Peggy Charren Transcript

JUDITH ROSENBAUM: This is for a Jewish Women's Archive conference call taking place July 23, 2001, at 9:30 AM Eastern Time with your host, Judith Rosenbaum.

PEGGY CHARREN: The first night was at her apartment in New York, which was one of those apartments with an enormously long hall – not so much what they call the railroad apartments, but this big, long hall, and that's where the table was set, from one end of the hall to the other. There must have been sixty relatives – maybe I'm remembering it as a child, maybe it wasn't that long. But it was infinitely longer than any table I'd ever sat at. I didn't really know most of them because they were that part of the family – you know what happens in families. And then the next night, at my mother's parents' apartment, which was right near our apartment.

JR: Were your parents born here?

PC: Yes, they were. My grandparents weren't, but they were.

JR: Where were your grandparents from?

PC: My mother's father – it's nice you asked me this today, because I cleaned up my office in the (minyan?) for this week, and found, would you believe – I guess my parents had given it to me – my mother's birth certificate and her parents' [laughter] birth certificates. So, I, who never did what you're doing with my grandparents, and I'm really sorry – so that I can find out where they came from in a more defined way – my grandfather came from Russia and my grandmother from Germany. And I have to remind me of that every once in a while, the most beautiful pair of silver candlesticks, which they sort of carried on them, the way people did when they came over here – that was in the late 1890s, not when so many other Jews came from Germany.

JR: And how did your family –?

PC: And my father's parents – I don't know which countries they're from, but they, too, came. And my father's parents ended up on the Lower East Side. I'm not sure where my mother's parents ended up early on. When I got to know them, they were in an apartment on 96th and Park, which was just the place that Park Avenue breaks from money to no money. And my grandfather was a doctor, and he had a lot of patients in Harlem for free, and then the Park Avenue patients not for free. He always felt good about that, even when I was young. That's when you have the right bringing-up, right?

JR: Right, exactly. How did your family identify as Jews?

PC: Very mildly. Well, that's not true – I mean, I'm sure that my grandparents were – well, even so. I think that – do those beeps mean anything?

JR: I'm not exactly sure what that means.

PC: Okay. I'm going to ignore it. We were all non-practicing Jews, all, very much – we're Jewish. There was no sense of hiding that – but as far as I know, with my grandparents, and certainly with my parents and me, it was Passover and staying home from school on Yom Kippur, but then in New York, everybody did, including all the teachers [laughter], as far as I could see. I grew up thinking everybody was Jewish – not really. Intellectually, even as a youngster, I must have known it wasn't true. But in New York City, at least in those days, I could never have experienced prejudice because everybody was Jewish. Now, that wasn't true in high school, but it was almost true. Do you mind if this sounds a little out of place?

JR: No, that's fine.

PC: I mean, because it will occur to me to say this now, and I'm sure it won't for the rest of the morning. The first time I realized that it was a whole world out there that wasn't

Jewish was when I had my first job when I was in high school – I think I was a senior in high school – you mix up early jobs in college, with late jobs in high school. In the summer – these were summer jobs – this was at the New York Times. I was in the Business Opportunities section of the New York Times, and I had to call credit references for the Business Opportunities page, which was – there's businesses for sale kind of thing. And everybody had to supply two bank and one business reference, or two business and one bank is more likely. And I had to call them. I have to tell you that the first day on the job, I felt like the Queen of the May. This is the New York Times calling. In my family, that was an important part of the day, the New York Times – although when I was very young, I was much more interested in my grandmother's newspaper, which I think was the Daily News, which had comics. The Times never had funnies. This was in college; this was probably the end of my freshman year in college.

JR: And where did you go to college?

PC: Connecticut College. And it took all of twenty-four hours, I think, for me to think this was the most boring job in the universe. I think in the whole summer, only one person said, "He's a deadbeat," [laughter], and the rest of it was, "This is a fine person, company, whatever." And the reason I know that it was the first year in college – sort of horrible. I learned how to light matches with one hand. And I didn't smoke in high school, but I did after the first year in college. Fortunately, I stopped about twenty-five years ago. So, I think that I'm healthier than I was then.

JR: Yeah, that's really good. So, you were talking about growing up in a community where you felt that everyone was –

PC: – was Jewish. Oh, yes. So, I get to the New York Times, and the first Friday I'm there, I go with a few of these other young women, who were making these dumb phone calls. We go to the cafeteria at the Times, and I probably ordered a chicken salad sandwich. And they said, "It's Friday." And I thought, "Yes?" [laughter] I'm wondering

what the problem was. And it was fish on Friday. That was the first time that I realized a lot of people weren't Jewish and that there was a sense of pulling away a little bit – not prejudice, in the real sense of the word, but, “Oh. She’s Jewish,” kind of thing. I don’t think I ever came across that.

JR: Even in college?

PC: Well, I knew that there were quotas. I knew about quotas even before that, from vacations in the summer, with my family. But it never was personalized, directed to me, like these conversations with these women were – women. I mean, we were kids. [laughter] It’s hard to call it, women. But in school, in college, all the Jewish girls sort of found each other. It wasn’t said out loud. I imagine that wasn’t happening by the time you got to college.

JR: Not necessarily. I mean, I had a lot of Jewish friends, but I think that it just turned out that way.

PC: Right, but this was a question – everybody else had blonde page boys and talked like they had stones in their mouths. And you sort of found each other without, almost without thinking about it.

JR: So, did your family belong to a synagogue?

PC: No. But they sent me – they must have belonged for a short period of time because they sent me to Rodeph Sholom when I was about ten, eleven, twelve – one year. But I never was bat mitzvah’d. I remember maybe – whatever year it was, I remember a pageant – it’s preposterous what you remember from growing up – a pageant in school, in the Sunday school, where I, and probably forty other female kids, was Queen Esther, in a black velvet dress with a lace collar, that I could draw for you now. I can’t remember who I had lunch with yesterday, but I could draw that dress for you. That was just one year.

JR: And did you participate in any other kinds of Jewish activities, like youth group or anything like that?

PC: Not only didn't I, but what I did in senior year in high school, I think it was – I'm sure it was – joined the – what was it called? I guess it was called the Ethical Culture Society on Sixty-something Street on the West Side. I joined that, not out of any wonderful sense of the need for an ethical culture for everybody, but because they had boys in the Sunday evening discussion groups. And there were no boys at Hunter, and a couple of us thought this would be a good idea – had nothing to do with religion.

JR: And what did your parents think?

PC: Oh, they thought that was fine. My parents were – and if they were alive, they'd still be – liberal. I guess, leftie political animals, with a sense that kind of thing was fine, and it was good that I was talking about interesting things in the evening. [laughter] They would have thought that was terrific.

