

**Interview with Catherine Roraback, by Marilyn Kuberka, for the Oral History Archive of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, February 14, 2003.**

MARILYN KUBERKA: The following is an interview with Catherine Roraback, a noted Civil Rights attorney for well over fifty years. This interview is being conducted in connection with the Oral History Archive of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. The auto tape and transcript of this interview will become the property of both the Hall of Fame and The Hartford College for Women. The mission of the oral history archive is to record and preserve the voices of women who have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. I'm Marilyn Kuberka, an intern with the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, and I'm very happy to have this opportunity to interview Catherine Roraback, a leading civil rights attorney. Attorney Roraback, please state your full name at birth for the record.

CATHERINE RORABACK: Catherine Gertrude Roraback.

MK: Where and when were you born?

CR: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on September 17, 1920.

MK: Who are your parents?

CR: My father is Albert Roraback. He was a minister in Brooklyn. My mother was Gertrude Ditmars when she married my father. She was a native of Brooklyn.

MK: And who are your siblings and when were they born?

CR: I had a brother who was Albert, Jr. He was born in May of 1915, but don't ask me the date. And my sister, Elizabeth, was born in February of 1918.

MK: What were their eventual occupations?

CR: My brother went into advertising and worked for various magazines. My sister became a social worker after her family had been raised. She married first.

MK: Let's talk a little bit about your early years. What was it like growing up

during the Great Depression?

CR: Actually, I was born in 1920, in the tender years, as you may or may not remember. So, you start growing up when you were eleven years old. [laughs] You begin to hit the depression period. In Brooklyn - we were living in Brooklyn – and you were very conscious of everything - residential areas, single-family homes. People would come to the door for food. My family was always giving out - that's one of my family's, which contrasts so vividly with what the world is like today, is that I, as an eleven, twelve or thirteen-year-old would answer the door and talk to these men who were coming for food, and no one seemed to think it was unusual, you know? It was a standard thing -my mother wouldn't have them come through the front door. I was to ask them to go to the back door. And she would have them in the kitchen, and cook a meal for them, and they would sit and eat in the kitchen. That was a very vivid memory. Another memory I have of the Depression is I watched a friend's father was taking her and me to something in New York, and we went across the bridge into Manhattan, and went up the Bowery, and that's when I saw the breadlines and I saw the men - it was always men in those days. The women were - I never saw in the streets, and they never came to the door. I suppose they were somewhere or other. [laughs] I remember men standing on street corners, selling apples, in order to get some money to buy food. Oh, and my father, who was a minister - people in the church were having a hard time, too, so we didn't necessarily have a steady income of our own. Especially - this is a real reflection of the impact of the Depression is that Easter Sunday was the Sunday that the church might make up my father's salary, which hadn't been paid, probably for two or three months or something. Or maybe more. I never knew the full details. I knew that it was very important in our family that

Easter be a beautiful, clear day because otherwise there wouldn't be a big congregation in church, and Papa's salary wouldn't be paid. That affected me for years afterward. Whatever kind of day it was on Easter was terribly important psychologically to me. [laughs] It had no relationship to my well-being, shall we say. One other thing - when I went to high school, the schools were jammed with students because there were no jobs. And so, schools were running on two and three sessions. I'm very proud - as a result of that, my father sent my sister and me to a private school in Brooklyn for high school because it was just that the educational system had gone downhill because of that.

MK: And so, would you like to talk more about your experience at the school?

CR: Oh, sure. I should say also - I'm not sure whether this was the Depression - or it probably wasn't the Depression, but I have one very vivid memory as a child. And at that point, I must have been six or seven-years-old. No, earlier because I wasn't in school. I went with my mother, who was going to a fair. I remember it was for the benefit of the blind. She went every year. It was put on by the churches in Brooklyn. And we were walking down a street in Brooklyn, where there were these homes with the front steps going up to the main floor - the old, brownstone-type houses, which are now occupied by immigrants, probably - certainly not very well-off people. And I made some remark. I have no idea what it was. But I remember my mother stopping me on the street. There were people sitting there on their steps. She was giving me a lecture about how everyone in this world is equal, and I should never think I was better than someone else. That made a huge impression on me. [laughs] When I went to high school - it was called Berkeley Institute, a school for girls - and it was the school my mother had gone to. When I was going, I went shopping with my mother ahead of time to get

something to wear to school, and I remember that I knew it was the only thing I would get. I would get one dress for school. And I picked out this dress, and it just didn't fit. In terms of the social package, I felt terribly out of things because I had not - I just had this one dress and it wasn't what the girls were wearing at that school. [laughs] But the school itself was a wonderful school. The largest class I was in high school consisted of fourteen students. And they had excellent, excellent teachers for English and Latin and History, and so forth. And just imagine with a ratio like that in your class, the level of education you got was just tremendous. When I got to college, I was a little bored because it was not as good. It was a great school. We also had the advantage of being in New York, too, that there were all sorts of other things that are mixed into your education. The History teacher - anytime we wanted to go to monthly meetings of the council on foreign relations - I remember they had a luncheon meeting of some sort at a hotel in New York, and students were allowed to sit in the balcony and hear the presentations and so forth. And we went to that every month. My mother was an artist herself, and we went to all the museums, and you had this wealth at your fingertips - not expensive things. Once in a while, during the Depression, she got some money and we'd go to the theater or something. But she always made sure that it was spent for things like that.

MK: Did you appreciate at that time, the quality of your education as opposed to attending the public school?

CR: No.

MK: Okay. And before we go on, I would like to ask you - why was it so important that it be a nice day on Easter Sunday? You mentioned that there would be less people. Why did less people come to church when the weather wasn't as

good?

CR: It could be snowing. [laughs] It was Easter Sunday - if you've never been in a Minister's family - you probably don't know - but it's the largest - people go to church on Easter who never go on any other day of the year. And it's always people who haven't been there. The amount of the collection is a very important matter.

MK: Did most people walk to church services then?

CR: Oh, I would guess so. In Brooklyn - who knows? In Brooklyn, there are churches all over the place. And there is lots of ground transportation. People didn't drive so much. When I was a child, you could play on the street because there weren't cars on the street. There weren't cars parked on the streets to take the space away. I mean, there were just wide streets.

MK: And when you were younger, what did you like to do in your spare time?

CR: Well, I liked to - I was something of a tomboy. I loved to play baseball on the street. When I was in high school, I was playing hockey and things like that, basketball. All those nice things. My mother was a great opera fan, and one of my childhood memories, which still is with me. When they began to broadcast the opera - in those days, a radio was a luxury to have in your home. I can remember having a large radio in the dining room. There was a chair there in front of it, and Mother would sit Saturday afternoon to listen to the opera. So, one day, when we were under orders - it was her day. We didn't make noise in that room. If you wanted to do something, you went somewhere else. But on the other hand, she would sit, listening to the opera. And if you wanted to listen, you could sit with her. I remember my sister and I did it all the time. I think probably my brother did - I can't remember. She'd sit there, and she was this great story teller. And as the

music was going on, she was telling the story of what was happening, and describing the scene - whatever. And what people were saying. And it was just almost like simultaneous translation. I mean, now you have titles when you go to the opera. We had Mother. And we would sit, listening to the opera, and learning it that way. And I still go to the opera, of course. We couldn't afford it in those days, needless to say, especially with a large family. There was a man named Sal Maggy who had an opera company, and they would do opera at the Hippodrome in New York, and the seats were twenty-five cents each. When she thought we knew an opera, she would take us to the Hippodrome so we could hear it, you see? One of the rules was that we'd have to read the [unclear] ahead of time, which we always did dutifully, so we would know what was being said and what was going on. And then we'd go to see a live performance. And if she thought we'd seen it enough and really appreciated it, then she would - on those rare occasions, when she got the money, she would buy tickets to the Metropolitan, and she would take us to the Metropolitan. It was a spectacular education. It wasn't just opera. We certainly had a lot of music. And summers we always came up here to Twin Lakes, the family place. And during the summers, I would spend most of my time on the lake, sailing or playing tennis, or doing things like that, and reading.

MK: And reading - and that leads to my next question. Can you give me some examples of books that you enjoyed reading when you were younger?

CR: Winnie the Pooh - all of those. [laughs] I'm trying to remember. I certainly read all of the children's classics. At some point - I think by this time I was in high school - but I began reading Dickens, I can remember. And someone in my father's church was moving into an old people's home, which is how they were known then and they were cleaning out their house, and so, they gave me their set

of Dickens. That was the first formal set of books I ever had. I did have Winnie the Pooh books. Dickens was important. But you know - you name any of these - we were brought up on Shakespeare, too. I certainly read Shakespeare. The childhood books, I don't remember names of them so much. I do know that I hated *Little Women*. [laughs] I just considered it - I shocked someone by telling them that. It just seemed to me one of the dullest books in the world. George Elliott. You know the British authors. I've read a lot of their books.

MK: And you have mentioned in the past that your father felt very strongly about providing an education to his daughters, as well as his sons.

CR: Yes.

MK: How important was your father's encouragement in pursuing your education in the late 1930s, when educating women was not as customary as it is today?

CR: Well, it was important for me. You know, I have no idea. I certainly didn't think it was important then. Both of my parents were very much - Mother was always there. And when I was in high school, my father had a study in the house, and there was a big table there. And so, that was the table where I always did my studying. And he was there. He graduated from Yale in 1902. When he went to Yale, he had had to have as a prerequisite to enter he told us he had to know Latin, Greek and Hebrew. And so, when I was studying, often he would always help when I needed it. But he was certainly encouraging. But there was an emphasis on doing your studies and getting your homework done. It was always there. And both parents were there to help, to put it mildly, and encourage.

MK: And who were some of your other role models when you were growing up?

CR: Oh, my. In high school - actually, in grade school - there was Mrs. Siegel, who was wonderful. In high school, Miss Condon was the History teacher, and she

certainly had a huge impact on me. In college, there were several teachers to talk about. But I was also thinking back. The general atmosphere of the family – it was primarily my father’s family that I knew well. My mother’s family - her father lived on Nantucket by the time that I was growing up. He had moved up there with his second wife. So, you just didn’t spend – my mother’s sisters had both died, so you didn’t have that same center as you would if that family were here, and we were with them every summer. My grandfather had been a lawyer. I have no memory of him. He died when I was about three or four. But my grandmother was here. My father had two sisters. One was named Catherine. And she had lived - she had stayed at home to take care of my grandmother. My other aunt, Grace, had been a school teacher. She lived in Torrington and elsewhere, and had some daughters who I was very close to. My uncle - my father’s brother - who was the lawyer, who had taken over the family office. Actually, when my grandfather was still alive, he’d become a judge, but he couldn’t carry on the practice here, so this was - this office was sort of part of living here. You spent half your time talking to Uncle Clinton from a very early age. They are all influences. Certainly, the impact of the law office and my uncle were tremendous, too, in terms of what I became, I think.

