil rights. Were you involved as you grew up and became more politically aware?

**JP:** I became involved in college with the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], which was the most radical civil rights organization there at the time. I also remember in elementary school a kind of odd occurrence when the White Plains Urban League put on some kind of pageant. Myself and my two friends,

all three of us little white girls, learned the Negro national anthem. (Singing) “Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring” and we acted it out, I think, wearing sheets, standing on a table with our hands gracefully waving around and all these mostly middle-aged African American people sitting around us. I think back on that and wondered how they could have put up with these little white girls singing the Negro national anthem, which is very moving and very beautiful. When I went to college, I did some work with the NAACP. I also came back from my junior year in France with a much larger idea about the world, and began to meet graduate students from other countries. There was a graduate student group at Brown, I went to Pembroke College at Brown University. The people there were different from us students and very interesting. In general when you went to college in those days, most women went to college to find a husband. Of course, a number of women stood out, who looked and acted different, but back then it was not easy to be different.

**CW:** Did you feel as if it was hard for you? Were you different in any way?

**JP:** I always felt different from other people. I always felt fairly lonely, very shy, very poetic, kind of always in the clouds. So again it’s that thing where you think that in the fifties everybody was the same and when you talk about it you find out how complicated things really are behind all these later summings up of what the times were like.

**CW:** What was your college experience like? Can you elaborate on that, being a young woman particularly in college and even abroad to Paris and seeing the world?

**JP:** I didn’t really take my learning as seriously as I could’ve. I did well in some courses and not in others. It was just at a time when new ways of teaching and learning were coming about. They had courses called I.C. courses, the Identification and Criticism of

ideas, which resembled the courses today, much more free-flowing than standard courses. I had learned French from elementary school on, I think going to Paris my junior year was a very incredible experience for me. Well, going to college was incredible too because I had never lived amongst so many people in one place. It was very heady, I had a wonderful time in a lot of ways. Paris was absolutely aesthetically beautiful. I would walk through the streets, along the river Seine, and absorb the light and the lines of the buildings, but I was also excruciatingly lonely. I've been lonely for a long time in my life... I'm not lonely anymore (laughs). It's taken me many years to get over those feelings. When I came back to college after my junior year abroad, I studied more seriously, wrote a long thesis on Andre Malveaux, the art historian and a really important man in France at that time.

Then I left college and really didn't know what to do with myself or my life. I took me a very long time to have a sense of myself as the author of my own life. I applied to three post-graduate schools, got into all of them, didn't get notified about any of them. Finally I went to find out what had happened and met with someone who said, "Look you've applied to graduate school in French, to Teachers College, and to art school. You have gotten into all three. Make up your mind what you want to do." So I studied art at Columbia University in New York City for one year. Then, still not quite knowing what life I was about, I got married in 1960 and went with my husband then to Italy for a year where we lived just outside of Pisa. We came back to Cambridge [Massachusetts] which was a really important move for us. There, I went to Harvard School of Education, and got a MAT in teaching French to high school students. I became a high school teacher for a few years, in French.

**CW:** How did being a teacher, which is usually known as a typically feminine job...

**JP:** Yeah, right (laughs).

**CW:** How did that affect your involvement with women's rights at all? Or did it?

**JP:** Oh it must have. I was lucky enough to teach at Wellesley Senior High School, which is outside of Boston. It was a fairly wealthy community. The teachers couldn't afford to live there. When I was a teacher, I had two senior classes. They were absolutely wonderful because the students in each of the classes were such individuals. They loved me because I was not much older than they were. And I, who still considered myself different, had long hair. I'd wear it up at school, and I'd wear stockings. I purposely looked quite, quite ordinary. But it was at a time when things were just starting to become a little more exciting for everybody, it was just a little bit before what they call the sixties really started...the mid-sixties. Every once in a while they'd say, "Mrs. Pincus, let your hair down!" (Laughing) And I'd let it down. My second year of teaching was not so good because the students did not seem to have strong characters or a good sense of themselves. They weren't really developed people at that point. After two years, I became pregnant and had my daughter in 1965. I taught a little bit more at Northeastern University after my daughter was born.

I was writing poetry at the time, that's what I was doing personally. Politically, we demonstrated against the Vietnam War. We would do testing for the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE]. That is, we'd go into apartments where black people had gone to see if they could rent an apartment and had been refused. We would go into the same apartment as whites, using our whiteness to find out whether there was discrimination. I would pretend to love the apartment. We were pretending that we were going to rent it to

see if the landlord discriminated against black people. It was an exciting and interesting thing to do, I thought. I also started to get involved in draft counseling in the sixties, as there were many young men who didn't want to go into the Vietnam War. Those are some of the things I did in the sixties, politically.

**CW:** You were involved in all of these political movements, like Vietnam, how did you change from doing that and move into working with women's rights?

**JP:** Well what happened in the sixties, which was so interesting, was that there were a lot of male dominated political groups...and these just happened to be the people that we met. It's hard to describe. Women started to see that they, in these groups, were the ones who were doing the typing and making the coffee and so forth. In Cambridge, while we were involved in having our children and doing some of this work, a group of women who'd been involved in very political groups, like SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], got together to talk about their lives apart from politics. And then, it was almost organic. Women started to get together to talk about themselves and to share their life experiences.

There was an organization called Bread and Roses, which was a large group of women at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. They had an office up these long flights of stairs. I remember meeting there, and I even had audio-tapes at some point. I remember a bunch of women talking about how they felt about their bodies, their breasts. I also became part of a group that we called our Personal Group. There were ten of us. We would meet every week to talk about our very turbulent lives. Then I got involved in women's health because some of my friends, who'd had just had children...we were politically involved. We started to get together and that was when we made up the

“Doctor’s List” I sent you and told you about...how we defined a good doctor, we didn’t know what kind of questions to ask doctors, so why not learn, ourselves. Over the summer we decided...this is ‘69, this is after my son was born...that we were going to write, learn about actually, not even write, about our health care. In the fall of ’69, we met to talk about getting information together. It was very exciting. At that point we were a large fluid, free-floating group, a lot of women. There was something in the air that’s hard to describe now, a wonderful feeling of being together. You have that too. One of the times I was in Washington was in ‘65 in an anti-war march. Huge crowds! Joan Baez singing and Pete Seger singing up in the band stand. And the marches, we would go on lots of marches. The other thing that was coming into our consciousness was the issue of abortion. I remember hearings at the Massachusetts state house. I think we even went to state house meetings of the Massachusetts legislature. So that people were coming together around all these women’s issues. It was a kind of a magic time. Also it was a time, I think, when the country itself was rich economically. And when you felt all things were possible, and it was possible to change the world, truly. I was in my thirties. For me this was almost like a second adolescence, full of hope. Because during adolescence, which can be really tough, I know, you do often think things are possible.

**CW:** You talked about before feeling out of place and lonely. Did working with these other women, getting together, and joining with them, did that help you overcome that?

**JP:** Some of it, yeah. Yes and no. I mean loneliness has been something I’ve struggled with for a long time. But yes, it was marvelously engrossing. I keep journals and when I re-read them...the lives that we led, they were so incredibly rich. Although I still could be lonely anywhere those days (laughs). My husband says, “You know, you could be

lonely in the middle of the city.” It took a long time for my sense of self to develop strongly. I wish it had happened sooner. But it was very exciting, really. At the same time as my son was born and as I got involved in our personal group, and also in what became the work group for *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, I was becoming an artist, batiking beautiful pictures out of wax and dyes and cloth. It was just an enormous time.

**CW:** So did that lonely feeling make you want to join these groups?

**JP:** Not so, no. Being part of the groups wasn’t a way not to be lonely, it was what life was about, really.

**CW:** Would you talk to me about, I know we’ve talked before, a little bit about *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, how you got started, and how you ended up creating this wonderful and radical book?

**JP:** When I look back, I’ll do it chronologically. When I got pregnant with my daughter and went to the “best doctors in town” [interviewee’s quotation] and did Lamaze, “natural childbirth,” do you know what that is? That is a way of breathing during labor. I didn’t know that when I was finally was going to have my baby, I would choose to have her in a way that was very unnatural. I was going for natural childbirth. I went to my doctor in the morning on December 14<sup>th</sup> and he said you can either have your baby today or you can wait till labor begins. Now, obviously, I know now that one should wait till labor begins. Instead, I said, “That’s a medical decision, you make it.” But that was not really a medical decision. I should *not* have let my doctor decide. What did I know at the time? So I went in and I had my labor induced. Meaning, I got shots of Pitocin to speed up contractions. I had my bag of waters broken, which is another intervention. When you entered the hospital in those days, they gave you an enema and, at the beginning of labor,

they shaved your pubic region. Afterwards, when I counted all the interventions, I came up with ten of them, although I *was* conscious during the whole time. My labor was not functional. I'd had tetanic contractions, meaning they were too strong. I was in labor for four hours, which isn't very long. What I didn't know at the time was first I was getting Pitocin to speed up my labor, then they gave me Demerol to slow it down. They had to pull my daughter out with forceps and she was blue and not oxygenated. She ended up being fine. I didn't find out about the Demerol slowing the labor down until I was pregnant with my son a few years later when I asked something about my records and he [the doctor] told me the sequence of events during my first labor. I said, "That's not my record, I didn't get Demerol. That's somebody else's record." He said, "No this is yours." I discovered that, and over the next few years, I found out, through my work in women's health, how dangerous the way I had Sami [daughter of Jane Pincus] was, the dangers of Pitocin, of induction, and basically that I had risked her life. It was not quite an established medical procedure then, and most obstetrical procedures are not scientifically proven to be best for the mother. What happens is the physicians just have them available and they do them, though they are not proven beneficial for most women. It's true today too, more than ever.