JR: What kinds of things were your parents involved in, in the community?

PC: This is one of the more interesting aspects of my life, which is really not my life but my family's. They were Roosevelt Democrats, times ten. One episode I remember very well that happened to my father – when Eleanor was at the UN [United Nations], which was quite a bit later than when we're talking about, my father was driving his car, and it was pouring rain, and he saw her crossing a street corner. And he got out and said, "Mrs. Roosevelt," or something like this – I don't know the direct quote. [laughter] "Can I offer you a lift?" And she was very gracious and said, "No, thank you, but how nice of you to worry about me," that kind of little nothing. And I think my father talked about it – you'll have to forgive this ridiculous thing with my voice.

JR: Oh, it's fine.

PC: – talked about it for the next month. They participated in elections – I always knew who was running and who was good and who wasn't. The Democrats were where it was at from day one and still today, she says gently. And that's sort of who they were. They were not Communists. They weren't even Socialists. They were what labor-loving Democrats were growing up. So I got sent to a camp – you don't mind us skipping around?

JR: No, no, not at all.

PC: Good. Got sent to a camp when I was twelve and thirteen – Camp Robinson Crusoe in Sturbridge. Do you know it? Did you ever hear of it?

JR: I haven't.

PC: Run by Josh Lieberman, I think his name was. Was there a Rabbi? Would be about my age. His name is Lieberman. Well, there probably is, and it's probably not their son. It wasn't a religious camp. It was very much the kind of camp where Pete Seeger came and sang. I learned all the labor songs, all the wonderful Joe Hill – all that kind of stuff. I loved that kind of camp that had Sunday morning meetings and wonderful square dances Monday night. It was my parents who picked that out for me. I mean, it fit my needs perfectly, but it was their idea. This leads to – you can go back and ask questions, but this leads to the good story, where, in 1929, my wonderful uncle and gorgeous aunt went to Hollywood. I obviously don't remember them – about a year old. Went to Hollywood. He helped start the Screenwriters' Guild – his name was Sidney Buchman – B-U-C-H-M-A-N, and helped start the Screenwriters' Guild, and wrote Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, and Here Comes Mr. Jordan, and the Jolson Story, and a whole lot of other movies that you see at night – I think Talk of the Town, but I'm not sure. I mean, there's a big thing in Who's Who that probably lists them all. And I had a standing invitation to Bel Air for the summer when I was in love with Cary Grant, right? And I never went. I was never sure if my father was jealous of my uncle or if it was the week on the train,

instead of flying there in no time, but I never went, and I went to camp instead. And by the time I got to Hollywood, which was when I was on the Advocates a couple of times – you know The Advocates? It was a show on Public Broadcasting that Mike Dukakis was part of, and it dealt with issues every week. Anyway, I was a guest, and the show took place in LA one week and in Boston the other week. And, of course, there I was in Boston, and they sent me to LA and put me up at a creepy hotel – I mean, this was public television, not ABC – a creepy hotel in Hollywood, and I was no longer in love with Cary Grant, and Hollywood was, at that time, not – it's better now. It went sort of down and back up again. And it was not a place you really wanted to be. And that was when I finally got to Hollywood. Meanwhile, my uncle was fingered by Larry Parks, who he had given his stock to in Hollywood, in the Jolson Story. He wasn't part of the Hollywood Ten, but it may have been the next twenty or so, testifying before that miserable committee. His remarks, his speech, or testimony I guess, is the right word, is probably still hanging out in the living rooms of some Hollywood lefties. It probably sounded like Jimmy Stewart. Anyway, it was, "Yes, I was, and I refuse to name names." So, of course, he had to leave the country. That was better than going to jail. And he went to London – not that London is – to me, London is probably better than Hollywood, but you don't want to be forced out of the country, in a democracy. I mean, that's not the way it should work.

JR: Right. So did that have a big impact on you, the whole McCarthy thing?

PC: It did. On the whole family, because we thought our phone was being tapped. We belonged to all the – as did a lot of people – belonged to all those organizations. They were on McCarthy's enemies list. You worried a lot about McCarthy. I mean, everybody did. You worried about the books that were in your library if somebody came. I mean, I don't think anybody who didn't live through that realizes just how horrifying that was in this country. Nothing about the Vietnam War, the Irangate, which, after all, didn't happen individually to people, was as terrifying as that was. I mean, being very poor and living

through the Depression was a different kind of terrible. Economic problems are always terrible for somebody. But this was for people who didn't have economic problems necessarily. And it wasn't just Hollywood. It was teachers. It was all through the country, and boy, we let that guy get away with murder, and in some cases, it was murder. I know there was an actor in New York who jumped out the window. I think he was on Mrs. Goldberg; you know that wonderful –

JR: Right, right. The Goldbergs.

PC: Yes. Philip-something. He committed suicide. Anyway, so that was – I think that was a politically forming experience in my life. I'll never forget what McCarthyism was like in this country, and when I hear some of the things that Republicans are dreaming up for various populations, it brings it all back – she says gently.

JR: In general, what kind of –

PC: Can you tell where I am?

JR: Yes, and I'm glad. It's good to know. I definitely agree with you. In general, what impact would you say your parents' politics have on you?

PC: I think they brought me up, so the way I feel was a perfectly rational adaptation of the way they felt. Although I'm more of an activist than they would ever have thought of being, what I'm concerned about is what they were concerned about, and that's why I know the words to all the labor songs and to six songs for democracy and know all about the Spanish Civil War, and which side I'm on. This was a guiding principle of my life, in a way that certainly Judaism wasn't. I mean, I was delighted to be Jewish. There was no other religion I wanted to be. There was something nifty about being part of a religion that had so many problems. I like that. It resonated with what I thought was important. As far as when I said prejudice never hit me – when we would go away, I remember reading in the paper the ads to see where it says churches nearby, and the code words

for “Don’t come if you’re Jewish.” I remember going through that kind of thing with my parents. But I associated that with the same kind of problem that labor union people had with the establishment. It was kind of an establishment – it wasn’t that it hit me that my religion was being attacked. I was being attacked, but not my religion, in the same way, that I would feel differently now.

JR: In what way would you feel differently now, or why?

PC: If I saw those kinds of ads now, I would feel that my religion was being attacked, in addition to me, and that it would be appropriate to organize some advocacy group to do in that peculiar way of violating the Constitution.

JR: How would you say that your relationship to Judaism has changed over time?