MK: Was it more implied encouragement, or did they believe that you should be an attorney?

CR: Oh no, not at all. When I grew up, I had the luxury of believing I could be anything I wanted to be. And both Berkeley Institute, and certainly Mt. Holyoke College, encouraged that in a way that - Ella Grasso, who was a year ahead of me at Mt. Holyoke, used to talk about how the great thing about going to Holyoke was that you had the sense that you - and people were telling you, in essence, you could



be whatever you wanted to be. It was all out there to pick from. It wasn't something that was imposed on you.

MK: And going towards your college years, where did you attend college?

CR: Mt. Holyoke, in Massachusetts.

MK: And what degree did you earn?

CR: I got a Bachelor of Arts, I guess - I don't even remember. I think it's a Bachelor of Arts. I haven't looked at it in a long time.

MK: And what was your major?

CR: I majored in Economics. Actually, I loved Chemistry. I also loved Math. When I was in high school, I just adored doing Math. But when I was in college, I got into doing Chemistry. The only reason I didn't major in Chemistry, I think, is that you always had to spend the afternoons in the lab, and I preferred to do my studying at night [laughs] and enjoying the world around me during the day. So, I didn't feel very warm either, living in a lab most of my life.

MK: So, what did you do during those afternoon hours at Mt. Holyoke?

CR: Oh, it might have been almost anything. I certainly played a lot of bridge, which wasn't an outdoor activity. I did that. But there were things - there were lots of outdoor sports, and Holyoke has this lovely campus with lots of space to do things outdoors.

MK: Who were some of the influential people during your college years, and why?

CR: There is Amy Hughes, but I'll take her up later because she was a major one. But there was a woman named - when I went to Mt. Holyoke - you have to understand, I entered in the Fall of 1937, and that was the year that Roswell Hamm became President. He was the first man to be President of Holyoke, and he

succeeded a very strong woman named Mary Emma Wooley. Ms. Wooley had been the President for some time. And the faculty at Holyoke had, for the most part, been very, very strong feminists. I'm talking, they're of a generation probably – sort of toward the end of their tenures as professors, were in their late fifties. They really started being feminists back at the turn of the century, and into the whole feminist movement. One of the things that I find sad is that younger women don't understand what a rich history continued of feminism went along - obviously, everybody knows about Elizabeth Katy Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. But somehow, it all focused on - it became focused on the suffrage movement. And when the vote was achieved, there were a lot of women - I suspect - at least certainly the knowledge of people that I had known, have no idea of what a rich group of feminists were still there doing various things. I mean, their were fights like minimum wage and child labor laws, and doing those sort of things of a social nature. But people sort of forget them, I think. When I went to college - this was the group that was on the faculty. They were all very, very strong feminists. There was a woman - Ellen Deborah Ellis - who taught Political Science. And she was a very strong teacher. Also, a very rigid person. She always felt that - I'm interpreting what she felt. I can't prove it. [laughs] But she would be terribly disappointed that some of her favorite students would graduate and get married, and somehow not achieve the full development of her career that Ms. Ellis felt she should because she had this sense that you should be there, just using all your faculties all the time, and not modify for social reasons. You could see almost a sense of betrayal. Some rather well known women. I remember one - I can't remember her name now, but I can dig it up - who had been her favorite student. Married. I think they were sociologists. I'm not sure. But in any event, they

wrote some books together. But she was not out there doing other things because Miss Ellis thought she should be by that time. [laughs] She was always slightly, this woman was in the shadow of her husband. That was the sort of atmosphere you had at Mt. Holyoke. And Amy Hughes was a teacher in the Economics Department who taught Labor Economics, and she had this huge impact on Ella Grasso, as well as on me. Amy Hughes would start off the school year with all enthusiasm. She would just be there, and she would get all excited with students, and so forth. But by the end of the semester – not the end of the semester the end of the year - she would have been just sort of flattened out because her enthusiasm was gradually disappointed by these students who didn't necessarily think that this was the greatest thing in the world. [laughs] And weren't responding intellectually, especially in those beautiful springs on the Mt. Holyoke campus. Anyway, Amy Hughes taught Labor Law and Labor Economics. When I was there, at Holyoke, she had helped organize something called the Student Industrial Club, which was a group for students and women workers and industry to meet together and learn about what being a woman worker in industry was about. That's back in the days when the textile industry was big in Massachusetts. I can remember going to several textile factories and garment factories, where these people we'd gotten to know in the club were workers, and seeing what working conditions were actually like, and what the whole system of factory labor was - what it did to you. That's almost past history in this country now. Except in the sweatshops in New York. But it was a terribly important impact on us. And certainly this was - while the Depression was still going on. The Depression didn't end until after World War II got done. So, I became interested in the Labor Movement through that. Ella Grasso, who, in those days, was Ella Tambussi - that's her maiden name. She was

a year ahead of me. And she became the President of the Student Industrial Club, as she was probably in the senior year. I can't remember. And the year after, I became head - it was that type of thing. The other thing that Amy Hughes had been involved in was something called the Hudson Shore Labor School. It was a summer school for women workers in industry, formed by the - well, it wasn't done by the colleges, but there were representatives of women teaching there - the professors. One from each of the seven sister colleges. And from each college, they would select one student a year to be a student assistant. This was - by that time, it had a long history, and I won't go into it. But it was situated in an old estate on the Hudson River, so that's why it's called Hudson Shore. A group of women - primarily garment people. I think there may have been some textile workers - would come to the school, and spend this time. One of my jobs was to help to run the co-ops so that they would learn how to have a cooperative, and develop that side. So, that was sort of the interest. They had writing workshops. They had an English teacher who taught them how to do short pieces and write, so that they could train these women in the union papers. The point of it all was to train these women to be leaders in unions. And we lived - they were sort of bunk rooms, I remember. There were four or five of us in one room, and I certainly learned a lot from being with women workers that I didn't learn at Berkeley Institute I can tell you. But it was just an amazing summer, this stimulation of mind. Ella Grasso went at the end of her junior year; I went the end of my junior year, you see the following year. [laughs] And Amy Hughes taught the history of unions and labor stuff in a class there. And there were always other people there. It was a wonderful, wonderful summer. It had a huge impact on me. And Amy Hughes certainly had one. She was very - what's the word I want? She sort of

bounced up and down with her energy - her enthusiasm. [laughs] And she would play labor songs for us, and teach us about that sort of thing. Actually, one of the stories I tell Ella was upset with me when it first came out because it was when she was still Governor, and I hadn't publicized it. After she graduated from Holyoke she spent another year at Holyoke as an assistant in the Economics Department. So, one of her jobs that year was to teach the statistics lab. She would teach us while we were supposedly learning statistics. You know, you were learning it. But she also taught us all of the radical songs of the 1930s. Did I ever tell you this story?

MK: No.

CR: She taught me - I don't know about the rest of us - but she taught me the words and music. I can still sing *The International*, and there were a bunch of others. Needless to say, when she was Governor of Connecticut, she was not terribly happy when it - it was a great joke among my crowd of friends that I learned *The International* from Ella Grasso. One of them told a reporter or something - I don't know who it was, but I suspect I know who it was, but I never did ask her point blank. One of my friends must have told this reporter because it was there, printed in *Connecticut Magazine* that Ella had taught me it. [laughs] And she was upset to put it mildly. Anyway, it was the sort of thing that I was doing during the 1930s. Part of that - when you start talking about influences - I think you go back to my parents and the family, generally - not just my parents, but mostly my father and my mother that - well, something like unemployment was bad, and you should help your fellow man. It was a very ethical emphasis - social emphasis. It was my upbringing that that was what your role in life was. You didn't just go out to make money in the world. You went out to help people, and to

make the world a little better. I don't know whether it was ever verbalized that way, but in essence, that's what the family was instilling in all of us. So, you know, in the 1930s, I was involved in all sorts of things involving the New Deal. I mean this was the late 1930s, when I went to college. The New Deal and the labor movement and so forth. I mean, this was all part and parcel of that background, I think.

MK: How did you choose Economics as a major?

CR: I think I just wanted to know how the world - I think that it is probably the key thing, the way the world runs. Unfortunately, it has its bad aspects, as well as its good. You have to understand it.

MK: You mentioned the President - there was a new President who was male.

CR: Yes.

MK: How did that - or do you feel it had an effect on the college?

CR: It had an effect on the college. I mean, you can imagine this group of very dynamic feminists. Getting a man for President is not exactly their idea of how Holyoke should be. And I was very conscious. I mean, I certainly didn't take any position one way or the other to the President. I don't think any college student pays much attention, except if the President tries to keep them quiet. [laughs] But the women on the faculty were up in arms about it. I mean, people like Amy Hughes and Ellen Ellis - they were all over it. Miss Adams and Emma Carr who taught Chemistry. It was the first time that they had to respond to a man instead of a woman, and they resented it to no end. It wasn't universal on the faculty but certainly, we were conscious of it. And because they made it perfectly clear what they thought, he must have had a tough time. [laughs]

MK: And so, let's go on to your work experience. You left Mt. Holyoke -

CR: One other thing. When I was at Hudson Shore, one of my jobs was driving this old station wagon. The Hudson Shore was located on the west shore of the Hudson River. Almost directly opposite was the Roosevelt Estate - Franklin Roosevelt's Estate in that area, just north of Poughkeepsie. And so, once a year, Mrs. Roosevelt would have the students from Hudson Shore over to Valkill for the day. I'll never forget this event. The day before we went, there were always women who were there at this place for the summer. And so, they had all written home when they found out they were going to Mrs. Roosevelt's. And clothes were sent to them so they'd have something to wear, because she was the wife of the President at that time - 1940. The week before, everybody was doing their hair, and they gave permanents to each other. They were all set, they were going to see the wife of the President. I drove this one group over. There were several vehicles, needless to say there were several vehicles to drive everyone from the school, and I drove the station wagon. And I always remember pulling up to - well, what I remember is a hedge road, and I was told that's where we would go. These young women got out, and I was going to have to park the station wagon somewhere. The gate opened, and Mrs. Roosevelt walked out in a tank bathing suit, and greeted them. They were getting out and meeting the President's wife - we were getting out of a station wagon. And she looked and she said - as they started walking in - "But where are your bathing suits?" [laughs]

MK: [laughs]

CR: And they said they didn't have any, and she said, "Oh, never mind, we'll find some around here," and in they went. And I went and put the station wagon away. And by the time I got back I walked in and here was this group sitting around next to a pool with Mrs. Roosevelt, all in old bathing suits, their hair sort of

tumbling down and this wonderful warm conversation going on. She made them at home in a way that I just could not believe. It was an absolutely beautiful thing. [laughs] And actually, it was the morning after, none of us knew this until later, she had been in Chicago to accept the nomination for her husband. This was the day after he had been nominated. We were there the day after she had made an acceptance speech and she had flown back that night. She was sitting there, it was a beautiful thing. She was just an amazing person. Anyway, that's one of my better memories. At Holyoke a friend of mine and I organized a torch light parade for the Roosevelts. We weren't able to vote then, because I wasn't twenty-one. Quite a person. I have a picture that was on the front page of the *Hartford Courant*, which did upset my family. Not my father. [laughs] As you may or may not know, the Rorabacks were great Republicans. Have you heard that one?