As for the beginnings of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*: I went away the summer of '69 after my son was born. My friends at home decided who would learn about which subject regarding our health. Because I had just been pregnant, I got the subject of "pregnancy" to explore. That's where I started to learn about these things, really. We'd meet every week, a bunch of us. We'd sit and talk about our bodies, ourselves. Somebody would ask a question...relate some facts I'd found about pregnancy and a woman would ask, "What

would my lover feel about me if I was pregnant?" There were so many things that I certainly had never thought about and there were few, if any, books with this kind of information. We would gather this info together, then at the beginning of '70, that was when we all began to meet at MIT. Such gatherings were happening throughout the country. Ours, in fact was a little tamer than the ones in California, where women were starting to do self-exams, pelvic self-exams, meeting and getting naked in groups, that kind of thing. We were, I guess, much more academically inclined (laughs) or something. Then we gave that course I told you about. Do you want to hear about it again?

**CW:** Sure.

**JP:** At MIT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Because at that time a number of my friend's husbands were professors at MIT, actually mine was too (laughs). We got to use the facilities. It was an absolutely mind boggling, heady time to meet together in a room to talk about personal issues that nobody had ever discussed before. There were tables covered with flyers about political events. And women too talked about having felt isolated as they were growing up, incapable of talking or learning about things that were happening to them, to their bodies. There really had been no language for that kind of thing, no way of getting together, at least among the people I knew. There was this huge expansion of knowledge and a huge feeling of connection with other women. Then the idea was to would get a lot of information and then share it with another group of women. Then, we didn't have group leaders, and we didn't call them consciousness-raising groups. Up at the Bread and Roses office there was a notebook with the names of people and about twenty-five women's groups around Boston who were meeting in these

personal groups. I think I did go to one or two as a kind of facilitator. But it was a leaderless time too, with everyone equal.

That time of expansion really didn't last very long into the seventies, from my point of view. There's actually a really interesting article I should find for you about the women's movement in the seventies. The really heady time lasted, I don't know, maybe, '71, '72. Then, once women started to feel independent, a number of them divorced. This had been volunteer work that we did, plus we were raising our children. After women left their husbands or their husbands left them, they had to go and earn a living. A lot of things kind of scrunched down for women as they had less and less time to be involved in, at least the women I knew, this kind of political activism.

But we kept going, our group, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.... Well I told you, do you want it for the tape, the story? You do, okay.... So we met all during 1970, and well into the eighties. The two women from the New England Free Press, the radical press I told you about, run by very male chauvinist men (laughs), very politically oriented in that they wrote or produced pamphlets about socialism and communism and the "third contradiction" and the "second contradiction." Two women who worked there, who'd been to the original meetings at MIT, wanted to gather the information that we were discovering and making into a booklet. Actually Gillie [Campbell, friend of Jane Pincus whose house the interview took place at] has the first book. I can show it to you, the very first book. So they were responsible for producing, via the Free Press, the first edition called *Women and Their Bodies*, which we contributed, I think, three hundred dollars to produce, to create. It came out and absolutely took off. It cost seventy-five cents. The Free Press didn't believe in making a profit. Everything was cut down to the bare limit. I

don't know where they got their money, actually. Eventually the book just fit in with the desire for self-knowledge that was happening throughout the country. Colleges would buy copies for all their incoming freshman and would put them in their mail boxes when they first arrived at school. The Free Press started sending out their little list of pamphlets, via our book. In fact, we had to hire someone to send the books out because the Free Press couldn't handle the volume of requests. It basically sold a quarter of a million copies just by word-of-mouth. It was amazing. Then we decided to go with a bigger press, for we wanted more distribution. Even so, we didn't really know, for we had no idea that so many people were receiving our book, we had no idea.

What we did know was, as the book went out, and because we invited readers to add their own experiences, was that people were writing us like crazy with their own experiences. I became friendly, through letters, with a woman who wrote in, said she had an ectopic pregnancy, for instance. She said, "You didn't write anything about this." I replied, "Okay, what happened?" She wrote us her experience. She was an amazing woman. Her name was Mary Elizabeth, that was the name she chose...no last name. She was twenty-three. She had had an ectopic pregnancy, in which the embryo starts to grow in the fallopian tube and eventually bursts and it can be very dangerous, and had an emergency operation. Then she'd gotten sterilized, which was, at that time, amazing, for she was so young, against her doctor's wishes. No, she must have had a kid, she had a son. *Then* she got sterilized and then she left her son with her mother, went off and left him, worked in a factory, and traveled to New Mexico. She was an astonishing woman because she did all these things on her own. Sent me a photograph of herself. So we'd start amazing correspondences with people who would write to us. I was in therapy at the

time and I went to a therapy group, meeting a woman who said, “You don’t have anything in the book about miscarriage, really. And I had just had a miscarriage.” I said, “Sure, okay, write about it and we’ll add it to the book.” That’s how *Our Bodies, Ourselves* grew, really from lots of women’s experiences. And, imagine, it was originally not meant to be a book at all.

When we decided to go with a larger press, the guys at the Free Press...there was one guy who’d broken off and wanted to publish the book, but we didn’t want to take the risk of starting up his press with our book. The Free Press became very angry with us, saying, “You want to leave us, go with a capitalist publisher. Awful things are going to happen. They’ll censor your words. Don’t do it.” They placed letters in the back of the various editions of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. By the way, the title changed from *Women and Their Bodies* to *Women and Our Bodies* and then became *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, because that was the closest we could get word-wise to identifying ourselves with our bodies. We wanted to bring everything together, body and soul. So the Free Press would put a letter in one edition and then we would write a letter in the next, saying, “we’re going to do this anyway and this is why.” And then, in the following edition they’d write a letter saying, “You shouldn’t do this.” (Laughs). They didn’t want to lose us either, of course, because we were a main source of money for them. And we ourselves didn’t take any money personally. Now that I think about it, where did it all go...to the Free Press? I think so.

Anyway, the bigger presses began to court us because they knew they could make money, they’d have a hit! Pantheon was one. A really cute guy came to one group meeting. My husband’s freshman year college roommate worked at Simon and Schuster,

his name was Jon Dolger. So the Simon and Schuster people came to another meeting and we talked with them. I think we really scared them. Feminists, too scary! (Laughs). And Random House, also. Finally we had to choose between Simon and Schuster and Random House. We chose Simon and Schuster. We had to vote. Usually we did everything by consensus. This is the only time we ever voted, six to four...I guess there were only ten people there at the time....We voted for Simon and Schuster because they were not owned by a larger company as Random House was, yet. Then they got bought by Gulf and Western, and now they're Viacom or something. The Simon and Schuster editor, Alice Mayhew, was younger, which was sort of a point in her favor. The editor, Charlotte, at Random House, who was older, actually later became good friends with a number of people in the Health Book Collective<sup>1</sup>. So we went with Simon and Schuster. We re-wrote everything, of course. We had to get new pictures. A lot of the photographs in the first edition are basically home photographs of ourselves with our children in various family configurations. We were really left free to do what ever we wanted, to write anything we wanted. Alice Mayhew, in the Simon and Schuster edition, did practically no editing work, so the words were totally our own. Which I think made it attractive and interesting. There was an editor at one point. We called her "blue pencil" because if we wrote, "I felt I had to pee," she would change the "pee" to "urinate." We'd just change it back to "pee" because that's how people really talk (laughs). We rescued the text from "blue pencil." That was the 1973 Simon and Schuster edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* with red block letters on the cover and a large picture of three women holding a sign that says "Women Unite."

---

<sup>1</sup> The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. The original founders of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* incorporated in 1972 before they were published by Simon and Schuster. See Appendix 1.

**CW:** I actually have that book.

**JP:** Oh you do? Of the three women, the older woman was a feminist, it turned out. I don't know who the second woman was. The third woman actually wrote us a letter and said, "You have my picture on your cover." I think that she had some problems with it, I can't remember what. But people would come up to her and say, "Hey your picture's on the cover of this book" (laughs). That was the first edition. Simon and Schuster... again it was when everyone was flush, had a lot of money. They sent us two by two all over the country. We stayed in wonderful hotels (laughs). And we talked on radio, television, to newspapers, we gave a lot of interviews.

**CW:** When you were interviewed did you talk about the book or were you teaching women...

**JP:** It was always a combination of the two. People, women especially, were very excited. And women reporters would be thrilled. Talking, in a way, was teaching and learning as everybody identified with the book and told their own stories. That happened to me a few years ago. I'd given money to Vermont Public Radio. It was kind of a hefty sum and whoever was in charge of hefty sum givers came to visit. I have a picture on the wall, Vilunya<sup>2</sup> had made me of covers of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. This woman walked in, saw that, and immediately told me a heart-rending story about how she had been raped. The picture of the book covers unlocked her own personal experience. So that has happened so often. Generally, it was very exciting.