PC: Well, the first thing that changed it was finding out what happened during World War II – the Holocaust, and all those movies, and pictures, and news, about what Hitler and his merry friends were doing to millions of people overseas. I don’t know who could not be affected by that. I identified with that. From that moment on, I guess, my major wave of identifying with being Jewish was through movies, plays, and books. I was a great reader, starting at five, six years old. If my mother ever yelled at me – not yelled, like child abuse, but, “Peggy! Get your nose out of that book, and set the table,” for example. And books were always a major part of my life. Ask me later what I thought I would do with myself when I graduated college, which relates to that. Books were terribly important. Eventually, so was electronic media and theater – especially theater. I used to kid around with the industry I was trying to influence, about television, and say, “I can be bought with a theater ticket,” although I didn’t really mean it. [laughter] So, movies, like Shoah, all of those movies, I think, were very influential in setting an agenda in my head for what happened. Not an agenda because I had no expectation of acting on it. I was an activist who didn't think of acting on those issues. I was glad other people were, but I wasn't going to do that in part because I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know

anything, really, about Israel. I've still never been there. By the time Stanley and I figured we very much wanted to go, we didn't have enough money, or Stanley started a couple of businesses and couldn't get away. But money was a big problem – we didn't go anywhere. We didn't go overseas, except where his business sent him. And then, by the time we realized that we really wanted to go, I was a little nervous about getting blown up, and life got in the way. What was I saying before I said that? Where was I?

JR: You were talking about how your relationship to Judaism has changed over time.

PC: Oh. What makes me think very much of movies is that last night, I saw Left Luggage. Did you see that?

JR: I haven't seen it, but I heard it was very good.

PC: It's extraordinary. It's extraordinary. And those kinds of films, and other media objects, really focused me on what the problems were and how important it is to remember and work on these issues.

JR: How would you define your relationship to Judaism now?

PC: Now, the change in my relationship to Judaism actually started with the Jewish Women's Archive. When Gail first called me – and she called me because she had been co-chairman of the Mass Council on the Humanities, and in my work with Action for Children's Television, I was wrapped up with the two endowments, national and state. And I'd met her, and we talked, and she called me and said, "I'm leaving the endowment, and I'm starting this organization about women and history and archival material, and I want you to be on the board." And I said, "Gail, I love you, but there's an organization that I can't see myself being a help for – what do I know? I mean, anybody you talk to would be better for you than me." And she said, "I don't need you to tell me about being Jewish. I need you to help me start a non-profit organization, which you did." And on that basis, I said, "Okay." And that turned into a really life-changing experience.

Not that people from the outside would see it, but I know how I feel inside.

JR: So, in what ways do you feel differently?

PC: Well, I learned a lot, sitting, listening at those meetings. And I developed a kind of nice social relationship with all the women around that big table, including a couple of rabbis, and it was – what we talked about was different from anything I'd ever talked about with anybody. And so there's that part of it. There's the sense that I wondered what I lost by not having that earlier on. And then, my two daughters – I have two wonderful daughters; they're eight years apart – it was like having two only children. Well, one was born – I was going to say [laughter] how old they are, and I can't remember. One was born in '56, and so that's – see, my math is terrific.

JR: Forty-five.

PC: Yeah, right. And the other one is eight years older – I mean, eight years younger. That's the oldest one, and then the next one is eight years younger. They both married non-Jews, which didn't really bother me, although I would have preferred that they married somebody Jewish, mostly because I thought it's not really nifty to have another problem in a marriage – there are enough things you have to focus on making work without having this as a separate problem. But it didn't bother me philosophically. And they turned out to be wonderful men – and [laughter] my kids are still married to the same men, and they each have two children, each have a boy and a girl. Life is only perfect. But, what happened last year is that – well, before that, a few years before that, Debbie moved from the foothills of the mountains – she went to Hampshire College, and she sort of never came home. When she married Tim, who was the second guy in charge of the big social service agency in that part of the state – she, by the way, is a reading and writing specialist for early elementary years in the Easthampton school district. When she moved from the mountains to Northampton a few years ago, they joined the Conservative temple. You can see the story about this in the [inaudible] annual report.

JR: The annual report, right?

PC: And I was so delighted that I had a kind of relationship with this whole world before she was bat mitzvah'd because it was a very nice synergy of interests and ideas, and you saw in that story what a bang I got out of the fact that Hannah, who was everybody's ideal grandchild – the long straight hair, the bangs, loves to read, is a good student, is a good dancer – that's something I never was, by the way – a dancer. I used to hide when they went swimming at camp – hide in the bathroom. I'll tell you a funny story about that after I finish Hannah. My whole sense of that bat mitzvah was totally different because of the archive. I would have gone, and my daughter would have called me about the bat mitzvah, and I would have enjoyed it. But I felt really part of what's going on there. And the fact that she danced her – what did she dance? Danced her what? – her interpretation of the Elijah story, which was – was that her Haftarah?

JR: Yeah.

PC: Yes. See? [laughter]

JR: Very good.

PC: I try. It was thrilling. It was really thrilling. And certainly very unusual – I was amazed that a Conservative temple sort of let that happen because it was so unusual.

JR: Do you see your activist work as being related to Jewish values?

PC: I think Jewish values are my values, which is why I'm sort of glad I'm Jewish. I think that concerns about people – and I'm not sure I know what Jewish values are, except that I never heard anything about being Jewish that conflicted with the values I've grown up with, so I assume they're the same. So values never got in the way of my feelings about being Jewish or if I ever got more involved in being Jewish. The only reason I think I won't is because I've got [laughter] so much I'm involved in now, I can't see adding a

really activist piece to it. I tend to think of getting really involved in trying to make something happen. I have a Miss Fix-It complex that used to drive my kids crazy. You eat in a restaurant, and a meal comes, and there's something really wrong with it – it's ice-cold – and I would send it back to the kitchen, to a point where my kids said [laughter] if I kept doing that, they weren't going to go out to dinner with me. So, I have to think there's something I can fix to get really involved. I don't really feel that way about Jewish issues. There's one other thing that happened to me recently relating to being Jewish. I don't know if it was three or four years ago – at the Vineyard, where I've been going since the late '60s with Stanley, and we bought a house in 1972, a nice house, which wasn't terribly expensive, and if we hadn't bought it then, we wouldn't be in it now because it's on the pond and has a dock, and what happened to property on the Vineyard is obscene. But here we are, still here. Well, the Vineyard – I'm really a city girl. I love the kinds of things that you can do and get involved in, in the city. The idea of being here all summer, as much as it's beautiful, is not really my cup of tea. For years, I was only here for the long weekends because I had to go back to work, to the office. But when I closed the office in '95, I could stay here longer. Was it '95? Maybe it was '97 – I got to get that straight. I wasn't sure I loved that, but here we were. And then, the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center got bigger and opened a wonderful facility on the island. Given the interest I had all my life, I wouldn't have thought I would get terribly involved in a Hebrew Center. But I did. It's a delicious place. Do you know Stanley Snyder?