MK: Yes and that was a wonderful story about Eleanor Roosevelt. Let's talk about your work experience after graduating from Mt. Holyoke.

CR: Well, when I first graduated - June of 1941 - I came up here for the summer. The family gave me a trip to the West Coast. My sister was living out in Los Angeles. They gave me a trip to the West Coast as a graduation present so I was going out in September, and when I came back and began to look for a job. And there were no jobs. When I say no jobs, practically no jobs. The Depression wasn't over in many ways. And also, I had learned how to type, but I didn't admit it to anyone, thank heavens. As it turned out, it was the best thing I never admitted because - well, I wasn't a terribly good typist, but the jobs that women could get were office jobs and they weren't there. I did some volunteer work that Fall for an organization called the Women's Trade Union League. It was actually run by a woman I got to know when I worked at Hudson Shore. This was an organization



in New York that favored trade unions, and also worked on things like child labor. It was formed by people like Eleanor Roosevelt and her group who were interested in issues like that. Anyway, I worked there in the office for a couple of months. And then I got a job in an unemployment compensation office in Brooklyn. And that's the first paying job I had in my life. Oh no, that's not quite true. I had a job at Mt. Holyoke, which I got thirty cents an hour. That was the NYA, the National Youth Administration. One of the New Deal agencies set this up so students could make spending money working at various places on campus. I had the unenviable job of working in a chemistry lab to start with and finally ended up in the library. The Chem Lab was hard work. Anyway, my first paying job was the unemployment compensation. I was on the line where people would first file their claims. Then, I guess, I think they had to actually come and pick up their check and report that they hadn't gotten a job. And it was that type of a job. And I was there for about a month or so. At some point I had taken a civil service exam. I got an offer of a job in Washington, to work for the Department of Agriculture in what was known as the Program Surveys Division. This is an organization that did public opinion surveys for various - actually, it was started as part of the Agriculture Department, the Economic Bureau. It was a very sophisticated and very good public opinion group. They did jobs for agencies all over Washington - government agencies. You do things for not only the Department of Agriculture, but for the Treasury Department and the War Department, depending on - we did one survey on savings bonds. That's when the whole business of selling war bonds and savings bonds really began is during that period. One of the surveys was related to that. There were one of the very in-depth interviews. It was quite amazing, accurate stuff. I mean, very sophisticated sampling procedures we used.

We did a survey of Detroit, and I went out to Detroit for that. I was there for about a month or so. The survey consisted of three hundred interviews, and it was rather in-depth interviews. In that report on that survey we predicted that there would be a major race riot in Detroit. And it occurred about six months later. It was just an amazing, amazing survey. Anyway, later on - it was after that riot, but at some point - I knew people who were on what was known as the War Labor Board, which was an agency to settle strikes and try to prevent strikes. I decided I wanted to work for the War Labor Board. There was this friend who worked in personnel or something. Anyway, there was an opening in Detroit. So, I went to Detroit, and I lived in Detroit for maybe a year-and-a-half working for the War Labor Board. And that in itself was very interesting because Detroit was so polarized between labor and industry. Just nothing comparable to it I've ever seen. You were either for or against labor. If you were working for the government, supposedly in between the two. It was an island - actually, the people you knew socially for the most part were just the people who were also working for the government because nobody else would talk to you. [laughs] It was a very strange sort of position to be in. Anyway, it was a very interesting experience. And I was doing analysis of cases, and presenting them to the board, and so forth. And at some point, I left Detroit and went back to the national board, which was in Washington, and I worked on cases there. At the national board, the reports would be made to a committee, and the committee made the reports to the board, so I was presenting cases to a committee, but then, there was one really crucial moment, when there was a threatened strike in Hollywood actually and I had worked on the analysis of it, and I had to report it directly to the war labor board. So, I walked into this guest body which included all the big, big names. I remember John Lewis sitting there,

for instance, one time. Anyway, there I was. My boss, who was a very delightful woman - and I was petrified I can tell you that. [laughs] I could just see myself freezing and not being able to speak. And she said to me, "Oh, don't let them get you. Just spit in their eye." [laughs] I never did it, but the thought - as I sat there, I wondered if I really could spit that far. It was the thing that saw me through! [laughs] And that's about it. While I was working there I had moved up to the Head of the Division by the time that I left, the war had ended, and I decided that's when I would go to law school.

MK: Before I ask you about your law career, I'm curious - was it unusual for a woman to travel away from their home to take a position at that time?

CR: Well, I wasn't away from home. Well, I was away from home when I first went to Washington. Yes. There were a lot of people that went to Washington. I mean, especially women. They were desperate. I was unique, actually, in Washington, in the War Labor Board. I had permanent civil service status because I had been hired by agriculturists permanent civil service. And I retained that status. You know, even though I had gone to the Labor Board. When I was leaving, the head of the Board - the Director of the Board - a man named Willard Woods, who later became dean of the Chicago Law School. He was very enthusiastic about my going to law school, but he wanted me to be able to keep my civil service standing, you see? If he could lay me off because they were laying people off by that time. He could lay me off, and then I would get - could go to law school, and then come back if I wanted to, to the Federal Government. Unfortunately, he discovered that in order to lay me off, he'd have to lay off the entire staff of the board. [laughs] Because I had permanent status so I would be the one favored. And so, I quit. I had a horror of becoming a bureaucrat. [laughs] I

went to law school. But I remember that. It was so funny.

MK: And what do you attribute your decision to attend law school?

CR: Oh, it was something - actually, I had thought of it when I got out of college. You could be anything you wanted to be and I was thinking of either going to law school or going to social work school. I recently discovered among some papers - I remembered that I had somehow gotten the catalog for NYU Law School, but I found among some papers, a letter to my parents when I was in college. I think it's a letter - something or other - saying that NYU had, I think, scholarships for women. I'm not sure, but it was the sort of thing that meant that I could go to NYU, and I was thinking I would at that point. And then I decided I didn't want to go to school anymore for a while. I wanted to just do other things. So, I was going to take a year and of course the war came along. So I never did go until after the war was over. But I had been thinking about it for a long time.

MK: Did your work experience have any effect on how you approached law school?

CR: Two ways. Number one, I don't think I would have gotten into Yale if I hadn't had this great work background. My grades in college had been good the first couple years, and then during the Spring of 1940, I guess it must have been, when the invasion of the low lands. Actually, it began earlier. I was really a pacifist when the war began. But there I was in college, and I began to wonder that various things were going on. But when the invasion of the low lands began it sort of heated up. I was taking Political Science Philosophy course with Ellen Ellis - the only course I did well in. We stayed up all night, every night. I'm talking three or four in the morning, arguing politics and political philosophy, and exploring where we were at. It was an exhausting period. And I sort of skimmed

through other courses, but I did very well in Political Philosophy. [laughs] But my grades were affected by that sort of thing. When I was going to law school, I really thought that I probably wouldn't make it. I didn't make Yale because even then it was hard to get into. But I think it was my work experience and my background that did it. There was something else I thought of. How did you frame the question?

MK: How did your work experience have

CR: The other thing was, I could study so easily. It was the most amazing thing. It was as though I could sit down and really do it in a way that I had not been able to do it when I was in college. I was a much better student in law school. It's what's known as maturity, I guess. [laughs]

MK: Did you focus on a particular area of law?

CR: No. Actually, I certainly wasn't focused on anything, specifically. I certainly had two things in my mind. Number one was labor law since I had this background and experience. But the other was being just sort of a general practice sort of thing, which was quite common in those days. It isn't as much now. And sort of its part of the background of having grown up in the atmosphere of this office, you know? You asked me whether I specialized.

MK: Right.

CR: This office was historically just - my uncle was a great trial lawyer, but he also had this general practice, which was quite common with people who practiced in - you know, not in New York City, but outside of the environment of a large metropolis. He did a lot of criminal work, as well as civil work. So, I just had that as a pattern in my head. And certainly, I had decided I was going to practice in Connecticut, not in New York because I didn't want to specialize, and I didn't

want to go to the big firms - you know, that type of thing. So that I looked for a job in Connecticut. But when I went to law school - that was in my head. And, in fact, at the Yale Law School in those days, you didn't really specialize, as people do nowadays.

MK: Can you describe your experience while attending law school at Yale?

CR: Well, when I went, which was October of 1945, it was at a time when people were leaving the Armed Forces. And so, there were a lot of students who had been at law school, had been in the Army or Navy, and were coming back to law school. It was my generation - you know, if I get taken four years working, they get taken four years fighting. And we were all - it was roughly the same age group. There were also a number of women and a few, well I don't know the other students because I didn't know them well. When I went to law school, there was a total of thirty women out of four hundred and fifty students - total four hundred and fifty students. The usual question I'm asked is, "You were the only woman in your class," but that's totally irrelevant. Because I was there with all this group that's coming back, some of whom had been there, some hadn't - and I was the only woman that entered that fall, but there were thirty of us. And we were really - anyway, we were a group. They had just a lounge for women because the women didn't live at the law school. The men lived at the law school. The women - they put most of us in a fraternity house a couple of blocks away that had been condemned as a fire hazard. So, they put a bunch of women students there. We were either in that or in another similar house. So that you had this coherent group of women stretched throughout all of the six terms of law school. They were running six terms a year. People were spread throughout the period. Actually, at that point - number one, I hadn't lived in a dormitory-like environment for a while,

and it is a major readjustment. Luckily, these people were a little older, so I guess we all had the same problem. But it was something new. I also - it was communal eating. It was just a different life, physically. And studying was fascinating. I just had a wonderful time doing the studying. But taking an exam was a major adjustment. I can remember the first time I had to take an exam. I was so tense, not knowing what to do. I remember it every time I hear it now - great chamber music fiend. I played the Brahms's Clarinet Quintet before I went and took the exam. Since I passed the exam, I guess it was good. [laughs] But I had to do something. But other than that, I just - it was harder to take an exam. It was easy to study, but hard to take exams.

MK: How did your male peers and professors in the law program relate to you?

CR: Well, it was this group of us that was there. For the most part - my memory is it was the male students, and not the professors, who were most chauvinist.