**CW:** Did you put your own experiences in the book, particularly about your childbirth and your miscarriage?

---

<sup>2</sup> Diskin. A founder of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and friend of Jane Pincus.

**JP:** Absolutely, that was what was so incredibly compelling. Everything that happened became a learning experience, and then we could put it to use by writing it down. I had had an abnormal Pap smear once and learned everything that I could at the time about abnormal Pap smears. I did get laparoscopy, i.e. tubal ligation, in 1973, so I couldn't bear anymore children. That was my choice, I wrote a page about that. At the end of the childbirth chapter, I wrote about my experience of having given birth to my daughter, how beautiful it was to lie there afterwards and to think, "I have a daughter, it's so wonderful!" And then I also vowed to enable women too, to understand their own experiences. The anger I felt when I learned about the things that I had allowed to be done to me because of my ignorance. I was angry for a very long time, an anger that fueled a lot of the energy I had to work to better women's health care. I had such a wish to make things better, especially in the area of maternity care, labor, birth, pregnancy.

**CW:** *Our Bodies, Ourselves* covers everything from nutrition, female anatomy, and childbirth. As a whole, what do you think the message of the book is?

**JP:** The message of the book is to gather as much information as we can about ourselves, to share that information, to value each woman's experience, to make it possible for women to act together. We always stressed doing things together. If you go to go to your doctor, bring a friend along. It can backfire sometimes, it did with me once. At that time we believed we could change the medical system, that once we told our doctor what we needed, we learned the right foods to eat, and we stressed that women must have choices, then the world would come around and see that it was obviously the humane and reasonable thing to do. We're still struggling now towards the same goals, how many years later? Thirty four years later.

**CW:** When you wrote this book, what was your feeling about your own body?

**JP:** My feeling about my own body? Every once in a while I feel wonderful and at one with myself. But when I look at my body from the outside I'd be very critical of myself, as I think most women are. I have facilitated a number of body image workshops over the past few years at women's studies conferences. It was very interesting to talk to the attendees about the process I'd gone through as I thought about what to wear that morning. We had interesting discussions about the kinds of things that women think about how they look, how they want to look. But I'm not sure such discussions helped me love my body more. I'm sure it helped other people. In one of the later editions of the book, the 1984 edition, there is a photograph of a woman who had breast cancer...she's like that (spreading her arms out), she's naked and one breast is gone. And we got some flack for that. Here was a woman who felt fine with just one breast and didn't mind it being seen, whereas a lot of women were getting extra padding or special bras. I think there's always going to be that dialog within a woman. I don't know, do you have friends who don't think about how they look (laughs)?

**CW:** No, I think that all women feel that.

**JP:** Yeah, I think there's always an ongoing dialog, an inner dialog, a dialog with the world, with the media, with people who say, "You should feel wonderful, be proud of who you are, you're beautiful, etc.," along with all the little voices that are transmitted, I think through the media, about how you *should* look. I'm fascinated, for instance, with people's teeth, these days, on television. They're not normal teeth because everyone's wearing caps. So it's not that you say, "Oh wow, this knowledge is going to transform my image of myself." I think it helps. But I see the process of accepting oneself as a

continuum, especially as one gets older, because it's hard to look older in this society and still appreciate oneself. I know, I have friends who say they do. They say, "Oh you look much more beautiful now than you did when you were twenty, right?" But I see it as an ongoing process of self-acceptance. Still there might be a beautiful moonlight night and you're walking naked into the waves and you feel like a goddess! It's up and down.

**CW:** You may not have become more self confident, but did you feel empowered by writing *Our Bodies, Ourselves*?

**JP:** Oh yeah, of course. It felt like being at the center of the world, it really did. The most exciting thing was that if something happened you take the experience, you learn about it, gather it together as much as you can, and then you offer it to somebody else if they want it, if they can use it. And that process kept happening. It's still happening. Yeah, I mean that empowerment...the feeling that you were useful and that your words had strength and power, when people come up and tell you, "My God, your book changed my life." It's a gift to have had it mean so many things to people.

**CW:** To go back a little, I was reading the 1973 edition and I was fascinated. In the preface, it said, "Most of us feel that unlike what we were promised in childhood, we were not totally fulfilled by marriage (a man), and/or motherhood (a child), and/or a (typically feminine) job." Did you feel as if you were not totally fulfilled?

**JP:** No, working on the book and also doing my art, which was really important, were both fulfilling. I would alternate between them. I couldn't do both at once. To start to write a book you really have to do a lot of writing in order to be able to make the writing flow. So I couldn't work in my studio one day and then write the book the next because each requires a different state of mind. There would be chunks of time when I'd work in

my studio and chunks of time when we were redoing the books. We were always rewriting it from year to year, pretty much. The world has always seemed incredibly rich to me. I've never felt limited...bringing up children at that time, we didn't pay our children the kind of attention people pay their children today. I wished in a way I had, I think that would've been better for them. There was so much going on. I had to grow up myself. Now, I see a lot more young parents who are much more mature than I was back then. On the other hand, maybe it wasn't a terrible thing. Our lives were very, very interesting.

**CW:** How did your husband respond to...

**JP:** He [Ed Pincus] was always...he was funny...he was always really positive about what I did. A group called the Arlington Street Women's Chorus sang strong, tuneful songs. And there was that free feeling...I remember, one day I took off my wedding ring, I wasn't going to wear it anymore. And when I told him about it, he said, "I think I'll call my mother." (Laughs) I thought that was incredibly funny. The connection is a little vague between the two, or maybe it's really *not* so vague. He was supportive. On the other hand, he and I both had work to do. He was a filmmaker and a film teacher, he taught filmmaking at the time at MIT. During the first year, before the book was published, I was working on a film about abortion with three other women. I would work in his film studio. When it would come time for one of us to go home and take care of the kids, sometimes I would resent that it had to be me. "Why can't it be you, why does it have to be me?" That kind of thing. But he was always really supportive, very proud. We would discuss all of the ins and outs of being part of a group of people, the Collective. I would tell him about what was going on. The men of the women of the group were all

involved with what was happening because we all, of course, had problems, personal problems, political differences. Our group was supposed to be leaderless, yet, of course, there is always somebody who “leads” in a leaderless group. All of those things would go on. And he’s good friends with some of the women in the Collective who love him dearly. He’s been great, he really has.

**CW:** You mentioned you had some problems having a leaderless group with a leader. As your organization grew what were the problems, if any?

**JP:** I don’t really think, growing up, that we learned how to live well in communities, and do things for each other. I remember I was planning to have my tubal ligation which was going to end my childbearing years. I came to the group and told them, “I’m going to have this operation, and we need to talk about it.” One woman said, “I can’t talk about it, for I haven’t even had children yet.” So sometimes we’d let each other down. Our group wasn’t only a work group, it was a personal group too, where we’d talk about their lives in detail. For some of the women it was their only personal group. So, a woman would be maybe leaving her husband and maybe not getting the support she needed from the people she’d become very close to. Over the years, we learned how to celebrate others or to support them. Graphically, I think we sort of wove many-colored ribbons around somebody who needed warmth and caring. Esther Rome, of the original Collective who wrote the nutrition chapters and anatomy and physiology chapters, died of breast cancer. A few days before her mastectomy, I remember that one thing she wanted us to do was to decorate her breasts. We met and we decorated her breasts to celebrate them. When she was dying, we would meet together, meditate, and pray for her. We learned how to do these things.

Other conflicts had to do with money and work. Once we started to get book royalties, we paid ourselves for health work done. At a certain point I think everyone got a certain amount, not very much. We'd pay ourselves for any health work we did. When we came to rewriting the book in 1984, there were certain people whose finances were very touchy, and certain people who may not have had financial needs, but who said they had financial needs, and so they would get more money. Or, certain people who didn't have financial needs *wouldn't* ask for any money and then would feel badly and let down. There was one chapter, this was when I was co-editor of the 1984 edition, the alternative health and healing chapters were being written by two women. They spent a year and a half getting paid lots of money, from our royalties, to write three drafts and never achieved a finished chapter. It fell to me to combine those drafts into a finished chapter. So there's that kind of thing where you say, "What were you doing with your time? Why couldn't you pull your act together? You weren't earning the money you were getting," That kind of thing would happen. There was one person in the group who was very good at expressing *her* needs. Other people couldn't and didn't feel heard, didn't feel listened to for long periods of time. To this day still, even after all these years, they feel mad about it.

So, those are some of the conflicts. There were political conflicts also, Norma [Swenson] was the oldest of us, and Judy [Norsigian], the youngest. They became the most active members of the Health Book Collective in the eighties. They traveled everywhere, all around the world, talking about women's health. And then at the other end of the spectrum, there were less active, less "militant" women, who wanted to go more cautiously, and make more cautious decisions. Even between Norma and Judy, who

had been great friends, there grew incredible conflicts. Since Judy got around more and was seen more, she began to be more in demand. And she made more compromises than Norma would politically. So that she and Norma began to have conflicts because Norma was “pure,” she could see far into the future and could prophesize, “This is going to happen if...” And I found her, often, to be right. Those were some of the conflicts.