JR: No.

PC: Because he lives in Brookline. He put together, for Sunday evenings and Wednesdays, a film festival, in conjunction with the Jewish Film Festival in Boston. That's how I happened to see Left Luggage last night – and there's one every Sunday. And I go every Sunday. These kinds of things – they're infinitely preferable to cocktail parties, where you see the same people, and you know what they're going to say. On Wednesday night, a panel discussion or somebody talking, and they're incredible. There

was one on health last week with the head of the Dana Farber, the head of surgery at Mass General, and somebody else. I learned more about healthcare than reading all the articles. That isn't my field, but it was fascinating. And all these evenings are terrific, and I find myself spending more time with the Hebrew Center than anything else I do on the island.

JR: Interesting.

PC: It is interesting. It's because it's so terrific what they're doing. Then they have some food before the movie, and on Wednesday, the Wednesday person or people take part in a breakfast the next day, where there's a lot of questions, and it's delicious. I don't mean the breakfast.

JR: Right. [laughter] So, can you tell me a little bit how you first got involved in the issue of children's television programming?

PC: There were two things I was going to talk to you about.

JR: Oh, you were going to tell me what your original career plan was.

PC: Oh, yes, to show you how interested I was in books. I was going to be either a librarian or open the best children's bookstore in Boston. There used to be a big dealer of children's books in Boston in the late '20s and early '30s, and I was going to do something like that. I actually had an application to Simmons to go to their graduate program in Library Science. I actually wanted to be a rare book librarian. I didn't see myself dealing with a whole lot of children, she says gently. I think that the way I'm built, I'm better off [laughter] talking about dealing with them. And maybe that comes from having children around. So what happened – so I did have children around the house, and because they were watching television, I watched what was on public broadcasting. This was 1968 that I started my [inaudible]. Before it [was] incorporated, I mean, these were the first stirrings of that, in '68, Public broadcasting, as a network – the law that set

up public broadcast, CPD, as the pass-through for money, didn't happen until 1967. So although Boston had a public broadcasting station – because it was better than anyplace in the country – better than New York – ha, ha, ha. I'm sort of a real old New Yorker, and I thought I was going to miss all the culture, and I do miss the theater – there isn't enough theater here for me, but there's certainly enough music, and, well, dance is iffy, now that Dance Umbrella has gone out of business. But television – they do better than anybody. But even then, there were very few programs – I think there was Mr. Rogers. The first time I saw Mr. Rogers, I thought there was a singing psychiatrist on television. And the networks were certainly not doing much. This was before technology gave you the options for choice. And I thought, "There must be something we can do to get more wonderful stuff on television for kids," because it was sort of wall-to-wall monster cartoons with an occasional Bugs Bunny. I was thinking about it as if it were a library. If this were a library of video, you could have a nervous breakdown from the lack of choice for kids in that library. You'd fire the librarian who thought that was all it should be. So I got some friends over at the house, people who were involved in various aspects of children's education, caring about children, and said, "What can we do to make some noise?" And ended up with four women, all of whom had worked and weren't working because they had young children. One by one, they disappeared. One went into the real estate business, and one moved, and that's how I became the sound bite for Action for Children's Television, and it turned into a non-profit organization with all the right rules to enable you to be a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible place. Looking for money – although I must say that finding money was the easiest thing we did. Our timing was very good, and we got an incredible amount of money considering who we were, how big we were, how likely we were to be effective, coming from Newtonville, and changing billion-dollar businesses. So I started ACT and looked around – with a small, small staff, a lot of volunteers at the beginning, or a few volunteers – and looked for what buttons to push to get people to listen, and found the law, figuring that the law is a good place to start. And found a law without which you wouldn't be talking to me. And this was the

Communications Act of 1934, which set up how radio worked in this country. But the radio stations had to be licensed to use a piece of the spectrum to enable them to make their noises. And this was adapted for television, so I discovered that, lo and behold, every TV station had a license which required them, in return for a piece of the spectrum, to return the public interest, convenience, and necessity. I wasn't sure what was convenient or necessary about television, but I figured the public interest must mean choice, just like it does in the library. So from the very beginning, ACT was designed to help provide more choices for children, and in the process, some delicious choices, and to fight censorship as a way of dealing with children's television issues. That's because I'm so violently opposed to censorship, and because for the most part – true then, and true today – people who think about [the] problem of media and children want to ban it, get rid of it, censor it. I don't mean censor it in the home – using the off button more often is not censorship – I mean, that's a parent being responsible. But the idea that you can get the government to say no to television content, to me, is as terrible as doing it in print. And a lot of our efforts were designed to fight, mostly, the "moral majority," who had all kinds of dumb ideas to get television to conform to their ideas of what it should look like. Generally, conservatives are against sex. Sometimes I wonder how they procreate [laughter] – they're against sex.

JR: They do it so well. They have so many kids. [laughter]

PC: That's right. [laughter] Against sex on television and for adults. They don't only want to fix children's television – they want to make it all suitable for children. And the liberals are determined to get rid of violence. And that's still true. You have a number of senators and representatives now, this very day, working on setting up... [Recording paused.]

JR: So what kinds of things did ACT work on?

PC: Well, a major goal was to get a rule passed, which actually turned into the idea, we need a law – because you couldn't get the broadcasters to do anything unless there was a law – to encourage choice as part of their license mandate, which turned into the Children's Television Act of 1990, which had to be revised a couple of times so that broadcasters paid even lip service to it. We did that, and it's not effective the way it should be, but you can't have tight regulations about content. You can talk about that you have to provide three hours a week of programs specifically designed to educate children, but when they say this educates, it's very hard to say, "No, it doesn't," because everything educates. Obviously, it meant education that was meaningful. So that's one place where we worked on solutions. Secondly, we discovered along the way that children's television was incredibly commercialized – twice as much as adults. There's a concept of primetime in television – the 8:00 to 11:00 spot at night, and that's considered an adult time. And the rules that the industry had for itself, mostly so they could figure out how to price commercials, were that you couldn't have more than nine and a half minutes of ads per hour – this was in the '70s and '80s. And because children's television was daytime television, that came under the rules the broadcasters used – this isn't government rules. It isn't even self-regulation. They were doing it for themselves, not to serve the public. And the daytime was sixteen minutes of commercials an hour. So we sat and watched [laughter] with a stopwatch and discovered, lo and behold, kid's television had sixteen minutes of ads an hour, and adults had nine and a half. That made a very good press story because it's so preposterous, right?

JR: Yeah.