There were things that went on. There was an eating club at the Yale law school called Corby Court that was only open to men. I think that there were some men who thought of the women at the law school as proper sexual companions, shall we say, and not as equals in terms of performance. I had an interesting realization with male stuff or that I think is just my own background. Most people in law school talk a mile a minute, very learnedly. And I think it was about - it took me a couple of years to realize that certain of the people who seemed to always have an answer and put down anyone who didn't and the tomariety to create one. When I began to realize that they weren't really saying anything as they talked. They said it with great authority. [laughs] So, once I realized that, I began to feel better.

[laughs] There was a professor - that was on the Bar Foundation tape. There was a professor who taught tax law. Supposedly one of the great liberals of the faculty.

And he never called on a woman except for one day a year, which he referred to as Ladies Day. At which point he would call on them and be very frank. It's not funny. It was one of the most vicious performances that you can imagine, trying to tear apart and making snide remarks. At least this was all reported to me. I never found out, because when I took the course, and when he began to call on women one day, I left. And I couldn't persuade anybody else to leave with me, so I never sat to actually hear it go on. But it was a lousy thing he did. I understand that there had been others that did the same thing. He was the only one that I knew that ever did. There were also professors that did - well, not professors. There were certain professors who tended to listen to men more than they'd listen to women. I think that is part of it. Women probably weren't talking quite the right lingo to him or something. There was a course in admiralty law. I don't know if you know anything about the sea, but at one point in history, around World War II, it was considered bad luck to have a woman on the ship. Did you know that?

MK: No, I didn't.

CR: I'm not sure that's totally true because certainly you had these fancy liners with lots of women on them. But a working ship. And admiralty law - when I was giving a course in it - and I'm a great sailor. I was a great sailor. I just thought it would be fun to take admiralty so I took admiralty. And it was a shock because no one had ever - no woman had ever taken admiralty in law school. I've learned one thing that there's a difference between a ship and a boat. And if you refer to a boat, you could be laughed out of class. [laughs] Unless you used it in the proper text. Anyway, that type of thing sort of hung on in various ways. We had a group of wonderful friends. There was a crowd of us. A group of the women and of the men who were together all the time, and it was all fine. But the general



atmosphere was slightly chauvinistic.

MK: The Socratic method of teaching the question-and-answer is commonly used.

CR: I don't know what the Socratic method is. I don't remember anymore.

[laughs]

MK: [laughs] Well, it was where they questioned back and forth between professor and student.

CR: Who knows? When you talk to lawyers, you'll find out there's the casebook method. You learn to take the facts of the cases – well not the facts of the cases. It began in Harvard, back at the turn of the century, I guess they began teaching from cases. You take a case and analyze the facts, and see how it fit with the law etc. and you argue back and forth - this may be Socratic for all I know. I remember contract class. The professor would start off every class with reciting a series of facts. He'd ask is this a contract? And then he'd point his finger at some student. And unfortunately, the course was given at eight-fifteen in the morning, which was not my better time. One morning he said this to me and I said, "Yes," and then he goes off to someone else, and then he recites some more facts and then he points his finger and says, "Is this a contract?" And I said, "No." He said, "But before you said . . . the contract." [laughs] And I said, "I changed my mind." [laughs] I never got called on again in that class. [laughs] I think he understood that I was really struggling. But in any event, that's the way law school was.

MK: Did you have mentors in law school?

CR: I don't know. You know, the word 'mentor' - I mean, there was certainly no formal mentorship. To begin with - I don't know if we talked about it earlier - but there were no women on the faculty. So there were no women in positions of any authority in law school except one who was the Secretary of the Dean. I remember

she was by the force of her personality ran a lot. She certainly didn't dictate how the law was taught. There were some great professors and certainly I - the whole faculty was pretty spectacular. I had some good friends, but I had a lot of friends on the faculty.

MK: Did any of them influence or shape the career that you made?

CR: No. By the time I was in law school - I mean, I was taking courses, and certainly some of the things I did were helped by knowing them and having taken some of their courses. Knowing them afterwards because I maintained a lot of friendships in the faculty. They didn't shape my career so much as abetted it [laughs]. Tom Emerson, who was probably the foremost first amendment scholar in the country he was a very close friend. Fowler Harper taught Torts and Family Law and was a very good friend. There were others, but suppose Tom and Fowler more than the others.

MK: Which leads us to your law career, which spans well over fifty years, and was quite spectacular. Can you tell me about your first case?

CR: I'm not sure which - my first case was. I have no idea. [laughs]

MK: I should re-phrase the question meaning what was one of your early cases that was special to you?

CR: What stood out what I was doing, I should say - I went to - actually, from a woman's perspective and in terms of the Hall of Fame probably is important here - getting a job was in itself something. I suppose that's when I was looking. That's when I realized for the first time what a male-oriented profession it was. I must have known it in law school, too, but certainly it was brought home. And I knew when I was looking - for instance, I learned. I'll start off first by saying my uncle said to me when I was graduating from law school - or when I passed the Bar -

you're reminding me of things I've forgotten about. When I got out of law school it was in February of 1948. And there was a law firm in Stamford - Leftwing Law Firm - which did labor law. And I had a job there while I was studying for the Bar. Living in New Haven I used to commute to Stamford. And I worked on these mega cases there. Now, when I say left wing, that goes back to - by this time we're in post-war U.S., and what later became known as McCarthyism and had already begun well before McCarthy appeared on the scene.

[end of side one, tape one]

CR: So, there were left-wing firms and there were right-wing firms in the labor movement - labor law stuff. Now probably a right-wing labor law would be considered radical. [laughs] But then it was left-wing, you see. Anyway, definitely left-wing represented The United Electrical Workers. And I worked on a case - that's interesting - I'd forgotten about it - I worked on a case involving the Mine Mill and the Smelter Workers union, and after I got out of law school after I passed the bar exam in the summer of 1948, when I was a full-fledged lawyer. I was looking for a job. I did not go to Sam and Milt's office. I guess they didn't have room to hire. They had a third lawyer there. I was looking around for various places, and my uncle told me that he'd love to have me come up here, that it would be a big mistake for a single woman to live in a - a single professional woman to live in a small town. He thought I would have a much better personal life if I stayed in a city of some sort. And so I was looking around in various places in the state. I wanted to do it in Connecticut. I had always planned on doing that. I didn't want to have to go specializing in one of the huge New York firms. I went around looking, and then I really discovered - there had been a friend of mine Mary FitzGerald at law school that graduated before me, and she had gone to work with

this law firm in Hartford. I knew her partners – and he just said that you could have one woman in the firm, but he couldn't afford to have more than one woman. And I looked around here and there. There was a public defender man who was a wonderful man in New Haven, who was an old friend of my uncle's, Tom Robinson and I went to see him. I went to see a lot of people. Mostly friends of the family and stuff or someone I knew. Anyway, I went to see Tom Robinson, and Tom had just hired two young men as associates. He just didn't have the work to take on someone else. At the time, I was supposed to go to Wiggin and Dana, which was a big firm - bigger now. Big firms in those days were five or six people. [laughs] Nowadays it's a hundred and two. Anyway, Wiggin and Dana might even had - no, I think they had ten. And I said I was on my way over to see Wiggin and Dana, and Tom Robinson told me that I should go, but I should not take a job there, and I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, do you know Catherine Tilson?" Catherine was a woman who was maybe ten or fifteen years older than I was, who had gone to work at Wiggin and Dana. Her husband worked there. He said, "You don't want to be like Catherine Tilson. You don't want to be Fritz Wiggins bag carrier." And I said, "That's true." [laughs] But if you went into a firm, you were pegged - there was a firm in New Haven in those days, Dunbar, Corbin, Tyler & Cooper, who had - there was a woman there who was easily thirty years older than I - twenty-five or thirty years older than I was. And her name was Mary Manchester. She was the authority on probate law in the State of Connecticut. Everyone turned to her. She had written the latest edition of the book on probate law in Connecticut, and she was at Dunbar and Corbin. She was not a partner. She was made a partner later. But she never became a named partner of that firm, even though she was the person who probably gave them all

their work in probate because she was such a probate authority. You know, and these other firms - I went to a firm in Bridgeport, the first named partner of which had been my father's roommate in college. I just stopped in there because I was in Bridgeport for something else, to ask if I could make an appointment, and this woman who was the office manager, white haired herself, told me that my father's friend was in Europe, but when he came back she knew he would want to talk to me. She was my father's college roommate's daughter. And so, she said, "But don't take a job here." And I said, "Why not?" This is right in the office, in a private office. She said, "You'll never see a client." She said, "You'll be sitting in a room. You know, they'll give you a job, and you'll be sitting in a room, just doing research for other lawyers." She said just don't come. Anyway, fortunately, I got a job with a single practitioner, who was a bankruptcy specialist. A friend of Fowler Harper's actually, that's how I got to know him. Harry had this very active bankruptcy practice, but he also had - as lawyers did in those days - all these other little things that someone who was being evicted, a speeding case in court. You name it all these various petty things - some estate things - it was a typical general practice type of stuff. So, I was able to do anything I wanted to in that office, and what he really wanted me to do was do everything else except what he specialized in, and that's what I did. I had experiences such as I tried cases my first year.

Friends of mine who were in law school - some of them never tried a case. There were cases if you lost them, you felt badly, but they weren't serious losses. And I can remember going to the City Court in Hartford, which, in those days, was in City Hall, but not the current City Hall. I remember the court room was a very dim room, like a Dickens court room. On the bench there were these lamps. They were sort of a post that showed a certain amount of light around and this room what was

going on in those days was that people would be picked up for - I suppose they called it vagrancy - I don't know. People who didn't have a place to sleep. They'd sleep on the streets and stuff. And they'd get arraigned, and prosecutors would call a case, and this person would shuffle up and was brought up from the cell he'd been in all night, and the Judge would say - they'd have the names identified and "Where are you from?" And he'd have no certain address, and the Judge would say, "Where are you going when you leave here?" He'd say, "I'll get out of town," or something. I'm not sure, something like or "I'm leaving town." That's probably it. And they would gather these people - and I'm talking about fifteen or twenty people or more - put them in a paddy wagon, and drive them to the edge of town and release them and they would start walking on the road. You might see them the next week in New Haven. You'd see them in Bridgeport. You know, they would just do the rounds. That's the way courts started. But in any event, the cases I tried were in that kind of court. One of my early cases with Harry was defending an eviction, because in those days, housing was very tight when people came back from the war. This was one of his better clients, who was getting evicted. It was tried before a Justice of the Peace in those days - they didn't have a regular court. Harry gave me the file and said, "Take care of it." And I said, "What do I do?" And he said, "You file every motion in the book, and you do everything you can to delay it." [laughs] And it was - you know, how I learned to practice. [laughs] I went through the book and did this sort of thing. But that was my training.