Others had to do with...as a group, especially in the 1980s, beginning in the 1980s, maybe even in the seventies, I think I talked to you about this before, because we were white women, because the whole black consciousness movement had expanded from the 1960s, because people of color were beginning to feel their power and beginning to see that in certain areas they didn't have power, African American women did not feel recognized by the white women's movement, felt alienated, would try to go to meetings, would receive racist comments, or be expected to make other people not feel guilty, all of that. We were criticized for being white, only white. And we kind of struggled through the 1980s as a Board, we were our own Board in a way, wanted other women of color to come on board somehow but didn't know how to do invite them in gracefully and successfully.

In the 1990s, the organization sought a lot of consultants. To go back in time, to the 1970s, all the information Judy Norsigian started getting in her house, I think I told you this, because as we developed the book through the seventies, people sent us more and more information, and Judy began gathering more and more, her house was full of papers, pamphlets, journals, and books. She hired a woman to be her secretary. Then we moved into an office in the basement of an Armenian Cultural center in Watertown [Massachusetts], and hired two people, Pam Morgan to be a secretary and Sally Whelan

to archive of all the materials we had gathered. We had tons of stuff. And the two of them later on became founders, co-founders, of the organization, because though they hadn't been there in the seventies, they were responsible for creating and sustaining the Health Information Center that we've become. Later on, we learned that they had felt an imbalance of power back then. They felt the founders had all the power, all the clout. And they, as women who worked for the founders and for the Collective, didn't have that kind of power or felt they weren't recognized as being important.

Into the nineties when we started to hire women of color, the very same issues came up. The Board, which had been just us, then gradually became Board/Staff, with new women from outside the Collective. Gradually they decided against the Board/Staff position. So there's Staff, Founders, and then the Board, basically three entities. At a certain point, because the staff didn't feel they were being recognized, there were young women of color on it, that's when they unionized in 1995, '96, when Esther was dying. It was a terrible time. Immediately they unionized, we become managers which was just amazing to us. There were certain rules governing how managers could communicate with unionized staff. Certain things you can say, certain things you can't say. So those were all the kinds of struggles that we went through, basically very common struggles for any group that had progressed as ours had.

Yet, we stayed together, which was unusual. Most of the groups that began in the early seventies folded. One, because we had royalty money, although the money from royalty diminished every year as more and more books about women's health appeared in bookstores. When our book came out there was nothing else about women's health on the market. We have a list of, each year, how much the royalties were. And they have gone

down a lot. The books don't sell as well as they used to because readers have much to choose from. But I think our book is the only really political book on the market that addresses the issue of medical, social, and economic institutions and how they affect our health. It's not the only women's self help book though; now there are a lot of other books. In our bibliography, for instance, we list millions.

**CW:** You talked about the conflicts within the group, but what was the response to the book when it was first published with the Moral Majority and the Eagle Forum?

**END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE.**

**JP:** Eagle Forum, not so much. As you read the Jerry Falwell material, did you?

**CW:** Yes, I did.

**JP:** He sent that particular little pamphlet which was eight pages long, I think, you saw it spread out onto two pages. He mailed it to sixty thousand, I forget how many people, eighty thousand members of the Moral Majority. And it was sent out, the "offensive lines" crossed out in...how did he do this...yellow. All those places you can't read in the copy, those are lines he crossed out with yellow highlight, so you can read them underneath. In 1980 to '83 our whole family moved back to Cambridge from Vermont for three years. I went to work at the Health Book Collective, part time from 9:00 to 2:00 everyday, just gathering information, answering phones, letting people know what we had available in the files because we were beginning to get voluminous files. We ended up with an incredible number of filing cabinets and books and magazines. Anyway, it was when I went back, the backlash started, led by the Right Wing, especially by the Moral Majority, and the Eagle Forum too. What would happen is that somebody in a community somewhere in the U.S. would protest. They'd take the book off the library

shelves, or they didn't want this book in their schools, corrupting their students. And the townspeople and librarians who loved and valued *Our Bodies, Ourselves* would call us. Eventually, because this happened in a number of communities, we would be sent newspaper articles about the conflicts and then learn what defenders of the book had done to counter these protests. How they had held meetings, and convinced a school to keep it, or convinced the library to keep the book. We developed a packet so that if somebody called and said that there was a group wanting to get rid of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* from the library shelves, we said, "Okay, we'll send you this packet so you can see what other communities have done." And that also was another way of learning, spreading information, taking what you have in your hand and just making it work in other situations. That kind of protest didn't last for that long, because the Moral Majority, I think, lost a lot of its steam. It was really very strong for a while. The Right Wing has taken a lot of other forms and is, in reality, really very powerful right now.

Our book was also banned in South Africa. I can't remember where else it was banned. It was considered immoral, especially the lesbian chapter and the abortion chapter. There is a photo in the abortion chapter of a woman crouched on the floor, bleeding, who has died. We later found out who she was. We put that in the abortion chapter. It's a very powerful photo. I think the woman's sister wrote to us at one point. That picture is very upsetting, and it got flack. Very, very early on, in the first edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the newsprint edition, there was a photograph of a young woman in the sexuality chapter. She's masturbating, perhaps. Anyway, she's lying flat on her back and there was some protest from... Was it the woman? Her lawyer? They demanded that we take it out of the book. Did we have her permission, didn't have her permission? I

can't remember, it was so long ago. Oddly enough there's a wonderful photograph of Ruth Bell, one of the founders, very pregnant in her underpants, dancing. One woman, who wrote in, thought it was very indecent. Many aspects of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* have been attacked for indecency, for being too explicit and the epitome of "secular humanism." That was Jerry Falwell's "the worst thing you can be is a secular humanist corrupting the morals of young people, and so forth, and old people" (laughs). Those are some of the protests that we received.

On the positive side, the book began to be translated throughout Europe, practically every country in Europe in the 1970s into the 1980s. And we, throughout the 1980s sent out packets of health materials all over the world. Every month we'd gather together the articles that we considered to be important, and send them to women's organizations throughout the world, which was very exciting, I thought, to do.

**CW:** So far, how have you been involved in the growth of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* with all the new editions and the new books for older and younger women?

**JP:** Personally, I've really been involved intimately since the very beginning. I wrote the pregnancy chapter for the first edition and rewrote the '76 edition, redid the '79 edition a bit. Then I was a co-editor with Wendy Stanford in the 1984 edition, which was completely rewritten, almost a new book, much bigger than the old, 1970s editions. That was when I worked on the "Pregnancy" and "Childbirth" chapters with Norma Swenson and lots of other people. And then I was involved with pregnancy and childbirth, not postpartum, up through the 90s edition into the 98' edition. I edited a lot of chapters in the 98' edition and rewrote, at least on five. I think I edited, in part, *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* for teenagers, a book by Ruth Bell, who moved to California, and Leni

Wildflower. I edited *Ourselves Growing Older*, about half of it, along with a lot of others. That book was very well organized. They would send a chapter with an envelope with the exact amount of postage (laughs) to send the chapter back. It was very impressive.

Since I've moved, I've probably told you this on the phone...I mean the book first came out in 1970, I moved to Vermont in '75 and was there for five years, and still would travel three hours to meetings in Boston. You know, feel my usual way-out of it, sometimes part of it other times. Back to Cambridge in '80 to '83 to write and edit the '84 edition. The complete rewrite with Wendy. That was quite a process, to edit your friends' material. I told you about the three drafts that I had to make into a chapter, the alternatives chapter. And then after I had done that, the two authors went over everything that I had written, which was agonizing in a way, the process, it was horrible. Or (laughs) Wendy and I...somebody would come in to have their chapters gone over and they'd say, "Too many of my words are landing on the cutting room floor" (laughs), you know! At one point, Wendy just stomped out and left the house during a session with somebody, saying, "I can't take this anymore!" (Laughing). You know, it was tough that year we edited. '80 to '81 I gathered information. '81 to '82 wrote because it took a long time. And '82 to '83 edited with Wendy. Really intense, incredibly intense work, all day, every day. Then, I moved back in '83 to Vermont, and always stayed in contact. I became, officially, a Board member at the end of 2000 when the Collective almost fell apart. I mean, it wasn't the Collective...the organization almost fell apart because of destructive things that were happening amongst people on the Board and within the organization. But, we pulled ourselves together. Boston University School of Public Health offered us

free rent for a year and we kind of retracted, became smaller, still very active on all fronts.