PC: I mean, you don't have to be a child advocate [laughter] to think that's terrible. And so we worked on that, and it's a little complicated where it went from there. We did get a reduction in the amount of advertising. But what happened in the '90 s is that, with the synergy with computers, and all the kinds of new technology that's coming on board, there were all kinds of nauseating ways to pitch product to kids – and to the rest of us

too, as a matter of fact. And these rules about number of minutes become less and less significant. You really have to talk about it differently in this new environment. The other thing is that kids were the first ones to get what some in the press called "program-length commercials." In fact, the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission use that lingo to describe what all those toy-based programs were, out of Hasbro, and Hasbro was involved in the producing of the programming, that you had what were really commercials disguised as adventure. We worked on that. We never really solved that problem to my satisfaction. On the other hand, we reduced the number of programs that fell under that category significantly. There were seventy series during the ‘80s, the end of the ’70s into the ’80s – seventy series that you could characterize as thirty-minute commercials, and that’s way down. The problem with that is not only that kids shouldn’t be the target for that kind of thing, that it confused editorial and commercial speech, which isn’t appropriate for anybody – but that it kept all the other stuff off the air. We worked on that for a long time. A third thing is support for public broadcasting because what was particularly important to us is that you needed the alternative. I mean, in a library for example, I don’t care much for how much junk there is, or how much nauseating content there is – I mean, even how much horrifying [laughter] content there is, as long as there’s a significant number of alternatives, so you don’t have to pay attention the bad stuff. So public broadcasting is where the alternatives were, and we focused on the need for money for PBS. And then, with the advent of home video, which – children’s television has changed tremendously since I started ACT. And most of the changes had nothing to do with me. They’re technological changes. It helped, I think – at least, other people think so too – that we were making noise about the needs of children and making a lot of noise. The press was very good to us, in part because we were so good on censorship issues, I think. It’s important for any technology to talk about the special needs of children. But first, there was home video and VCR technology, which enabled parents to time-change programs. The three networks used to put on their preschool programs at eight o’clock at night because that's when they sort

of owned the set. Before that, it was earlier hours for the independent stations, and at eight o'clock, it was network programming. Well, if they do a Dr. Seuss special at eight o'clock, and everybody has to be in bed at seven o'clock because it's a school night, it's not terribly helpful if you don't have some way to tape the program. We got more complaints about that than almost anything early on. "If they finally do something good, why can't we watch it?" And certainly, VCR technology helped that, if you can really figure out how to use them. And so that was one. And the videotapes – there are an incredible number of terrific videos in the marketplace. It's unfortunate that most of them start out with a number of minutes of promotion for other stuff, but parents who care enough, I suppose, can sit there and fast-forward through the garbage. But there is – available at least to people who can afford the money to rent it, and then libraries carry it now, so that's a wonderful help for families, particularly families of young children. I think that young children's programming is in very good shape now. Public broadcasting does a wonderful job with it, and the video marketplace is full of nifty stuff, like Weston Woods – W-E-S-T-O-N, Weston Woods dramatizes, in wonderful animation, some breathtakingly wonderful children's books, the kind of things that you want your kid to be part of. And kids looking at it on television also want to read it – it works both ways.

JR: What kinds of strategies –?

PC: But then comes – wait. So there was the video. Then comes cable, which provided more options. Now granted, it also provides some creepy programming that you certainly don't want your kids to watch. But we feel that just means you just have to be a more concerned parent, that you have to turn it off, that you have to have rules in Congress that provide daycare and babysitting money so that parents who work are not up the creek when it comes to taking care of their kids. But cable, I think, has been a boon to choice. And that goes along with satellite and other ways of getting stuff into the home. And what's coming, with digital television – someday [laughter], I mean people thought it would be here sooner, but it's going to be here – is that there's one station now. There

will be six, at least, in the future – six digital platforms, which won't all be used for programming – there'll be data delivery and stuff, but it creates an option for more media. If you use it for high-definition transmission, you don't have the six options, but for the most part, I think, except for certain things like ball games and dance programs, maybe, there'll be less high-definition television than there will [be] lots of channels. And then you have to make sure that public broadcasting is adequately funded to provide stuff on their platforms. And then there's the connection with the computer. And the computer has changed the way a lot of kids spend time in front of that screen. And even with the economic disadvantage, eventually, kids will be able to use computers in school and in places outside of school. Video started in video arcades – they still exist, but everybody's got it in the house now. And that's where that's going, which is the good news and bad news. The good news is there's an opportunity for more choice; the bad news is the stuff that they produce is enough to make your hair stand on end. [laughter] I think that does the television.

JR: Yeah, that's good. So what kinds of strategies and campaigns did ACT use to make these kinds of changes happen?

PC: First, we used the law. And one thing I discovered through my activities with ACT, which by the way I named in the shower one night. I thought it would be good if it begins with A because then we're always first in a list. It came to me, and it's worked very well. I discovered the law is a nifty agent for change. When I was in college, I had no desire to go to law school. I didn't want to be a doctor, and I didn't want to be a lawyer. And I wonder if anybody says "Indian chief" anymore.

JR: No.

PC: "Doctor, lawyer, Indian chief" – I bet that's not acceptable nursery rhyme lingo. I don't even like going to the doctor. [laughter] I don't want to look at blood. And lawyering always sounded very boring. I developed a real respect for the law as a way of making

change. All these jokes about lawyers – I don't agree with any of them. Not that I haven't met my share of peculiar lawyers. So we went to the law, and the law was very helpful to ACT because the rules were in place, going way back, to set up a diverse, better system. There were rules at the Federal Trade Commission that said that deceptive commercial speech is illegal. It's unfair, and deceptive speech is illegal in the commercial world. Now, deceptive speech in the editorial world is what makes newspapers work, right? That's legal, and you have to find other ways to deal with editorial speech problems, and I think the only thing to even think about is more choice, more speech – all those nice First Amendment cases. The more speech, the better. And I really love that part of the law – the Constitutional issues relating to speech. With commercial issues, we went to the Federal Trade Commission. Both of these efforts resulted in multi-year – what do I want to call it – investigations at both agencies with testimony and rules and laws passed, and then hiatus, where nothing happened, when the Republicans were in power. And it was very exciting, actually. Considering that we were based in Newtonville, which sounds like the middle of nowhere, if you haven't lived in Boston, and that we were underfunded – nobody made a lot of money, even me. I thought it wasn't appropriate to make a lot more money than anybody else who was working there, and that's how we sort of operated. The fact that we got front-page stories in major newspapers, often – I mean, we have so many press clippings that we started a library early on – oh, yes, my library. We started a library at ACT early on in one room of these offices because I had to be sure that when I testified, or that when any of us testified, what we were saying was right. We had to put this stuff into some kind of order that you could refer to it. So we always had a librarian on staff. See, even then, I had a sense of archives. [laughter]

JR: Exactly. You're perfect for this.