MK: Good.

CR: And then I will tell you about the first criminal case I really remember. There were others before. It was May 1st. It was a May Day meeting that the

communist party was having in the Worcester Square in New Haven. And it had been broken up by a gang in the area. The communist, needless to say, he was arrested, no one else was for breach of peace and resisting arrest - you name it. So, I was called by someone. I was active in the Progressive party. Somebody in the Progressive party who had known me and called me and said, "These people have been arrested." It was a gorgeous afternoon sort of like today, but it was warmer than today. It was one of the days that you'd be outside. It was a Saturday. I wandered around New Haven that day. I had gotten my hair done that day. I was going to go to the theater that night. I stopped in the office and found that there was this call for me, so I called and they told me that these people had been arrested, and could I get them out on bail. And I had no idea what to do, literally [laughs] I called up Harry, my boss and asked him - and in those days, there were three Judges. He said, "You have to get a hold of a Judge to get the bond reduced." "What you should do - Charlie Album, who was someone I knew - one of the lawyers in town - Charlie Album is the Clerk of the Court, and you should just call him and talk to him because he's the one that has to arrange the entire thing, and he'll tell you how to do it." So, I call up Charlie. He told me that the three Judges - one of them is Dominic Solato whose son is still a Judge. Anyway, Dominic Solato, it was around the time of the Communists, this was 1949.

Dominic Solato will be in New Haven out scraping his boat, but you don't want to try to get him if you could possibly avoid it. I can't remember who the second Judge was. The third one was a man named Al Protis, who'll be out playing golf at Woodbridge Country Club. [laughs] So, you'll have to call him there. And he said, "And you'll have to talk to him. He's probably the best one to call. You'll have to get the bond reduced. Have him call me and have him tell me when the bonds

reduced. Then you have to come to my house with whoever is going to post bond for him.” And these are big bonds. I mean, they put five thousand dollars on each of these people, which, in 1949 is a lot of money. So, it was a big deal. You have to bring someone to the house to bring a deed. He said, “You should be giving me a Certificate of Title, but it’s all right.” If you tell me Catherine it’s the man who owns the property I will take that and your assurance that it is clear. You can imagine this happening. [laughs] Anyway, then he tells me all of the other things. We finish the phone conversation, and I’m on my way to try to get the bond reduced and Charlie said, “Oh, one more thing.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “Don’t try any of the silly law school stuff like habeas corpus. It takes too long.” [laughs] And I’ve always said that was my introduction to criminal law. [laughs]

MK: Were there any cases that meant the most to you?

CR: This is an interesting question because most of my cases meant a lot to me. One of the great things in practicing law is that you’re helping people and you’re doing things for people. Each one has its own wonderful thing. Sometimes they’re more dramatic than others like the Black Panther case or something. But every case - in a way, one of the most meaningful cases I ever did - I’ve done a million of them, actually - was a divorce case. Because I was representing a woman - I had known her father quite independently, and she came to me sort of apologetically. Her husband was a lawyer, and she thought it would be embarrassing for me to represent her. I assured her that it would be fine, that I certainly could do it. But she was this very delightful - she was a nice person - let’s put it that way. And she was obviously cowed by her husband. In those days, it was not an unusual thing. She was afraid to talk about a divorce. Although she couldn’t stand the situation, it was as though she couldn’t do it. They had three children. Her husband had said -



I'm not sure if it started then but he said she couldn't have the son. Anyway, at some point he said that she couldn't have the son, she could have the daughters. She was just this very nice person who was caught in an awful situation, and with no self-confidence about getting out of it. I represented her. We went through a divorce that went on - I brought the Action. Her father had friends who ran this very fancy finishing school in Europe and had gotten her a job there, so that she could go there, and be away from the whole situation. She wanted to take her son, who at that point, was about ten-years-old. And he said she couldn't take him. He'd have her arrested if she took him out of the States. So, I started a divorce action. Eventually worked it out so she could take the son to Europe, and she worked there for a year. She came back, she lived in New York, and the husband is contesting the divorce like mad. Eventually she got the divorce. And in those days you had to prove - you know, a contested divorce was very hard to get, unless you had real physical cruelty. Anyway, extreme grounds. I can't remember the word for it, its illegal sexual intercourse. It's adultery. Adultery you could get a divorce on. And you had to prove it. But for tough cases, you had to have witnesses to support it. So, anyway, she comes back from Europe, gets a job in New York, and had an apartment there, brought the son up there. Her two daughters had been away at school, I think, when she went to Europe, so they didn't go with her. In any event, it ended up that she got divorced, she met and married a very delightful well-known public man, and she, herself, became this wonderful, outgoing, sparkling personality. I didn't create that, but I gave her the chance to come out to be it. And, you know, that's something that you don't usually get a chance to do much in this world. And it's very meaningful. It was very meaningful. She's still a very close friend of mine.

MK: What was it like litigating cases in the court room?

CR: Are you asking me like as a woman?

MK: If it's relevant as a woman, or just as an attorney?

CR: It's probably one of the more important things I did in this world I would think. Two things. The question sort of doesn't quite approach it the way I'm thinking of it. You have to remember that when you try a case - when you're litigating it - take the average criminal case, for instance. When someone is accused of having assaulted someone else. Well, what led to the assault? What was the background of it? How does it fit into our social expectations in certain situations? What are you trying to do? You're trying to - number one - try to re-create what the scene was when the assault occurred. Now, that creates a lot of - in the process it's sometimes a very difficult to do because you're trying to represent a client who, probably by the time the case is being tried, has been in jail for six months or a year. And they may or may not have been, but if it was a serious case, they'd have been in jail a lengthy period of time and is not the same person as the person who was arrested. Also, depending on how sophisticated a brain they have may not be able to re-create or explain - it's not re-creating or explaining who they were then as compared to now. And so much of it is the way the court looks at things. Back in 1948, until the late 1960s, there were no female Judges. I think Ellen Bray was the first woman to become a Trial Judge from Connecticut. My memory is that would have been the end of the 1960s. So, you're in a court room. Actually, I'm sorry to interrupt myself, but there may have been a woman or two who sat on juvenile cases. I'm not sure when Fredericka Brennaman became a Judge, but she was originally a juvenile Judge. Maybe some of the juvenile Judges were women, but that was also pretty late. When I was first doing this it was just

men. So, when you're trying to present this case, you're trying to present your client in the best - you know, at the time that it's happened, and what is going on around him, and what is expected of him, etc. You know, what part are the litigating factors in essence which goes to the question of what degree of crime that was done. If you're talking about assault, you may have just a slap on the face. You know, which level are you bringing it back to, even though they charge a very high level. And it's all a question of presenting it. It's like directing a play, almost. And how do you get some of that information in. Now, if you only have men sitting on the bench, and you're living in a pretty patriarchal society. In 1948 and 1949, it's still pretty patriarchal. The Judges and bench and the law are always about ten or fifteen years behind the times anyway, in terms of when social change is occurring it filters back in various ways. But you have to take that factor into consideration when you're trying a case. And some judges are different from some others. I think being a woman did not effect that process. In a way, I was - I had a real advantage that most other people don't have in this world. My name was Roraback. I came from a family well-known in the States. And from a family of lawyers. So, not only my uncle and my grandfather, but we had cousins in Torrington who were well-known lawyers, and there was Uncle Harry around, and my whole family was doing its own thing up in Hartford. So that if I had been Jane Smith, it would have been a much different thing. When your name is Roraback, half the Bar knew my uncle. It wasn't a big Bar in those days. He was a well-known traveler. So, there I was. They were looking at me in a much different light. And unfortunately - I don't think unfortunately - naturally - I didn't really think of it in terms of I'm trying to change the perception of the patriarchal society. When I was working on a case, I was just trying a case. And I learned all

these great techniques. I knew how to try a case pretty well. And when I came along into the late 1960s - but in those first days, I was trying cases. When you tried it - there were some really tough issues to deal with at times but there weren't many women defendants but in that first communist party thing. The night of those arrests - when I had gotten everybody out on bail - they had a party. The New Haven police broke into the party, arrested people on other prehistoric charges, including a young woman who lived in the house where the party occurred. They had seized her - in the drug cabinet in the bathroom had been a contraceptive, and they seized it as evidence, and charged her with assiduous carriage. Now, this is some ancient - I think it went back to the original Connecticut Statute with the charge that any act which - it was criminal to perform any act which arouses lewd or lustful emotions. This assiduous carriage was used for all sorts of things in those days. But they arrested her for that. I think her worst act was that she had been dancing with a black man at the party. Maybe they saw it - I'm not sure. Anyway - and they seized this contraceptive, which, in those days, the law had changed a good deal by the 1960s. She was a graduate student at Yale. And if Yale had learned of this arrest, if she was convicted of it, they would know it, and she wouldn't get her degree. So what you did was not to change the attitude of the court. [laughs] I didn't represent - I got another lawyer to handle those cases because it was just too much for me to try to do both of them when I was first in. So, I don't remember how it worked out. I know she got her degree. I think we just postponed it long enough so that she was convicted after she got it. But that's the sort of thing they were doing. And then in 1954, there was a prosecution of the leaders of the communist party in Connecticut, known as the Smith Act, and I was representing, among others in that case, a woman who was on

the National Committee of the Communist Party. She had been arrested for conspiracy charges. She had all sorts of different charges. We don't have to get into the details. But representing her, I began to – in preliminary things- she was being held, I think, in New Haven County Jail. And so, I went to see her in jail. Now, in those days, the women in jail were held in a separate wing. Now they're held in a separate jail, I think. They had a separate wing. And it was a huge room, around the side of which were the cells. And then, in the middle of the room was this large table. It must have been about twelve feet long. It was a big table. I think it had chairs around it. And they had a matron. So, I went in. The matron went and got my client, let her out of her cell. And she came and sat at the table, and I sat down, and the matron sat right down next to her. I said, "I wanted to have a private conference." And she said, "I sit with any of the inmates when they confer." I said, "But I'm a lawyer." And she said, "When they confer with a lawyer, I sit here." [laughs] So, I said to my client, "I'm sorry. I'll be back." Now, that's the first time I represented a woman who was being held in jail. I told her "I'll be back." And I went and saw the Judge in federal court. She was being held in a state facility, or a county. So, I went to see the Judge. And he was sort of shocked. [laughs] But he immediately issued an order and the matron never forgave me. She wasn't able to sit in from then on when there were conferences. It was that type of a society that we were living in. And I suppose that it may be that some of the prostitutes, etc. that were there. Maybe that's why they had the matron sit with them. [laughs] But she didn't sit with us. But I tried that case. And I don't remember making anything special from the fact that she was a woman in that case, other than representing her. The interesting thing in retrospect is, I saw one of - well, I went to someone's funeral who had been one of the defendants in

that case. One of the others was there, and we were standing talking to someone. And he referred to the seven defendants, and I said there were eight. He did not count this woman as one of the defendants in the case. Interesting. Oh her.