And the other thing, I think I told you about that I did get involved with were the translation/adaptations of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* amongst, not European countries, but countries like Serbia, Bulgaria, Poland, Armenia, Japan, French-speaking Africa, all translation adaptations. I was lucky enough to go to a conference in Utrecht in the Netherlands, because I take wonderful notes and because I'm a founder. It was very exciting. It was held in a women's center. Utrecht is a beautiful little city. There were about twenty of us from all these different countries. We sat around a large table for three days. The women from each of the countries talked about what the process had been like to decide to introduce a book into their countries, to take the present *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and translate it, and then to adapt it to the needs of their countries. It was incredibly moving to hear what *Our Bodies, Ourselves* had meant to them, especially after those few difficult years on the Board. Norma and I were there as founders. We waited to the very end of the sessions to talk about our experiences, as I'm telling you, in creating *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. It was wonderful. So I have been involved in editing in some of the articles about that conference. Some of the prefaces to these books were translated into English, so I put together a little packet of translations of these other editions of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Just the other day, I sent seventy-five of them down to the Collective because they're useful for fundraising.

**CW:** In my research I found that, shortly after *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was written, the Collective created the National Women's Health Network. Have you been involved with that?

**JP:** I really haven't. But Judy Norsigian was on the Board of the National Women's Health Network, she's also one of the founders, and she's the heart of our organization. She and Sally Whelan, the heart and soul. She helped found, or start, the National Women's Health Network. We've worked very closely with them, we share resources and information. And so, yeah, they have been involved with innumerable women's centers throughout the country, this country and other countries.

**CW:** Have you been involved in other women's rights issues such as *Roe v. Wade* and abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, or even birth control?

**JP:** Involved...when I moved to Vermont in '75 I was looking everywhere for a group like the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, not even consciously looking. It had been very hard for me to pick up everything and go away from Cambridge during that time. So I looked around in Vermont. I tried to get a job at the women's health center which was an hour away. I didn't get that job, for I don't think I presented myself in a really positive way. I was very active in other endeavors. There was this marvelous...I think it was '77...when every state in the U.S. got federal money to hold a woman's conference, and then to elect delegates to go to a nationwide conference in Texas. Vermont had, what they called Vermont Town Meeting, which was its woman's conference. I met around that with a lot of women active at the time in Vermont. It struck me that Vermont is a rural state and a lot of women wouldn't be able to get transportation to that main conference in Montpelier, the capital. So I was driving home from Boston once, have you ever driven...well you'll see when you drive, sometimes you get these incredible ideas and feel like you're floating! And I got this incredible idea of using some of the federal funds to hold regional conferences. I introduced the idea, it was approved,

and we did get money for the regionals in five other parts of the state. And so, yeah, I did that.

I always testify, throughout the years, at the hearings that come up around the issue of abortion. In the Vermont legislature, the Right to Life constituency usually tries to limit access to abortion in one way or another. Over the years I've testified in the legislature, pro choice. A few years ago, at a hearing in the legislature, pro-choice people sat in this gorgeous room here (points left) and the anti-choice people sat there (points right) and one from this side would come up and speak, another from that side, and they took turns in front of the Health and Welfare Committee in order to influence legislation.

So yeah, and I've spoken a whole lot, less these days than in the past. I was very involved when, somehow, all the obstetrician-gynecologists seemed to leave Central Vermont. We held some emergency meetings. Women were always trying to get good maternity care in Central Vermont. I was part of a statewide, wonderful group for a while, organized by the, then, head of the department of health, who was Hawaiian and didn't last long at his job. He wanted to basically organize health issues around families. So he invited a lot of people from a lot of different organizations and groups to come together every month. It was very exciting having ObGyns, and the former governor of Vermont, and community and state representatives coming together. So I've done those things all along.

**CW:** How has *Our Bodies, Ourselves* affected the medical community and the health movement that *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was part of?

**JP:** I think it has affected it a great deal and affected people's consciousness a great deal, doctors and women. Women do have more choice and more power these days, especially

middle-class and well-off women. On the other hand, I don't think it changed the basic structure of our health care and medical system. We're still fighting the same fights, and it's even tougher, now that there's less money. A lot of doctors have appreciated the work we did. I imagine that there are still many doctors who don't know anything about it. I think it did help, in the seventies especially. There were some women who would go into medical school classes, and would allow medical students examine them, with the aim of informing the students as to how they felt during exams. And laying their bodies on the line and saying, "this is how I'm going to educate you. When you give me an exam I don't want the speculum to be cold, I want you to treat me with respect. I'm feeling uneasy with what you're doing," that kind of thing. But it always struck me that we really can't make a difference, well, for a lot of reasons. Because the drug companies and their lobbyists are so powerful, because we need basic, easily accessible health care as well as crisis medical care, we need social services to help with difficult life situations. In sum, we need a more human-oriented society than we have. So we've had a great influence in some ways, and in some ways not at all.

**CW:** What aspects of health do think that we are still fighting for?

**JP:** We are fighting for respect and adequate health care for every single man, woman, and child in this country regardless of whether you'll pay or not. Long ago I read Julius Lester, an African American writer, who basically said health care should be a right, housing should be a right. Health care, housing, education, those are the three things that we should not have to pay for, we should not have to fight for. And the very fact that *Our Bodies, Ourselves* had to be written, and was so needed, and got to be so popular, is a response to just how poor our health care system really is and how deficient our social

and economic system really is, I think. (Laughs) The birth control chapters...that was another funny thing, the lesbian women would say, "You wouldn't even need the birth control and abortion chapters if you all became lesbians!" But the fact is that women are going to have babies and need birth control. We're always going to have to struggle for good health care.

**CW:** How do you think the health movement fits into the overall women's movement and the movements of the sixties and seventies?

**JP:** It fits in...that's a hard question (laughs). It fits in beautifully. It fits in with our wish for political equality, equality in business, the idea of empowering women and the hope that any woman can become who she wants to be, and with our hope of changing institutions inimical to women's best interests. It's about the idea that we can at least strive to change institutions. Usually when women become part of male-dominated institutions either they have to become better than the men or they have to adopt a lot of the repressive attitudes and practices that created and sustain those institutions. And do *you* feel there's a woman's movement now?

**CW:** Not so much now, I don't think so. Women are still struggling, just as many groups are still fighting for certain rights. I don't think that it is as widespread as it was when *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was written. How do you feel about that? Do you think there is a women's movement now?

**JP:** I think it's really dispersed. There are lots of women doing lots of really wonderful and important things. But this is not what gets into the media. And it would be really nice, for instance, to see articles or books about the successful projects that women have undertaken. And you don't really see that.

**CW:** In my research, I went on the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* website and its mission statement is to, “empower women with information about health, sexuality, and reproduction...work in and for the public interest, promote equality between women and men, and build bridges among social justice movements.” Do you feel as if *Our Bodies, Ourselves* has accomplished what you wanted it to?

**JP:** Yeah, I do. It’s done all of those things. I think our organization, and the book, has done so. For a struggling non-profit, it’s doing all of those things, all the time, as much as it possibly can. We just need money to continue our work (laughs)! Definitely. I think the mission statement used to be even longer and more detailed (laughs). Placing women’s interests in the context of social justice issues, is where *Our Bodies, Ourselves* fits into the women’s movement for sure.

**CW:** Would you say that *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was needed for women just as Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* was needed and was influential to the women’s movement?

**JP:** Oh absolutely. *The Feminine Mystique*, I think that that happened at a time, just the beginning time of the universe of the possible in the 1960s opening up. Our universe opened up, giving women a language for the expression of dissatisfaction and desire. Really a language is what it involves. I don’t think we had that kind of language when we were growing up. I read a wonderful book by a woman named Alice Koller, called *An Unknown Woman*. She wrote an autobiography about how she went to Nantucket [Island, Massachusetts] all by herself for four months. She was a philosophy graduate student at Harvard before the women’s movement. Basically her search was very psychoanalytic and inward. She did talk about how hard it was to be part of the male philosophy graduate

student department and all. But she wrote before the language of feminism had developed. I think that's one of the really important contributions of the sixties that somehow we did develop a way for people to express their connection with each other, and also their connection with the larger movements around them. Yes it was needed, and when we talked to women from other countries, they say that in their country, men and women need the book because women are still so ignorant. Just recently, I heard about a young American woman who wanted to know what she looked like in her crotch region. She didn't know. As my mother-in-law would say, "In this day and age!" I think the forces against our learning about ourselves and valuing ourselves are very powerful. So yes the book was needed then, it's needed now. And I think it is especially important to keep our personal issues at dead center! Even though at times it gets really tiring. I remember people talked about acquiring a "feminist lens." And once you have that, that's the way you see the world. It can be very interesting and useful, but it can also be very tiring (laughs), and maybe even a little boring after a while. Because the world is a little more complex than just that.