PC: Always had a librarian on staff, and the library actually, quite early on, was – the American Library Association listed it as a special library. And people came from around

the world to use our library. I mean, it was one room, filled with stuff. Because we, in filing the initial petitions to the agency – we filed lots of petitions, and we sued lots of companies, and we sued the FCC, when they didn't act, and we sued the FTC. We had pro bono lawyers who were superb, and then eventually, we had a lawyer on staff, one lawyer – they'd stay – terrific young lawyers in the Boston area. They'd graduate [from] Harvard Law School, go work for a year or two for a boutique law firm and then come to us for two years. They each stayed about two years because they could do work at a level at ACT that they would have to be a partner at Hale & Dorr to do. We were filing petitions. We were running all kinds of investigations relating to these agencies that all were legal-based. So they went from being our lawyer to running the world. [laughter] It was very satisfying. But ask me another question. I can't remember where I was going.

JR: One thing that I meant to ask you before is whether you had been working before you had kids.

PC: Oh, yes. I sort of always worked. But the level of work was not the kind of thing that you read about now in the business page. My first job out of college, real job, was the WPIX – the independent station in New York. I ran the film department. I got hired as a script typist, but that didn't last very long – in part because I really couldn't type very well [laughter], and that wasn't what I wanted to do in my life. And I ran the film department at a time when almost all of television was film-based – a little live programming. That's when Betty Furness got in trouble with Westinghouse Refrigerator. She was doing an ad for a Westinghouse Refrigerator on television live, and she goes to open the door, and the door wouldn't open. It was a more exciting medium in those days. [laughter]

JR: You never knew what could happen.

PC: That's right, and some of these dramas were live, which made it feel much more like theater. It wasn't beautifully produced because it was difficult to move those cameras around, but it had a vibrancy that is missing too often in the television world. Anyway,

there I was, at WPIX, and I loved it. My friends were jealous. My salary was forty dollars a week, maybe forty-two, I think, by the time I stopped. I spent most of it on cabs going home at midnight – I ran talent shows at midnight. It was a glitzy sort of dumb job, has nothing to do with the fact that I got involved in the television business later in life. That really related to children, and the other one related to the fact that that's where the agency I went to for jobs sent me – they sent me to three places: the Advertising Council, which supposedly works to make advertising better, but it's an industry group, and it really doesn't do that; WPIX; and an ad agency, I think J. Walter Thompson. I got these creepy entry jobs at each one. I mean, they all said yes. I picked PIX because it sounded the most exciting. So that was the first job. Then, I got married, and I moved to Providence first because that's where Stanley was working.

JR: And what kind of business was your husband in?

PC: Was what?

JR: What kind of business did your husband do?

PC: Well, that first business was a roofing business, which only lasted for a couple of years, that his uncle owned. He was trained as an engineer – graduate of Brown, and then graduate school at Harvard. I think he thought that was sort of boring too. But the first jobs in Providence were – I'm trying to think, when were those jobs? I think my first job was at Math Reviews. Math Reviews is a very esoteric math magazine for the most sophisticated math professionals. And it reviews journal articles, that kind of thing, so they're the précis of all the articles that are worth paying attention to internationally. I couldn't understand anything in the magazine. I was copy editing, which you can do if you can read. [laughter] You can compare what it should say with what it did say. The only thing I learned of any value – well, it wasn't even valuable after I left there – was the Russian alphabet, so I could make sure the Russian articles were in the correct alphabetical order. It was a nice atmosphere, but not very satisfying. So I started the

first of my businesses. I decided, for the level of sophistication I had but the lack of training in any particular field, which meant that anything I was doing would be kind of low down on the totem pole, that it was better to be in my own business. So I opened an art gallery on the third floor of the Arcade building, which is modeled on the Milan Arcade – a nifty building. I had original prints, lithographs, that's what I mean by prints – it wasn't reproductions, and I did framing, which, between my husband and my father-in-law, they sort of set me up with a little frame shop, and I could cut mats on the bevel. I would go to the museum, and all I would look at was the mat. And that was a lot of fun. I never really made any money. I didn't lose any, which was important, because we weren't making any. But we sort of put up with – I think I thought eventually I would make money because otherwise, it was a dumb thing to do, but in terms of contributing to the economic needs of the family. But we were sort of carefree in those days – no children, an apartment for a hundred dollars a month, with a balcony [laughter], and I loved that. I was getting to the point where, for example, the head of the RISD – Rhode Island School of Design – Museum came and said, "Peggy, we want to teach you how to make French mats so we don't have to go to Boston." I think the same day, my husband came home and said, "I'm changing jobs, and we're going to move to Boston." And I actually thought that was more important than my framing/print business and much more exciting because the whole idea of living in Boston was more exciting than living in Providence. Providence at that time was not like Providence today, which is really more fun. Because Stanley grew up in Providence, we go back every once in a while, and I went to the fires on the river –

JR: Right. Waterfire, yeah. It's nice.

PC: Ah, was that breathtaking! Really, I got such a bang out of that. And some of my favorite restaurants are in Providence now, which is sort of amazing – the Empire Diner, is it? I forget the name of it – there are a couple of them that are just mind-boggling. In any case, we came to Boston. My first jobs in Boston were – for example, at the Harvard

Psych Lab, analyzing nonsense syllables – if you can think of a less delightful thing to be doing, you tell me. I started dreaming in nonsense syllables, which are purposely not meaningful. And neither was this job. And eventually, I started another business – this was after my kids were born, or at least after one of them was born. I had gone to a book fair at an elementary school, and I thought, "Gee, I can do better than this." I was very interested in children's books for forever that I can remember. I would say I collected them, except I wasn't a collector in the traditional sense of that word. I mean, I bought illustrated children's books, if they were cheap enough because I loved them. So I looked at this bookstore and thought, "I can do better than that," and opened, with my neighbor, a children's book fair business called Quality Book Fairs. And loved it! All up and down New England, from Swampscott, north, to south, I don't know where south, and did Shady Hill and public schools, and it was a lot of fun – designing stuff for the tables, the Winnie the Pooh illustrations. [laughter] It was nice. I never really made any money at that either, but I enjoyed it. Let's see. Was it at the same time? Oh, then I stopped doing that when my second daughter was born because it meant getting out of the house a lot – a little during the day because I had to put the book fairs together, but a lot at night – they had night meetings, at the schools, and it wasn't all Boston, and I found it was too tough to keep that going. So I closed the book fair business when I really thought that I would open it again, at some point, because it was easy to open – you got books on consignment – and when the kids were older, I would go back to it. In the meantime, I was running the Newton Creative Arts Council, which was a volunteer job which had a volunteer crew of PTA people from every school. There were thirty schools in Newton, including elementary, junior high, and two high schools. And we talked – I felt like Alexander Cohen, the theater impresario – talked to all kinds of people in the arts into doing programs inside the schools for free. At least, they did them for free in schools that had no money, in the poor neighborhoods, and they got paid a minimal amount in the schools where the PTAs raised money. And I loved that! The drummer from the Boston Symphony doing a drumming program; Richard Lewis, the poet and teacher, putting on

poetry workshops – that kind of thing. Theater – talked Paul Benedict, the wonderful actor in Boston – he's in New York now, actually, on Broadway, but – into dramatizing a piece of Mr. Popper's Penguins. Do you know that book?