[laughs] It was in the late 1960s. All of the cases I tried - and I certainly was trying divorce cases, and so forth I may have handled a divorce for a woman somewhat differently, but I don't remember doing it. In the late 1960s, I was at a meeting of the National Lawyers Guild. My memory is - I think it was 1968 or 1969, which was after - the newer Women's Movement had started to blossom. It was sort of the new left Feminist Movement that was engaging in consciousness-raising. I never had been involved in any of that. By that time it was 1948 or 1949. But a lot of women were doing this. There was a meeting first at the Lawyers Guild, of which I'd been a member since I'd been admitted to practice. They had the first meeting of what they called the Women's Caucus, and what it really was a consciousness-raising session. All of the younger women and the Executive Director was a young woman. They were all there, having a consciousness-raising session in the context of the law. See they were practicing law. They were law students. Certainly some of them were lawyers by then. There was one older woman from Los Angeles who participated on the formal presentation, you see. Only women were present in that room. They began talking, and it was, to me, one of the most painful days of my life because I suddenly realized that I had accepted quite easily - not easily, but certainly, as I had practiced law, I had accepted my role as a woman - and not as a woman challenging what was going on, but accepting what was going on. You know, when you sit in the Judge's chambers and people tell jokes, which always occurs with the conferences with Judges. Well, it depends on the Judge. Some Judges were better than others at jokes.

[laughs] Some very good jokes were told. But if they were sexist jokes you know, you didn't make an issue of it. If a remark was made in court that would ordinarily be insulting nowadays, you wouldn't make an issue of it. You accommodated yourself to it, and in some ways, it was all very pleasant and nice. And I never thought of it. But by the time this caucus arose, I suddenly realized what I had become. And I was not challenging this role that I had been put into. Not in a nasty way, but you have to raise the consciousness of the court as to what they're doing, and I had never done it. And I had built up all sorts of layers of acceptance of my role that really had been very painful to examine. And I left that meeting just sort of - but I sat through the whole thing. Two others - my contemporaries in the guild left. And a few years later, I was doing the keynote speech for the Convention of the Guild, and I spoke of this experience, and said that to me, it was like pulling scabs off wounds. It was a painful process. What fascinated me was this one woman, who never admitted anything about that meeting that I ever heard. But at some point, I heard her make a speech maybe a year or two after that, and she referred to the scab thing. [laughs] I really thought that was fascinating. Anyway, this was immediately before - well, when I was first involved in, and that's what I'm not sure - the Panther case. And, of course, in the Panther case, I represented Erica Huggins, among others. When we walked in the courtroom - or maybe, it must have been after that first day in the courtroom - the first day, when they were arraigned in court and so forth, and Erica came in. She, of course, was held out at Niantic, so I hadn't seen her. She was brought in by the sheriff. She is standing next to me. I had spoken to her and I turned to look at the court, and she just looked up and I heard her say, "Oh, my God." I turned around, wondering what was wrong. I said, "What's wrong?" And she said, "It's all men." And I

looked at that courtroom and realized the court reporters were men, the clerks were men, the sheriffs were men, the Judge was a man, the prosecutor was a man, most of the other lawyers were men. And I just looked. And it was as though - I thought, "I've totally forgotten it." It was so much a part of my life I hadn't even thought of it. And the combination of those two experiences made me begin to do things in a much different way. And at the same time, I had been making speeches for the last year or two before that. I went to the Guild meetings a lot. I always made speeches at the Guild meeting, urging younger women to get into court. And that it would be important that they try cases. But I'm not sure when I had sort of begun to do that in connection with these other kinds of things. It's all roughly the same time frame. And then, there was something called the Women of the Law Conference, which law students began to do. And that was along in that time frame, too. So, women began to do and who had been practicing law - I guess we're into the 1970s by that time - we would be on panels with students who were just learning about it. But I kept having this thing that getting women into the courtroom would make a difference. Now, of course, getting male patriarchal women in is not going to help anything, but if you got sensitized young women into the courtroom, things could change. So, I would talk about the need to do that sort of thing, too. And I began to develop some stuff in the Panther case that I think carried over into a lot of other stuff. Someday, just for your own edification, you would be fascinated to read something by Elizabeth Glaspell. She wrote a short story called *A Jury of Her Peers*. It's in various collections. I don't know how to find it. Somebody gave it to me. Actually, I found sources to it. Anyway, it's in a collection somewhere. But there she talks about - it's not a courtroom scene, but it's a very interesting thing. And really reflects on this, as well. But if



you're sensitized, you know how to deal with - you know, you're dealing with custody cases, for instance. It's a much different representation of the client if you're a feminist who thinks that the various factors are important, in terms of the custody - or if you're doing a criminal case with a woman involved. When we tried the Panther case, Charlie Garry - this is the final trial of Erica Huggins and Bobby Seal. And Bobby Seal was represented by a man named Charlie Garry, who is an old-time trial lawyer - very dramatic - and he was a Panther lawyer, as well. But he could never understand how I could construct the defense for Erica Huggins because his only concept of how you defend a woman in court was that - you know, this poor, young thing was led astray by some man. So, if you can pin it on a man, then she'll get off. And I kept telling Charlie that Erica Huggins was such a strong woman that no jury would ever understand such a defense. Just pooh-pooh it and pay no attention. And Charlie just couldn't understand how I could even be thinking of representing her. It was just - he was perfectly well-meaning, it was just that how he did it. Erica herself was one of the most beautiful exponents of feminism that I've ever had the pleasure to represent. And although she had been involved to a certain degree in this horrendous thing, it was just - you had to bring out all of these various factors. Part of them, of course, is the relation of men and women in the black community as well as in itself a slightly separate thing - or maybe more. Yeah, it is separate and different. And so, it's sort of a two-year process. My re-thinking how you do things in court, and Erica educating me on things. Not only just that, but on a lot of things. I became a big advocate of doing certain things. It began to show in various ways you know, in the jury selection process. How you examine women jurors. The standard textbooks, up until that time, on trial practice. And, unfortunately, I don't have them. Because I

would want to write about this, and I'm not sure how I'm going to find them. But there were these books that would say that - there was a man named Henry Rathbaum in Brooklyn who did - you're not going to read it. Don't bother.

[laughs] He did a lot of trial work. And he wrote these books on how to try cases. One of his things was that you had to be worried about women witnesses. If you have them on the witness stand - if you're cross-examining, be careful. Because they cry easily, and that will make the jury sympathetic to them. [laughs] Or you should be sure to dress a certain way to impress the potential female jurors.

[laughs] And so, there were these side things. But he, too, would have taken Charlie Garry's line about how to defend a woman. You had to work through all these other details. Later on, I represented a woman named Susan Sax in a rather notorious case in Philadelphia. But when we were going through something called the pre-trial conference, I was there representing Susan. There was another woman with me, a lawyer from Philadelphia, and her partner, who was a man. But all the prosecutors were all men. And the Judge in federal court always has a bailiff who takes care of the little details for him, like making sure the water jug is full.

Anyway, the Judge decided he wanted to move counsel tables nearer the men, to just make it look less informal. So, he pushes these two tables - he suggests that the tables be moved together. And this old man - he literally was in his seventies, and obviously, not a healthy man - goes up and starts to move the tables, and all the men stood there and let him do it. And so, I walked over and said, "Can I help you?" So, we're moving a table together. He was very thankful to me. And the Judge said, "Miss Roraback, in my courtroom, ladies do not move tables." And I said, "If there were gentlemen in this courtroom, they would help an elderly man move the tables." He said, "I'll be happy if any of the gentlemen in this court will

help this elderly man move the tables,” at which point, of course, all the men went to work rearranging the furniture. [laughs] And then, at the end of that session, it’s a question of when will we have this preliminary hearing, when will we do that? He said, “Are there any other requests?” The Judge always asks, “Are there any other requests for the pre-trial order?” And I said, “I have a request. I would ask that at all times in the courtroom my client be referred to as Miss Sax, instead of by her maiden name. And that I be referred to as Miss Roraback.” Because all of the prosecutors had been referring to me as Mrs., which was something that always gets on my nerves anyway. [laughs] I used to tell – say my family hated me for this. I always said when someone would call me Mrs., I would say, “My name isn’t Mrs. Roraback. It’s bad enough being one without being married to one.” [laughs] My brother didn’t think that was fair. Anyway, I said, “Ask Maiden’s request.” And he said, “I’ll enter the order so that it will be Miss Sax. But may I say Miss Roraback?” And I said, “Of course, your honor.” You know, the standard thing is they always referred to women by their first name, you see?

MK: Yes.

CR: And they’d been doing it to Susan all this time in the courtroom. Anyway, but its things like that that you can do - not get anybody angry about it - but just gradually raise the level of understanding. And then, as part of this I have to tell the classic tale of Erica in the courtroom because it was probably the most dramatic example of this that ever occurred. She testified in her own defense. And I don’t know if you know the history of the Panther case, but what had happened was that she had come to New Haven from Los Angeles. She was married to John Huggins, who was from New Haven, and John was a Panther. Actually, I had represented him years before that. Anyway, John was in Los Angeles, and was killed in a

shoot-out with this other group. So, she came to New Haven with their then six or eight-week-old child, a very small baby. She first came with his family, and then with some other people, formed a chapter of the Black Panthers in New Haven, and she moved into the Panther house. She was there in town with John's family, who, needless to say, wanted to see their grandchild. [laughs] And while she was in that Panther house, some Panther from New York came up with an individual whom he said was an informer. They had brought him to New Haven, and then the local Panthers - he was slightly a wild man. But anyway, eventually what happened was there was a trial or a pseudo-trial. And they decided - the Panthers decided he should be killed. Now, they didn't have testimony as showing to who decided what. It was all part of a conspiracy theory, actually. Several people were charged with the murder. Erica was charged as a conspirator, aider, abettor, etc. Murder, kidnapping, etc. Bobby Seal had come to New Haven the weekend before this murder had occurred, and spoken at Yale. And he'd been in town for several days. And the murder occurred on Tuesday or Wednesday following that. There was no evidence anybody ever produced that he was, at any point involved in deciding that this fellow should be killed. But he was killed, and they were all charged. You know, after a year-and-a-half of proceedings, it came down to just a trial for Bobby Seal and Erica Huggins. So, we get to the end of her testimony, and Arnold Marcall is cross-examining her. And he has it all worked out for his final question. He's got this carefully planned thing when he began. He said, "If you were so upset about what was going on, why didn't you speak to someone? You were out of the house the whole time. You could have called the police. Why didn't you call the police?" I mean, it was a silly question for him to ask because she could explain she had actually already put it into testimony that they actually arrested her