**CW:** How would you compare the 1970 edition to the newest 1998 edition and the upcoming 2005 edition?

**JP:** Oh God, the new one. The first edition was a total cry from the heart and the mind. It contained vivid, acute, angry, and passionate experiences. And what I wrote, I'm appalled now, because it was about myself struggling to deal with life and bringing up my children. So it seemed very anti-motherhood, the first pregnancy chapter. But it was *real*. We wrote really right from where we were, at the time, and our words resonated with so many women. Then, in succeeding editions, as people began writing to us, we

had to become responsible for incorporating not only their experiences, but incorporating all of the increasing amount of health information that was coming out. Women were demanding to know more, and more information was appearing. The flow of information was freer and freer, as you can see now on the internet. Our book became less angry, less personal, and more inclusive. A lesbian group came to us and said, “we’ve *got* to be in this book” in 1972 “we’ve got to be in that first Simon and Schuster, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.” And we said “Oh, okay, whatever you want” (laughs). And they were very sharp and very keen, and had the most keen political outlook. Their political consciousness was much keener, at least, than mine. And they really kept us on track, politically. Then as time went on, we became older women, less dogmatic, and perhaps, more inclusive (laughs). And then the book branched out. There’s *Ourselves and Our Children*, a book for parents which I was involved in also, and Ruth’s *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* for teenagers, which is a wonderful book, *Ourselves Growing Older*. We also helped other groups and authors. There’s a book about jobs and safety, it’s called *Our Jobs, Our Health*. We’ve co-produced a number of books too, and written many articles. So the 1998 edition was really huge, big to carry. Still, it’s astonishing how many people don’t have it. Everybody who says “I have a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*” has an older edition. Somebody just the other night said, “Oh I have a copy, would you sign it?” It turned out to be an *old* one, the 1973 edition! So it’s not known, mostly, now, as a book that keeps up with changing medical information and so forth. It transformed somebody’s life at some point, and that’s the book they stick with. I don’t know what the next book is going to look like because part of it will be on the internet and part of it will be in book form. It will be literally a different shape for the first time,

which I really do have problems with. And as I've told you, if you look at the different *Our Bodies, Ourselves* covers over the years, the picture of the three women and the sign "Women Unite" on each successive cover gets smaller and smaller, which is indicative of the publishers attitude toward that kind of "radical" (interviewee's quotation) look. This is an answer to the question about doctors' attitudes. We had a wonderful doctor down in Cambridge and I asked him when we did the medical information, if he would look over the chapter. He did, and he wrote a letter saying how much he had appreciated the wonderful book. But upon seeing an earlier copy of the book, he wrote me a letter and said he had been to a book store and a lady had said, "this cover is really offensive" (laughs), he said, "I think you shouldn't have such a radical cover." So, all in all, it's become less radical, but still places health information in the political, economic, and social context in which it belongs.

**CW:** Are you working at all on the new edition in 2005?

**JP:** I'm going to read the pregnancy and childbirth chapters. I'm not editing any of it. I was so involved for so long in maternal reform and revolution issues, maternity care, I've just grown out of that and stopped. Again, it was my anger that carried me so far for so long. In great part, I was surprised the power of anger.

**CW:** Do you feel as if you are not so angry anymore?

**JP:** When you get (laughs) up here, to the age of 66, what's the point really? My God, you make so many mistakes in life, and you do so many things right, everything kind of evens out.

**CW:** You mentioned to me earlier that now that the founders have grown older, they have let younger women run the organization. What do you think the challenges are for younger women today?

**JP:** I think they're the same as they were, they've always been. What we've talked about before, they need equality, respect, enough money so they can live well, emotional, financial, and every kind of familial support. We need day care centers, we still need everything we marched about in the 70s. I actually wrote the words to the song Bella Ciao, do you know that one?

**CW:** No?

**JP:** Oh, it's a revolutionary song and it's in several languages. And I came home one day and wrote these verses! Ed [Pincus] laughs and laughs about it. (Singing) We are the women, and we are marching, bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao! We are marching for revolution...on no...marching for liberation, we want the revolution now! We need good day care...(laughs). We need all that stuff, don't you think?

**CW:** Do you think there's been any progress?

**JP:** Yeah, I think there's been some. Like I said, I think people will say that all our work has made a difference, and it has made a difference. But I think it depends on people's point of view...it's a yes from one point of view and a no from another point of view.

**CW:** What's your point of view?

**JP:** (Laughs) Both yes and no, really.

**CW:** How would you want *Our, Bodies Ourselves* and, more broadly, the women's rights movement to be portrayed in a high school textbook?

**JP:** Are there any high school textbooks that it's in?

**CW:** When I was doing my research, the books mention the women's rights movement but they don't really mention *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Although Howard Zinn's book...

**JP:** *A People's History of the United States*?

**CW:** Yes. He's very liberal and he mentioned *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in about a page or so. How would you like it to be portrayed?

**JP:** As Howard Zinn portrays it probably. I think he does a wonderful job of including issues and connecting them. And that's the important thing. I don't think addressing these kinds of subjects is being done enough, in schools especially. You're in high school so I wish we had more time to talk about it and maybe we can in the future. Do you learn critical thinking? Do you learn to, if something happens, to see why it happens? And what are the forces that brings about an event? And to connect those forces with other forces. Do you think you learn that in school?

**CW:** I think we do.

**JP:** Oh that's wonderful, you must go to a really good school! The other thing about women's health is that the definition of health can either be very narrow or very broad. You can define women's health as economic health, social health, educational health. Or you can define it more narrowly as getting medical procedures needed, when needed. One thing the book did was to enlarge the definition of health. On the other hand...you learn it really with childbirth...when you're pregnant, when you have your baby, that becomes the all encompassing thing. Once you've had your baby, you move away from the issues, and that's why it's hard to recruit people often to do activism around childbirth. And it may be true for other health issues. Once you've lived through that time, fully, you've gone on to something else, you're occupied with something else. So,

if you're not going to focus on women's health as your work, it's just an issue that only comes up if you have to go to the hospital because you cut your toe or something. I found myself knowing a lot about obstetrics and gynecology, but when something happened to me physically that was in another medical realm, I didn't have the slightest clue about what to do. I had to learn the questions to ask all over again. So, what I'm trying to say, is if a woman is healthy, maybe in a narrower sense, she doesn't think women's health issues are that important. Do you see what I mean? You have no problems, unless you make some aspect of health care your life and your career.

**CW:** Is there anything I failed to ask you (laughter) that you think is important for me to know to understand women's liberation, women's health, and *Our Bodies, Ourselves*?

**JP:** Oh Lord. I don't know. Two years ago, about six of us founders, we were being given medals from this organization called Veteran Feminists of America. At a grand dinner they gave medals to about forty writers. We went to one afternoon seminar, with a panel consisting of Phyllis Chessler, Alice Kates Schulman, and a few others. Well-known feminists! With a big audience. And there was this odd disconnection between the older feminists, meaning the ones who had been active when we all started, and the younger people. The older feminists would say, "You just can't *know* what it was like back then. You just will *never* know! I mean you'll never know!" And the younger women would say, "You can't tell us that! We've got our lives now and we're very excited about what we're doing." But there *was* some kind of element back then, something in the air, a feeling of possibility, a sense that we could, we would, change the world. A kind of fearlessness, optimism in the face of great odds. Judy Norsigian has it most of all, in our group. She works very hard at connecting people with each other,

getting money for the organization. Whereas now we are being taught to be fearful and a little hopeless. Be afraid of this, be afraid of that, worry about mad cow, SARS, terrorists, you know. Back then there was the Vietnam War too, that wasn't any great thing. But we felt you could fight against something and *really* win, not only for yourself but for other people. I think it was a very generous time.

**CW:** Do you think this feeling of being fearful has to do with your age and your perspective, or do you think that it has to do with the time and the government compared to your age and the government during the 60s and 70s?

**JP:** Well, Nixon was president then. Do *you* feel these days...are your friends optimistic?

**CW:** For the most part.

**JP:** That's great! You sound like you go to a wonderful school. There is something so wonderful about women or girls getting together and talking among themselves. And that's the main thing...it's like a woven fabric, a way of being together and connecting. I would encourage joyfulness and being together (laughs) and working to cherish the world. In my art work, I'm doing useful work, because it's full of imagination. We need that kind of imagination. I feel that I'm being as positive as possible, and creative, when I work with the artist group I'm in, organizing art exhibits so that people can express themselves.

**CW:** Before when you were talking about sitting in the room with the old feminists and the new feminists...

**JP:** Oh God, it was amazing.

**CW:** I wanted to know how you would define a feminist.

**JP:** (Laughs) I would define a feminist as a person who wants justice and education, all the wonderful things for everybody in the world, and who develops an analysis of the institutions that prevent human beings from realizing themselves, who develops strategies for dealing with those institutions. [Interviewee interrupted by Mike Seltz] Where were we?

**CW:** We were talking about being a feminist.

**JP:** Oh right, yeah. Phyllis Chessler had written a new book, she had written *Women and Madness* \_\_+. Each of the women on that panel we mentioned was staking out her own book territory too. You know, “what *I’ve* done.” I remember just sitting there saying, “How can they be so self-centered?” It was very interesting. Oh, well, I’ve said a lot. Do you think you have enough information?

**CW:** Yes, definitely! Thank you very much for doing this and talking to me.

**JP:** Oh, you’re welcome!

**CW:** Thank you so much.

[Post interview comment with Jane Pincus on January 4, 2004]

**JP:** I’d like to talk about transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. A number of us have had daughters. My daughter went through some difficult times but we’ve become close again. I never quite knew how she would interpret or take my women’s health work into her own life. She does it far more clearly, I think, than I did. She had a home birth, which I was fascinated by. It was a long, three day labor. And I don’t think the midwives at certain points were terrific. I was there for the last twelve hours and saw my grandson born. Another founder’s daughter is a lesbian; she and her partner have just had a baby, at home with midwives. Both of them are incredibly active

in social justice and lesbian and gay movements. It's interesting to see that our daughters and sons, for most of us, really appreciate the work that we did. They're happy to have been part of it, happy to have their photos as part of the book. It's been really gratifying. None of them are really doing women's health work, per se. Although my daughter is an Alexander technique practitioner and a counselor; so you could say that that's sort of a form of health work. Anyway, I just wanted to say that our lives have affected our children's lives, not always directly, but indirectly. It's been interesting to see them evolve. That's basically it.