JR: Yeah.

PC: It's a wonderful book. [laughter] I have a paper mache penguin in the corner of my bedroom down here, whose name is Captain Cook. Remember him?

JR: Yup.

PC: Yes. Anyway, and so I ran that for two years, and when that was over, I thought maybe I should try to do something about television – all these people were so concerned about the arts. Let's see, '68 – when was my second daughter born? '56. I guess Claudie was about four or five, my younger daughter. I told you, I looked at TV with her and thought, "Gee, we can do better than this." So when ACT started, that's the end of my career.

JR: So, in doing your work with ACT, did you experience any conflict between your work and family responsibilities, having small children?

PC: Always. Always, every day. But you sort of deal with them. You try to work it so that you don't feel guilty about how you're treating your children. My older daughter was old enough for me to worry about less – at least she was a thinking, sentient human being. But the young one, I thought, needed me more than I was available. ACT wasn't incorporated until 1970, and that's when we started getting grants. And in 1970, Claudie was – when was she born? '56 and eight is –

JR: '64.

PC: So she was six. And that's really very young. And the good news is that at the beginning, I was running around less because nobody knew who we were. There were fewer speaking engagements. Every year, we had a conference, and the conference became a very exciting event because we thought it was important for a group like us to look like we were a bigger deal than, in fact, we were so that our magazines, our newsletters, even our press releases, were designed for us by wonderful graphic people who worked for us for nothing. I mean, it still costs money to produce, but we got a lot of pro bono help. I assume that the archive tries to do the same thing. And I remember we separated out the issues of children's television, of terrific children's television, into various books. For example, we commissioned articles on children with disabilities in television, the first noise on that problem that ever happened. And the arts, how cable could help, and stereotypes. The booklets, even today, look nifty. And Grant Tinker, who at the time was running NBC, once said to me, "Who does your graphics? I read all your stuff on the way back and forth to the coast." And I thought, "See, it works!" Because if it didn't look good, he never would have read them. And the same for the conferences. We never had a conference at a hotel, except the Charles for a little luncheon, because it's right next door to my condo, so we got a good deal, [laughter] she says. So, we had the first one at the Kennedy Memorial Hospital for children in Boston, then at Yale, with the law school and the school of art, at Harvard, with the law school and the ed school, at the High Museum in Atlanta, where we had Maurice Sendak come – Maurice hates to fly, but I got to know him, because of children's books, and he came, and there was a school fair in Cambridge where they had a button maker so that you drew something, and then put it under a plastic circle, put it in this machine – have you ever seen one?

JR: Yeah, I've seen this.

PC: And you squeeze it, and you end up with a button – like a political button? And the whole conference was on the arts and kid's television – which certainly, there wasn't

enough of it. I thought I would give everyone a creative art experience. All these broadcasters, everybody came to our conferences. I used to think, is that because they're so good, or they're worried about what we're going to address? But everybody – heads of networks came, and it was sort of amazing. I thought it's important to give them an art experience. So I had my button maker, and it was so successful that I had to hide it, or nobody would have gone back in to listen to the panels. And Sendak was drawing his little creepy, crazy people in the circles. And everybody wanted a Sendak button! So, after the conference, I remember Sendak called me and said, "I need some more buttons for my cousins!" And I sent him the paper, and he drew it, and he sent it back, and I made buttons [laughter] for his cousins. We had a lot of fun with things. Sometimes it sounds so serious to talk about activism, and there was a lot of fun involved.

JR: This might sound like a weird question, but I'm curious whether you saw your work, or see your work as fitting into women's traditional kinds of work or challenging that kind of work?

PC: I think when it started, we were called housewives in every story in the paper. I never did anything about it. I thought you can only work on one issue at a time. Gradually, when you are responsible for rule-makings – that's what these things were, I couldn't think of the world – rule-makings, at the Federal Trade Commission, on both coasts, rule-makings at the Federal Communications Commission. The story of how we got to the Federal Communications Commission may not fit in what you're doing because it's a long political story, but how did we get to the Commission? I mean, here we were, housewives. I think that word should be stricken from everybody's vocabulary. You may be an at-home parent. You may even be an at-home dilettante without children. But who's married to a house? When we started getting the Washington world to respond to us, people stopped thinking of us as parents. And we didn't stop thinking of us as parents – I mean, we had to do both. But we were part of that world, of lobbyists, and

industry, that either made changes happen or didn't. And that's what happened to my perception of what we were. I mean, at the beginning, there's no question; we were parents. We met at home; we didn't have an office. The first grant we got from the Marco Foundation in 1970 was for $160,000, a two-year grant. And we spent it very slowly because we were afraid that might be the last money we get. But it wasn't, and we got money from Ford, and Carnegie, and a whole lot of other places that we asked for specific project grants, and as we paid some staff, and as we got to be a professional organization, which is different – you can be 501(c)(3), and not be terribly professional, although from day one, we had annual reports, and we tried to conduct ourselves like a Fortune 500 company and used all the rules that applied to going public – all those rules that business has to abide by. And we stopped feeling like this was women's work. In fact, we had men on staff, so it was a little hard to think of us as women's work when we were both sexes.

JR: What would you say were the greatest challenges for you in doing this kind of work?