for the murder of her husband out in Los Angeles. She was held on a conspiracy charge there, too because she was at the scene where it happened. It was pretty easy to understand why she wouldn't necessarily trust the police. And she said something like that. And he said, "The Huggins family - you saw them every day. You could have spoken to them." And she explained to them that it's very difficult to talk to your in-laws. [laughs] But Arnold just kept going. He said, "Well, Chairman Bobby was in town that weekend. Why didn't you speak to him?" She said, "I tried." He said, "You did? Where was this?" So, she said, "We were all having coffee at the house." He said, "What did you say?" She didn't say 'I did.' She said, 'I tried.' And she said where it was this. He said, "What did you say?" She said, "I said, 'Chairman Bobby, there's the brother of the house.'" And she stopped. And he said, "Well, what else did you say?" She said, "Well, he turned away." And he said, "Well, what else did you say?" And she said, "I tried to start again, but he turned away. And he was talking to somebody else." Arnold starts, "What do you mean you tried? Why didn't you stay there?" She finally said, "Mr. Marcall, you have to understand that sometimes it's very hard for a woman to be heard by a man." It was one of those amazing moments of my life, I think because we had four women on the jury. And I would be willing to bet that any one of them - every one of them - was ready to reach out and hug her. I mean, you could feel it. Every woman in that courtroom - just - BINGO! And Arnold, like the jerk he is, asked the question again. [laughs] Sort of cemented it, you know? Charlie Garry didn't get it. Bobby Seal turned to me. He was sitting next to me. And he said, "Isn't that just like me?" [laughs] And he was the only one who had a human reaction in public. Anyway, we got a hung jury! [laughs] And we wouldn't have. I mean, it's just one of those moments in time.

But it's the sort of thing that only a woman could do, and actually, the reporter for the Hartford Courant thought I planted it, which I wouldn't have admitted in years that I had the brain power to do. But certainly, we had gone through the case enough. And Erica was such a good person in many, many ways, that she really just did it. It was a great moment in time. But that was the sort of thing that having women in the courtroom could do. And it certainly educated a lot of the men, as well.

MK: And another high profile case that you defended was the Griswold v. Connecticut case.

CR: Yes.

MK: How did you become involved in that case?

CR: Oh, this is long before I got into the more sophisticated elements of feminism in the courtroom - 1958 and this was just a couple of years after the Smith Act trial. And also, there was a whole bunch of other things going on during that period. It was the period of McCarthyism, and the House Committee on American Activities came to New Haven, and we had hearings, and I was representing people at those hearings. I did some other defending people. There were a whole bunch of anti-communists absurdities as I thought of them. They were very serious. But they questioned every member of the International Workers Order in New Haven, having gotten their names from insurance records in New York State that were made public. Things like that. Why did they have insurance? Anyway, I had a phone call from Fowler Harper one day, who had been a professor of mine at the law school, who was a friend. And he taught, among other things, family law. He said, "I've been involved in some conversations with Estelle Griswold, and a man named" - whom I didn't know at the time "Lee

Buxton.” Estelle had just come to New Haven as Director of Planned Parenthood. And Lee was the head of OB/GYN at Yale. He said, “We’re thinking of bringing a series of lawsuits,” and he starts to explain what they’re going to do to challenge the birth control statute. And we’ll bring these suits to get a declaration from the court that the statute is unconstitutional. So, Lee would bring a case, claiming that he has the right to practice medicine in his best light and accepted standards, and he should be able to provide contraceptive advice to patients, and give them prescriptions in order to practice birth control. And then, you’ll have a woman who is a patient of Lee’s, and I guess if that case is going to - I’m not sure whether he talked about including this other case, but it was in there when we did it - is a woman who had a stroke when she was pregnant, and had to carry to full term because they couldn’t operate. And she delivered - I think it was a stillbirth. But she almost died in the process and that if she ever became pregnant again, she’d die or if she became pregnant, I think that she would die and/or she couldn’t carry the child to term at that time. There was a second case involving a couple who had an Rh blood factor. A third case was a couple that had had three malformed children, all of whom had been institutionalized and died early on in the institutions, although they may have had one still at that point. I’m not sure. And then, there was a young couple who were students of the law school, who wanted to postpone pregnancy until after he finished his education. They engaged in family planning, in other words. Fowler said I was wondering if you’d be interested in participating?” So, I said to him, “Are you asking me as a single woman or as a lawyer?” [laughs] And he had a great sense of humor, and he got into hysterics and he said, “That’s a great idea.” And I said, “Well, I’m not doing it.” And he said, “Okay.” I said, “But if you’re asking me as a lawyer, I’d be happy to.” So, that’s

how I got on it. He had called me, actually, because he said I'd done all these tough cases, and I deserved a good one. [laughs]

MK: And how difficult was it to develop the arguments?

CR: Well, we went through - we started those cases which were known as declaratory judgment actions. We got up to the Supreme Court, and we lost in the Connecticut Court. There had been a prior case. I don't know whether I should get into the history, but the Nelson case in 1942, where the statute had been declared constitutional by the Connecticut Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court in Connecticut just citing that case that that was the law, period. And then, it went to the U.S. Supreme Court, and it got tossed out. A case known as *Poe v. Ullman* because as Frankfurter wrote in the Opinion, he said, "The statute had never been enforced." Of course, he ignored the Nelson case in doing so. He also ignored the argument, the argument that there was always the threat of prosecution. He just said it never was enforced. And therefore, there was no lawsuit properly before the court. The decision was then made - and this is where I part company with some of the people who remember this part of history. But I think my memory is probably the best, in terms of what actually happened. We decided to open a clinic. And I say 'we' - Planned Parenthood decided to open a clinic. Estelle Griswold was the Executive Director of Planned Parenthood, and the Board had been in back of this other litigation. I was hired by Planned Parenthood. I wasn't hired, but I was retained, a fancier word, to do that litigation. Fowler was doing the litigation in the Supreme Court, but he was not admitted in Connecticut, so he needed a Connecticut lawyer. And then, so Planned Parenthood decided - and I sat-in on those conferences - to open a clinic. Now, the general line that some people have taken is that that was just done in order to get an arrest and be able to



take a criminal case up in court - proven the case that the statute was enforced. I didn't take quite such a view of it, and I knew that it was my advice that was being followed. I mean, the odds were - I wasn't positive, actually, that there would be a prosecution, but I thought the odds were that there might be. But, in any event, we could open the clinic. And if there was no prosecution, then we just keep on going.

We'd open them up around the state, you see? There had been six, I think, at the time of the Nelson decision, and they were all closed. But if there was an arrest, then we would take the case all the way, or as far as we had to go. So, that's the beginning of when the clinic was opened. It was opened in New Haven. It was open for ten days. We had spent a lot of time ahead of time, planning things like what contraceptives would be available at the clinic. Lee Buxton was going to be the doctor handling things. He was going to take the rap, shall we say? Estelle became sort of the Executive Clinic so she was the person who would be responsible for making decisions about it. Anyway, the clinic was open for ten days, and there was an individual named James Morris who picketed the clinic. Have you seen any of that?

MK: I have seen some of it.

CR: There is a picture of him picketing the clinic that was in the New Haven paper. But he also was not just picketing. He was telephoning everyone. It was a one-man crusade, really. It was quite interesting. It was not a big movement of people. James Morris. He called everyone. He called the Governor, he called the Senators, he called the Chief State's Attorney. And badgered the prosecutor in the then Circuit Court of New Haven to get them to arrest these people and close the clinic down. It was a one-voice operation. It was amazing. I had not expected - I had expected it would be something different that occurred, but this was just this

one man doing it. In any event, he had stirred it up so much that the newspapers were asking the prosecutor every day, "What is he doing?" Somebody was asking the Chief of Police - the Chief of Police sent a detective over to the clinic. So, Estelle shows him around - shows him the literature they're getting out. Julian Moritz was the prosecutor in those days, and he was issuing a statement, and he was investigating, considering, and so forth. Morris was claiming that this was a big conspiracy between Yale and the prosecutor because the prosecutor was a graduate of Yale Law School, as half the lawyers in New Haven are. [laughs] That this was just a local town gown fight, and he was the only person who was - anyway, I went to see Julian Moritz. I said, "Listen, Julian. I'm going to be representing them. If you do arrest him - what's going on?" And he said, "Well, I'm just going to have to do something." And I said, "Well, how would you do it?" And he said, "Well, I'm not going to have the patients complain to me, so I'll have to go in and arrest Estelle, right there at the clinic." And he would have to seize records so he could go through the case. And I knew this was - in those days, they could do that sort of thing. The law was pretty broad about what they could seize when they made an arrest. So he said that's what they were planning on. And I said, "Well, if I went through the records and got three clients who were willing to be your witnesses, and let me release their records to you, and would testify, would that be good?" And he said, "Yes," he would not raid the clinic. I may say, Estelle was very angry with me because she was such a magnificent woman. She was rather frustrated, never having been arrested during the Suffrage Movement. So, she was all set to get hauled off and taken down to jail. But I persuaded her that it was better this way. [laughs] And I got permission of the three women to release the records, and gave them to Julian, and started the prosecution. I took Estelle and

Lee down to headquarters, where they surrendered. And that was the beginning of the trial. And that, of course, went on. We tried the case, and they were found guilty by the Judge. It went to the Circuit Court - there was a Circuit Court of Appeals within Connecticut at the time, not just the federal system, it's the state system. And we lost. The first Appellate level and second Appellate level was the Connecticut Supreme Court, where we also lost, and then it went to the U.S. Supreme Court. And where you know we won! [laughs]

MK: Exactly.

CR: Yes.

MK: How prominent was it at the time? Could you feel just how important -?

CR: Oh, it was tremendous. The day of the decision, I had a partner here in Canaan at the time. You know, you always know when the case is going to get decided. It was the last day of the court, and they left it until the last day to make the decision. So, we knew that day was here. We were all having lunch together at a restaurant, and heard the decision. And, needless to say, had a celebration. Estelle was in her office. She celebrated there on her own. [laughs] Lee Buxton was off in Europe. But it was a great, great day. I called up Bill and said I thought I was going to quit the practice of law. It would never be this good again. [laughs] He said, "That's fine. Just finish Mrs. So-and-So's will." [laughs] Which I did, and here I am, still in the office.

MK: Yes, you are. And what do you attribute to your longevity of your law career?

CR: My longevity? It's a family trait. My father lived to ninety-three. [laughs]

MK: I wanted to ask you about some of the influential women that we often don't hear about, yet have made some pretty special contributions in America's history.