**CW:** Thank you again!

**[Table of Contents](#)**

## INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

“We are the women, and we are marching, bella ciao [beautiful hello], bella ciao, bella ciao, ciao, ciao! We are marching...for liberation, we want the revolution now!” (Pincus 59). As Jane Pincus sang the words to “Bella Ciao” a revolutionary song she wrote during the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s, she not only revealed her creativity and passion, but she gave historians an emotional and personal account about herself, the women’s rights and health movements, and America. Oral historian Donald A. Ritchie once wrote that oral history, such as that of Jane Pincus, “collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews” and unlike other forms of history “memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved” (19). Although accuracy of memory is uncertain and as time passes, one’s memory can be altered, oral history offers valuable insight into the “intimate, private worlds that create bridges between races, regions, gender and age groups” (Stricklin v) that no other form of history is able to provide. Despite these flaws in memory and even in the interviewer’s technique and questions, the oral history of Jane Pincus unveils the processes, successes, and struggles of one woman involved in the social changes of 1960s and 1970s through her activism and authorship of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* which evolved from the women’s health movement.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. once wrote that there are two types of history – exculpatory and compensatory (55). Most history is exculpatory, written through the perspective of the elite few rather than the common man. Oral history, on the other hand, as explained by historian Studs Terkel, is primarily compensatory and “capture[s] the

thoughts of the non-celebrated...and these 'statistics' become persons, each one unique" (312). History is made up of both the celebrated and non-celebrated; therefore, a complete presentation of history encompasses exculpatory and compensatory history. In order to understand this complete history, oral history "ask[s] the questions that have not been asked, and...collect[s] the reminiscences that otherwise would have been lost" (Ritchie 37). Although oral history furthers the understanding of history through individual accounts, oral historian Linda Shopes explains that, "An interview is inevitably an act of memory, and while individual memories can be more or less accurate, complete or truthful, in fact interviews routinely include inaccurate and imprecise information, if not outright falsehoods" ("Interpreting Oral History" 2). Oral history is also colored by the interviewee's "social identity," who they are and what their background is, as well as the "speaker's relationship to the specific events under discussion and temporal distance from them" (Shopes, "Who Is Talking?" 1). Consequently, "oral history is as reliable or unreliable as other research sources... [and must be] tested against other evidence" (Ritchie 26). Just as the goals for historians when analyzing a historical source, in the words of historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. "are accuracy, analysis, and objectivity" (51), oral historians must also analyze their interviews for accuracy, analysis, and objectivity.

Through the memories and thoughts of Jane Pincus, captured in her oral history, Ms. Pincus became an individual woman within an organization and movement. When she summarized the history of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the women's health movement, Jane Pincus spoke of herself as part of the organization of women who wrote the book, Boston Women's Health Book Collective (BWHBC), rather than as an individual. She

explained how the women and their group developed, their process of finding and then changing publishers, and the conflicts and triumphs they faced within the group as well as the reactions from the outside world. Jane Pincus' oral history not only included the history of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the group of women who wrote it, but also her own life history. In her oral history, she became an individual, rather than just part of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, when she described her childhood, motherhood, reasons for joining the health movement, involvement with other movements, and feelings and analysis of the time. As a woman growing up in the 1950s, Jane Pincus felt "different from other people...fairly lonely" (25), "incapable of talking or learning about things that were happening to [her]" (32); therefore she joined other discontented women in consciousness-raising groups in 1969. "It was very exciting. At that point we were a large fluid, free-floating group, a lot of women. There was something in the air that's hard to describe now, a wonderful feeling of being together." (Pincus 29). For Ms. Pincus, this movement felt like her "second adolescence... [when] you do often think things are possible" (29). As women became more conscious of their roles, Jane Pincus and her friends created "Personal Group" where they researched and learned about certain women's health topics. The birth of her daughter in 1965 influenced Jane Pincus to write about pregnancy.

I would choose to have her in a way that was very unnatural. I was going for natural childbirth...When I counted all the interventions, I came up with ten of them, although I *was* conscious during the whole time...What I didn't know at the time was first I was getting Pitocin to speed up my labor, then they gave me Demerol to slow it down...over the next few years, I found out, through my work

in women's health, how dangerous the way I had Sami [daughter of Jane Pincus] was, the dangers of Pitocin, of induction, and basically that I had risked her life.

(30-31)

As a result of her first pregnancy, Jane Pincus felt angry about her ignorance and strove to learn as much as she could about maternity care, labor, birth, and pregnancy to teach other naïve women (Pincus 38). As her children grew older, she would sometimes resent having to take care of her children, telling her husband ““Why can't it be you, why does it have to be me”” (41). This anger, resentment, and confusion, voiced by Jane Pincus in her interview, gave an in-depth, personal account and rationale for her involvement with *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. She also addressed the historical value of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, believing that it fit into the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s with the wish for equality and the empowerment of women to strive to make changes (Pincus 54).

Just as Jane Pincus analyzed *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the movements of the time, historians must also analyze her interview for accuracy, analysis, and objectivity to determine its historical value. The value of a historical source is dependent upon the interviewee as well as the interviewer and the resulting dialog. The dialog within the interview must be validated by other historical sources as well as “open up new views of the past” (Shopes, “How Do Historians Use It?” 1). Despite a few weaknesses, the history of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, and most importantly, the history of Jane Pincus, is consistent with other research and adds new views which can not be found in other historical sources. Jane Pincus' analysis that “most women went to college to find a husband” (25), paralleled with historian David Halberstam's *The Fifties* and Betty Friedan's interpretation of the 1950's in *The Feminine Mystique*. Jane Pincus also

referred to her own and other women's feelings of isolation during the 1950s just as Bret Harvey's book *The Fifties: A Woman's Oral History* explained that women were taught "independence equaled loneliness" (Harvey xviii), yet, as Betty Friedan wrote, women who married early still did not escape that loneliness and often found themselves questioning their identity (21). Betty Friedan's explanation of women feeling dissatisfied during the fifties and questioning themselves, saying, "Is this all?" (Friedan 15), is also described by Jane Pincus in her feelings toward taking care of her children (41). Ms. Pincus' historical account of the dangerous health procedures performed on women by doctors who did not educate their patients thoroughly is also accurate with other historical interpretations of the medical system in the 1950s and 1960s, explaining that the "primary focus was on treating the disease, not the patient" (Freeman 151). Jane Pincus' recollections of the history of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is supported by the prefaces to 1973 and 1998 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and with the history written by Barbara A. Brehm in *Women on Power: Leadership Redefined* (149-166). The historical facts which Jane Pincus presented in her interview were accurate, but the value of this historical document is also established through the unanswered questions that Ms. Pincus answered and her personal interpretations, feelings, and life history.

Oral historian Linda Shopes once said, "recounting the experiences of everyday life and making sense of that experience, narrators turn history inside out...talking about their lives in ways that do not easily fit into preexisting categories of analysis" ("How Do Historians Use It?" 2). Traditional research on women, the women's rights movement, and *Our Bodies, Ourselves* provides a limited analysis of the period. The historical accounts of Jane Pincus are not only factual, but they elaborate on the facts and provide

personal perspectives of the period. Although she has been interviewed many times before, due to her work with women's health and *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the history of Ms. Pincus is not found in other historical sources. Therefore, her oral history is compensatory, and when read with exculpatory history, can present a more complete understanding of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the women's liberation movement. Ms. Pincus' most significant contribution to a larger understanding of women and their roles, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, were her motives and feelings that influenced her to work with the women's rights movement. She personalized the movement and the book by explaining her feelings of isolation, confusion, resentment, and anger which, in part, influenced her to write the pregnancy chapter. By understanding these feelings, historians are able to better understand the thoughts of some women during the women's rights movement and are able to create a more rounded view of that time period, incorporating the effects and facts of the book with the causes and reasons behind the facts. Jane Pincus also elaborated on the problems within BWHBC and the response *Our Bodies, Ourselves* received. She explained the problems in more depth than Barbara A. Brehm did in her essay, *Women on Power: Leadership Redefined* (149-166). Although historical sources write about the negative response of the Moral Majority and the positive responses, demonstrated by the amount of books sold, Jane Pincus recounted the individual responses she received either in person or through letters (Pincus 34-35, 37, 39, 46-48, 56, 58). Jane Pincus' oral history describes her life not only in her work with *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, but also her work with other social movements, her childhood, schooling, job, hobbies, and opinions about the time period. Her life story is of historical value because it shows how one woman lived and felt during a time of radical social

change in America. Although the historical account of Jane Pincus is historically valuable it also has weaknesses. Her oral history adds perspective to the women's rights movement, but because it is through one woman's words, it cannot provide the whole perspective. Jane Pincus believes that women are "still fighting the same fights" (53) as they were during the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, due to the limited perspective of Jane Pincus and the continuing issues of women, historians cannot rely only on one woman's oral history. Historians also need to consider the "unconscious preconceptions" (Schlesinger 52) of Jane Pincus. Being a middle-class, white woman and talking about her past experiences through the present, limits her perspective of the whole movement as a movement of different women collectively joining together making their personal experiences a political issue. This unconscious preconception limits the historical value of the oral history of Jane Pincus. Historians must consider these flaws, as well as the flaw of memory, when analyzing the value of Jane Pincus' oral history.