PC: Fighting a multi-billion-dollar industry, or a few of them. We had arrayed on the other side of us broadcasters and media people, cable and all that – although they thought of us as less of a problem than broadcasters did – but broadcasters, toy manufacturers, food manufacturers – we made lots of noise about the fact that all the ads to kids for food were for sugary foods and unhealthy foods. The National Association of Broadcasters – I mean, there was once a picture in Broadcasting Magazine, which was the trade journal for broadcasting, and it said, "War Room Deals with ACT's Issues," something – and they had a big room, big table, you know those kinds of trade articles – big table, and around the table were representatives, one each, of all these companies, and all these businesses, and all these institutions that were there to make money. There wasn't one woman in the picture, and the little description under the picture was, "This is who's gathered together to fight everything ACT cares about." That was a challenge, let me tell you. A big challenge. And I think that's one. So, fighting vested

interests is one challenge. And the second one was fighting elected representatives, officials who cared not at all about serving the public. And so, when Reagan and Bush were presidents, one after the other were President – it wasn't as bad as it is now because – well, not this minute now, but a few weeks ago. We had a Congress that at least wasn't all Republican. But trying to get something to happen when the whole political structure of the country is opposed to letting you get anywhere was the second challenge. And the thing is that the President appoints the people who sit on the two regulatory agencies that we dealt with – we didn't really deal with Congress very often, although our Children's Television Act had to come through Congress. But most of what we did was regulatory agencies, and whoever's in the White House controls those agencies, so at one point, the chairman of the Commission, his name was Mark Fowler, F-O-W-L-E-R. I talked about how he was a creature most foul – F-O-U-L – for children's television. He was simply impossible. So that was the other problem. Raising money was never a problem, interestingly enough.

JR: What was most rewarding for you about this work?

PC: The successes that we had, the political and legal, legislative successes, because they came in spite of the problems. When the problems are enormous, and yet you win occasionally, the times you win become very satisfying because the effort to keep you from winning was so strong. So that was a major help. And then every once in a while – not too often, but every once in a while, there'd be something on television that was spectacular for children, and not just on public broadcasting. On public broadcasting, it wasn't once in a while – just about everything they did was designed to help children. So I don't consider that the result of anything I talked about – they would have done that anyway. I mean, Sesame Street was not because of ACT. We were very supportive of all those efforts, and we tried to help them get big funding – that kind of advocacy work we did. But we didn't do that. They did it. But there was, for example, the ABC after-school specials, which took terrific children's novels, mostly – novels for elementary and

junior high school, late elementary, junior high – and dramatized them with the best actors in the country. And they still are classic, wonderful television for children. Like Blind Sunday. I mean, just wonderful stuff. It wasn't on every day; it wasn't even on every week – I think it was every other week, in the season – fall, winter, not in the summer; stuff isn't on in the summer. But there it was, in the afternoon, twice a month, and when that kind of stuff exists now, with tape and what-not, it can stay around forever in a library, like a book. The vice-president of programming for ABC would say, every time he opened his mouth – he was a very nice guy – would say, "These are on the air because of Action for Children's Television." Now, it's very unusual for the industry to give a group like us the credit for that. Usually, they say, "We're doing this because we care so much and because our license is so important." And whenever we got credit for something extraordinary, that was very satisfying too.

JR: I was wondering if you were involved in or influenced by the women's movement at all.

PC: I was. I certainly was. I was at. – what was it? Anne [Riffey's?] house – the writer – for a very early meeting on what would develop into NOW [National Organization for Women]. But it was very early – in a barn, on the Vineyard, although she eventually went to Nantucket, and I never see her because Nantucket doesn't talk with the Vineyard – I'm kidding [laughter]. Sort of [inaudible]. And this was the first time almost anybody in that room had heard how these issues were going to start to get handled. And I remember one thing that the presenter – I don't remember if the presenter of the way it was going to work was Anne or was somebody who was in the room – that, this was the discussion [laughter] of the no bra, getting together, and talking about your sex life in consciousness-raising sessions. And I thought to myself, "That's not me. I mean, I'm not going to get together with a bunch of dames and talk about my sex life. And what in heaven's name is that going to accomplish?" Now, maybe it did accomplish something. But there's activism and activism. I mean, there were other –

[END OF TRACK 1]

PC: – which started in the Sixties, where violence was the only thing talked about – that was an issue before ACT, but nothing else was. And choice, and all those issues, were not there. We put those issues on the map. The legal issues were why because that meant that newspapers wrote about it all the time – I mean, I have a set of clippings – for all the noise, it's not wonderful now either, right? But public broadcasting has money – it would still have money. But it's easier to get money when some group that is listened to is saying how important you are for kids. So, I think that for the kinds of things we helped make happen that were good, there were a lot of people who felt warm and fuzzy toward us. For the advocacy that was driving the industry crazy, there were people who were very much affected by what we were doing and hated every minute of it, right? So, it was a two-way sword. And in Washington, there are still people around who are affected by what ACT talked about, and depending on their political persuasions, they either like it or they don't. Ed Markey, for example, who's a Congressman from Malden, Massachusetts – Malden and surrounding, the way these districts are now, you can't just say one city – was an extraordinary help to us. We wouldn't have gotten anywhere in Congress without his concern for this issue and his focus on making something happen. And he's still concerned, and he's still in Congress, fortunately. Is that an answer to your question?

JR: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. What would you say the impact of your work has been on you?

PC: Well. First of all, it kept me very busy. [laughter] I was delighted to have found something to work on for over thirty years that I thought was important and that was making at least a little bit of difference. I don't think the difference that I made is necessarily worth all the kudos that came my way. I used to think, "Are they reacting to all that pressure? Do they really think what we're doing is important?" But push comes to shove, it is important to talk about children and media because they spend so much

time with it. And we certainly helped make that happen. So what was the question?

JR: What kind of impact your work had on you?

PC: I think it helped my inferiority complex. I think I had one, and you sort of never get rid of something like that. Oh, I know the story I was going to tell you about swimming. To a degree, and still today, I think, “Who the hell am I that I should get an honorary degree? Who the hell am I that I should get these kudos in the press?” And I certainly felt it sitting with Women Who Dared, which is, after all, why you called me. Who am I to compare to these women who go to Bosnia to change the world there, to open their mouths when they’re twelve about how something isn't working and managing to do something about it that works? And it’s not just Bosnia – where else were these characters? Reading about them was mind-boggling. I would think, “I don’t have the courage to put myself in those paths of danger.” And that, I think, is the reason why you can develop an inferiority complex. I was never able to think of really putting myself in physical danger. I think it came from a mother who said, “You have to wear your lisle stockings,” when I was very young. “Don’t roller-skate over there.” It was always, “You’re going to fall down.” And that sort of sticks with you, that way of thinking about taking risks. They always took political risks, but I didn’t take physical risks, and every time I see a story about kids, or young adults, or old women for that matter, who are taking real physical risks that were not piled on them – it was choice – I feel like I could do something if I had to. But from choice, I wasn’t going to do that. To show you what I mean, when I was applying to college – and this is a funny, funny story I’m telling on myself. When I was applying to college, I read the college reports about what the school is like that are available – what are they? – not annual reports. You know what I mean. The stuff you read about the schools. And almost all of them said, “And to graduate, you have to swim…”.

[END OF INTERVIEW]