CR: Yes.

MK: Can you reflect on a few of them?

CR: Actually, I don't know - who you say you don't hear about. There has been some people who have been forgotten, I think. There's a woman in Connecticut, when I was going through all this. I'm talking about Griswold and *Poe v. Ullman*. When I first got involved in that, I had a phone call one day in my office, and this voice said, "This is Alice Paul." I must say that I knew the name, but I had assumed she was dead. She belonged to the history back in the suffrage period, and then immediately after that. Anyway, she was very much alive. I don't know how old she must have been. By that time, she was quite ancient. So, we talked. And she was calling because she was concerned that I might - she thought the Planned Parenthood people just didn't understand what was important in this world. When we got the vote, women didn't win everything, and that you had to be organized politically, and that you needed a women's party. And she gave me the whole pitch, I may say and sort of cross-examined me, and made sure that I would not be led astray by these Planned Parenthood women. [laughs] I think she didn't understand the full power of Planned Parenthood, but that's neither here nor there. She just wanted to be sure that I didn't get totally wrapped up in that, and forget what was important in this world. And she used to call me every few months, just to keep track of me, until she died. And she was an absolutely wonderfully vibrant, inspiring person. So, that's one. Certainly, I've always felt in any lawsuit I'm involved in with my clients are heroines, and Jane Doe, the woman who would have died if she had become pregnant, was to me, one of the most wonderful people, in terms of her strength. There was always the chance that her name would become public and we did keep it confidential until Mr. Garrow decided to give it

out, which I have never forgiven him. But she was just a wonderfully strong woman, warm woman, who wanted to do anything that would help, in her own quiet way. You know, all of these women like the woman who became my friend, who was a client in that divorce lawsuit, is - they're all great people. I happen to have been fortunate enough to develop my career just at the moment when I could really do something with it. Oh, one thing I didn't talk about before was because I was such a prominent trial lawyer and there were others in the country, I wasn't the only one but certainly around this part of the world because I was doing cases that people read about. There were women that weren't so notorious as I was - I inspired, I know and people have told me about it, I inspired a number of women to become lawyers and try cases. To me, to the extent that I contributed to that, I think that's a wonderful thing. I had the occasion, I guess it was The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund. I talked about how when women first began really appearing in court beginning in the 1970's you'd see a young woman come in and sit down and I was in court a good deal in those days so I'd see this frequently, it was just so exciting for me to see them actually there and I'd go over and introduce myself to them. I just knew it was important for me and welcome them. Here you know now there's lots and lots of women in court and it's an entirely different scene. To me it's one of the more exciting things I probably helped.

MK: Absolutely. Do you have any thoughts on our culture's focus on whether or not a woman can have it all - meaning career and family?

CR: I think it's going to take a long time, a long time. I know, I mean there are women who think they have it all now, but I must say that the conflict, unless you hire someone to take care of the family end of it, is just horrendous. I'm not sure

how they do it. I know I couldn't have done it and maybe it's because it was at an earlier time. There were people who managed it in those days, but it's always with this conflict and terrible pressure that distorts the joys of having it all - that's not having it all. Having it all would be with not relaxation but without the extreme pressure that distorts the joys of having it all (laughs). You have to have that too, and I don't think that patriarchy has disappeared from our society sufficiently for that to have occurred yet.

MK: And my final question for you -is there anything that I have not asked you that you feel I should have asked, and if so, let me ask it now.

[end of side two, tape two]

CR: That's such a toughie because I talk about so much that I'm never sure what I have talked about when I'm finished. I suppose the - I'm trying to think back when I was first in practice. I've told this story too. The first time I went to a county court short calendar - this is when I worked for Harry and he had me doing it right from the start. I walked into this court room and short calendar is the day when motions are heard, there are temporary little hearings or temporary injunctions or something. The court calendar for the week is read so people have to report as to whether they will be ready to try the case on the date specified, if not you have to have the court excuse, things like that. In those days, almost all the bar went to every short calendar. This is in New Haven, in the county court. If you were a senior member of the office you certainly didn't go take care of the calendar. The junior went, so I went that first day in the fall of 1948 because courts didn't meet in the summer in those days. It was a joy, you see. So I went to the short calendar and there were 100 lawyers or more in the court room all talking. They hadn't seen each other from the summer so the conversation level

was way high - everything from their golf game to their children, to whatever and of course I walked in and they were all men and I stood there and no one said a word. I was there until the judge came in and took the bench and called the court to order and luckily not too long a period of time. I was such an oddity a various number of them had heard of me and one or two came over and spoke to me, but it wasn't ostracism. They were obviously curious to see how I would do, whether I'd make it or not. That was always a part of it, a sense of the early years but a few of them sort of took to me because number one I was a Roraback and that was fine and you almost had the feeling that some of them had daughters they thought well maybe you got the feeling course the ones who knew my family were gracious about being nice to me so it was fine but I'll never forget that dead silence and I did a lot of cases as you know over the years. I did do an absolutely lovely case out in Nebraska - Lincoln, Nebraska. There was an Indian reservation and in the state next to it. Anyway, it was the Wounded Knee Reservation, whatever state. This is in federal court - a demonstration there had been on Wounded Knee Reservation. This is when things were going on all over - the youth movement, the civil rights movement and Wounded Knee which occurred in the beginning of the 1970's. The local Indian movement had as they said liberated the trading store on the reservation and they had taken it over and just were giving out whatever was there instead of selling it to the Indians on the reservation - come on in and take what you want and a number of arrests occurred that were prosecuted in federal court. They were sort of overcome for the need for lawyers. They had a committee to get lawyers together. This woman had known me actually from the trial lawyers association and this committee was actually trying to organize lawyers for these people and said would I

come out. There were only men and there were some women defendants and she'd like to have me come out - so I did and you get admitted on the pro hoc whatever, jurisdiction on a special motion, but had a special public defender since they didn't have enough lawyers. I went out and I represented a woman who had driven out to the trading post that day to get gas because her son had broken his arm or had some injury and she had to take him to the doctor and she didn't have enough gas to get to the doctor and who had been eighteen miles away or something. So she goes to the trading post and one of the leaders of this Indian Movement comes out and puts gas in her car and she tried to pay him and he said no, no we've obliterated it - don't you need anything? Why don't you come in and you can get what you need. She goes in and her son goes in with her and her sister and her family had come along for the ride, all of them go in and takes things. Now here's a kid who sees this fire truck, it was some sort of truck. He gets this truck. She gets things like pampers for the baby, salt, thyme, I mentioned and some herbs. The sort of stuff you might get when you go shopping and they all get back in the car. By this time they take it back to the house and decide to take the boy to the doctor the next day. It couldn't have been a very serious injury, I guess. Anyway, they go back to the house and the marshals come following them into their house. The interesting thing - I learned a lot about reservations in that time. The interesting thing where an Indian family lives that's their property and so the marshals just can't come on the property without a proper search warrant. So we had a good suppression motion going and they certainly had to have some grounds for doing it. In any event, when they went on the property they go - obviously the car had driven in before they came - there's several different buildings on this thing where the family eats



and lives and stuff and various side areas. When they go into this house and the grandmother, the mother of my client is there.

CR: She had this baby, and she was at this table with a pan of water. She was washing the dishes. And the baby was there next to her. They had brought things in, and among other things, there was candy. And so, when the marshals come marching in, having pulled the father out from under a truck where he was repairing it, and marching him in. I don't know what he was getting arrested for, but anyway [laughs] the baby had gotten upset, so the grandmother takes a piece of candy and sticks it in the baby's mouth. And so, at the hearing, to suppress the sentence because they seized everything, the toy truck, this that. I insisted that the marshals had to be there, and I wanted them to produce everything they'd seized. And so, you know, putting into evidence a box of Pampers, and package of salt. [laughs] At some point - and putting the whole scene in. This is before a Judge. The U.S. Attorney is trying it for the government. And at some point, I finally got to the package of candy and had that marked as an exhibit, and then I said, "Was there any other candy that you seized?" And he looked rather shame-faced and he said, "Yes." And I said, "Do you have that?" And he produces it. [laughs] The prosecutor had turned around, and he's looking at me, his back to the Judge, and he just mouths it - he says, "Not the baby's mouth?" And I said, "Yes." [laughs] But you know, number one, I had all of the techniques of a trial lawyer able to use it and I had this wonderful time. And I don't think that a man could have pulled it off. I'm not sure they would have thought of it, frankly because they probably wouldn't have talked to the mother, as well as the daughter before trying the suppression hearing. They just would have gone in. But it was absolutely wonderful. The Judge suppressed it, freed my client, and we went home. There

was no trial. [laughs] But the importance of having a woman there was very visible to me then.

MK: It certainly seems that way.

CR: And probably, in some ways, afterwards was one of the more meaningful things that ever happened in a lawsuit for me. I was staying in a hotel. I was flying out the next morning. I got a phone call from the office, saying that the family and this young woman I had represented were at the office and wanted to see me before I left. So, I stopped there on my way to the airport. And there they were. Now, they had to drive six hundred miles to get to that court. And the brother was subpoenaed as a witness. She had a brother who was at the house at the time. He was subpoenaed as a witness. So, he had gotten a subpoena fee and they used that money to pay for the gas. That's the way they got there, on his subpoena. And he had a witness fee too, I guess. These people lived - when you think of poverty, it's nothing compared to what they lived in. Anyway, there was the family. The mother - it looked like - it was just a classic picture. The mother was there. The father, who was this man - not much taller than I am, but very stocky, and looked like an Indian Chief. He had the face and the bone structure and everything. And he was dressed in a suit and tie and so forth. And the brother was there, and the mother, and the little boy, and my client. And the mother said and she was the only one who really spoke a lot of English. I guess the brother did, too. But anyway, she said that she wanted to thank me for everything, and that they had gone to the store and her son had picked out this present for me. [laughs] So, I accepted and he gave it to me, very sweet thanking me. It was a little toy hutch, about that tall, with copper pots on it and stuff. It was really a very sweet thing. And then the brother thanked me. And he had bought a single-stem rose.

And this was in November in Nebraska. [laughs] I don't know what it cost him. It was in a box. [laughs] And they tried to take a picture. They had a Polaroid camera, but it didn't work. And they were very upset because they wanted a picture with me. And then the mother said that her husband wanted to say something. And he obviously - spoke practically no English, but he had learned. He said, "Thank you for giving us back our daughter," with this huge dignity. It was really just - it was quite a day.

MK: That is really special. And I so appreciate your sharing your story with us. It is quite a story.

CR: Yes. It's really lovely. It is really one of the great moments. So, anyway, that's what being a lawyer is all about. [laughs]

MK: Well, thank you very much.

CR: My pleasure.

End of Interview