Historians must also analyze the interviewer of Jane Pincus to determine the historical value. A first time interviewer, such as the interviewer of Jane Pincus, can make significant mistakes. An interviewer must try to be objective and use, as said by historian Edward Carr, "imaginative understanding" (Carr 930) to put themselves in the minds of the interviewee. This interviewer asked questions that expected a certain answer, asked two questions at once, repeated questions already answered, and did not always ask clear, effective follow-up questions. The interviewer did not focus the interview well enough and had many unconscious preconceptions of her own. She was an upper-middle-class, Catholic, high school student at a private Episcopalian school. Despite these unconscious preconceptions, which limited the interviewer's ability to use

“imaginative understanding,” and despite the mistakes she made in her questions, she was attuned to the interviewee and was able to make the interviewee comfortable enough to share her experiences, feelings, and even songs.

Notwithstanding the weaknesses within the oral history of Jane Pincus, this historical source teaches valuable lessons and offers undocumented and unanswered information and perspectives on *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the time of social change that the book was part of. The creation and documentation of Jane Pincus’ oral history educates readers on the process of making a historical source and teaches them the importance of analyzing an oral history with the same goals as when analyzing traditional forms of history. Through the weaknesses and errors of this interview, particularly in the questions fashioned by the interviewer, oral historians and interviewers also learn how to create a more valuable historical source. The most significant contribution that this oral history makes to the education of readers and historians is the idea that one woman, in her process of having “a sense of myself as the author of my own life” (Pincus 26) in a time when the people around her were making the same discoveries about their lives, helped educate other women on their selves, body and mind, contributing to the larger movement of change in America. Through her exploration and contributions in her life and through her oral history, Jane Pincus demonstrates the importance that one person can have on a period or event in history.

## [Table of Contents](#)



## APPENDIX 1



The Founders of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective  
Back: Esther Rome, Paula Doress-Worters, Vilunya Diskin, *Jane Pincus*  
Middle: Pamela Morgan, Ruth Bell-Alexander, Joan Ditzion, Norma Swenson,  
Judy Norsigian  
Front: Wendy Sanford, Nancy Miram Hawley

[Table of Contents](#)

## WORKS CONSULTED

- Baxandall, Rosalyn and Linda Gordon, ed. *Dear Sisters*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000.
- Bender, Marilyn, "The Feminists Are On The March Once More" *The New York Times (1857-Current file)*. New York, N.Y.: Dec 14, 1967. pg. 78, 1pgs. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000090905342&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1071493632&clientId=29688>>
- . "The Women Who'd Trade In Their Pedestal for Total Equality: It's the Current Topic." *The New York Times*. New York, N.Y.: Feb 4, 1970. pg. 30, 1pgs. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000092176136&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1071492980&clientId=29688>>
- Beyette, Beverly. "Feminist Book Updates Its Health Topics:[Home Edition]" *Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext)*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Mar 12, 1985. pg. 1. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000064407300&SrchMode=1&sid=7&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1071494193&clientId=29688>>
- Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Boston, MA: New England Free Press, 1971.
- Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1973.
- Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. New York, NY: Touchstone, 1998.
- Brownmiller, Susan. *In Our Time*. New York, NY: The Dial Press, 1999.
- Carr, E.H. *What Is History?* New York: Vintage Books, 1961.
- Cook, Joan. "'Mystique' View Backed by Many, Author Finds." *The New York Times (1857-Current file)*. New York, N.Y.: Mar 12, 1964. pg 30, 1 pgs. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=33&did=000000097172349&SrchMode=1&sid=11&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1071472043&clientId=29688>>

Cott, Nancy F., ed. *No Small Courage*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.

“Display Ad 523 – No Title” *The New York Times (1857-Current file)*. New York, N.Y.: Mar 18, 1973. pg. 15, 1 pgs. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000097121149&SrchMode=1&sid=4&Fmt=1&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1071493785&clientId=29688>>

Doctor’s group (Boston Women’s Health Book Collective). “Who is Your Doctor?”  
Doctor’s Questionnaire: 1969.

Donovan, Tricia Norton. “Fighting For Your Life.” *New Roots for the Northeast Greenfield, MA*. Nov. 1980.

Evans, Sara M. *Born for Liberty*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1989.

Foner, Eric. *The Story of American Freedom*. New York, NY: Norton and Company, Inc., 1998

Freedman, Estelle B. *No Turning Back*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2002.

Freeman, Sue J., Susan C. Bourque, and Christine M. Shelton, eds. *Women on Power: Leadership Redefined*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2001.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: NY, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1983.

Gwinn, Mary Ann. “MEDICAL MANUAL UPDATED:[FOURTH Edition]” *Seattle Times*. Seattle, Wash.: Feb 28, 1985. pg. D.6. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=7&did=000000052457366&SrchMode=1&sid=6&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1071471148&clientId=29688>>

Greer, Germaine. *The Whole Woman*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1999.

Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York, NY: Villard Books, 1993

Harvey, Brett. *The Fifties: A Woman’s Oral History*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1993.

Hawley, Nancy. *Control of Our Bodies*. Edmund College: Women’s Conference, May 1969.

Hofstadter, Richard. *Great Issues in American History*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1982.

- Hogeland, Lisa Maria. *Feminism and its Fictions*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.
- Hurley, Jennifer A., ed. *Women's Rights*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2002.
- Kennedy, David M., Elizabeth Cohen, Thomas A. Bailey, and Mel Piehl. *The Brief American Pageant*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.
- Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. "Thinking About the Thinkable: Books of The Times Response to a Stimulus Much to Be Learned The Boston Women's Collective" *The New York Times (1857-Current file)*. New York, N.Y.: Mar 13, 1973. pg 37, 1pgs. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=2&did=000000090928796&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1071470294&clientId=29688>>
- Lester, Elenore "Our Bodies, Ourselves: A revisionist view of female sexuality A Book by and For Women. By the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. 276 pp. New York: Simon & Schuster. Cloth, \$8.95. Paper, \$2.95." *The New York Times (1857-Current file)*. New York, N.Y.: May 20, 1973. pg 390, 2 pgs. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=4&did=000000090440519&SrchMode=1&sid=9&Fmt=2&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1071471904&clientId=29688>>
- Lipnack, Jessica. "The Women's Health Movement." *New Age*. Mar. 1980: 1-7
- Norsigian, Judy and Wendy Coppedge Sanford. "Ten years in the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* Collective." *Radcliffe Quarterly*. Dec. 1979: 16-18
- Ogier, Jenny. "A Short History of the Women's Health Movement In Boston." *Whole Life Times*. Mar. 1983. Issue 25.
- Our Bodies Ourselves*. 4 November 2003. *Our Bodies Ourselves*. 28 November 2003.  
<<http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/>>
- Pincus, Jane. "How a Group of Friends Transformed Women's Health." *Women'sEnews*. 13 March 2002. 5 pgs. 28 November 2003  
<<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/844>>
- Pincus, Jane. Interviewed by Chelsea Whittaker. 4 January 2004.
- Pincus, Jane. "Some Women's Movement History: A Packet of Song, Poems, Articles, and Addresses of Women's Publications." 28 April 1993. "Song from the *Abortion* film" 1970-1971.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Rosen, Ruth. *The World Split Open*. New York, NY: Viking, 2000.

Schlesinger Jr., Arthur. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. 1998.

Shopes, Linda. "How Do Historian's Use It?" History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web.  
<<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>>

---. "Interpreting Oral History." History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web.  
<<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>>

---. "Who Is Talking?" History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web.  
<<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>>

Stalcup, Brenda, ed. *The Women's Rights Movement: Opposing Viewpoints*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1996.

Stocker, Carol, Globe Staff. "WOMEN OF THE '60S WHO SURVIVED THE '80S HOW THE HEALTH BOOK COLLECTIVE KEEPS GOING:[THIRD Edition]" *Boston Globe (pre-1997 Fulltext)*. Boston, MA: Jul. 5, 1990. pg 65. *ProQuest*. 6 December 2003  
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=5&did=000000061647701&SrchMode=1&sid=6&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1071471148&clientId=29688>>

Stricklin, David and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. *The Past Meets The Present: Essays on Oral History*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988. Baylor University. Institute for Oral History  
<[http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral\\_History/pmp%20webpage/pmp.htm](http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/pmp%20webpage/pmp.htm)>

Terkel, Studs. *My American Century*. New York: The New Press, 1997.

Woloch, Nancy. *Women and the American Experience*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984

## [Table of Contents](#)

