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Oral Interview of Carolyn Blouin by Jenny Meagher for a Project on Activist Women in South Berwick, Maine

Carolyn Blouin

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Oral interviews for a project on the history of activist women in South Berwick, Maine

Interviewer: Jenny Meagher (JM)

Interviewee: Carolyn Blouin (CB)

Date: June 26, 1992

Recording number: 1992.2.8.c5.b

Length of recording: 6:04

[transcript begins]

JM: —to go to some meetings with you. Some of the abortion meetings or the League of Women Voters. How would you feel? Would that be—

CB: You see the trouble is that the League of Women Voters isn't meeting again until September.

JM: I see.

CB: Just had one meeting. Um, and I don't, I don't know. See this is summer.

JM: Right.

CB: Uh, I will keep it in mind if I know of anything.

JM: Or go with you to the hospital? Or just on some of the things that you do—

CB: Well look, I, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get in touch with Billie Richardson. And Billie Richardson lives in South Berwick but she, her husband was the head for a while because it's a moving directorship of the UNH Department of English. He was a professor. And he's just retired. And we travel with him. We've gone abroad with them. Jack and Billie and Maury and I have gone abroad together several times. And she's the one that got me into the hospital and she's the head of the volunteers. She's a fascinating person and I haven't, I haven't really told you about her because basically they lived in Durham for a long time

and his parent, her parents, I guess owned the house they live in now. It's, it's in South Berwick and attend the other, it's not in Tatnic, it's in, on the other side of town. But if you're gonna be here I want you to meet Billie. Uh, but and then and you can certainly go to the hospital because she's the head of that thing and—

JM: Right.

CB: —and, and you can decide really what you would want to see in the way of what's going on there.

JM: That's great. I, I'm also just curious about what you do. Like maybe to go with you on a round and help you pass out mail.

CB: Oh, well sure. I'll be glad to do that. To take you with me. I'm going on Tuesday.

JM: I could go on Tuesday. That would be fine.

CB: Okay.

JM: Whenever is, you know, whatever is good for you.

CB: Where are you staying now? Are you going back to Portland?

JM: Yeah, yeah.

CB: Well, let's, uh—

JM: I'll give you time. Whenever you're ready you can just give me a call. I have an answering machine and you can leave me a message and I can call you back.

CB: Oh okay, 'cause you gave me that. You wrote that down.

JM: Right, right.

CB: Yeah, okay. Okay well, um, I'll give you a ring because actually you could come. I could meet you at Wentworth-Douglass, as far as that goes. And that would save you, I mean you could go right to Dover.

JM: Okay.

CB: The thing is there isn't a hell of a lot of mail anymore because there aren't that many patients.

JM: Oh really.

CB: And I would like you to meet, uh, I'll call you. Because I'll see whether Billie's gonna be around 'cause then maybe you can meet her at the same time.

JM: That would be great.

CB: And then, then you, you can deal with Billie about when you would like to see her. Other than that—

JM: Great. That would be perfect.

CB: Okay. And I will think about these other people as long as you have more time, I really would like you to meet some of them.

JM: Great. Great. Because that that would be wonderful. I'd like to meet them and just also if we, if I could get a tour of your farms and see the gravestones—

CB: Well definitely. We'll, I've got that in mind. I definitely will, will show you them.

JM: That's great. That's great. 'Cause I'm just curious about that area but. It's very interesting they're two sides of town and it seems like with everything I've heard a lot, not, not, I'm not

speaking of what we spoke of, but heard a lot about the town manager struggle. And just how awful it was.

CB: Oh, you've heard a lot about, other than what I told you?

JM: Everyone I've spoken with. Every single person.

CB: No kidding.

JM: And so, I can't see not mentioning it because it seems like everyone acknowledges it as something that was very difficult.

CB: You see, but, basically, I do want you to remember that it was terrible and all that. But it was time for a town manager system of government because things were becoming much more complicated. And it really wasn't fair to the old-fashioned ones that just, you know, took it on because the town had to have a government and so on and manage. But it was so much more, you know there's so much more red tape, there's so much. And, and so it was time for it. It wasn't just that things were, were not being done correctly and sometimes not even honestly. That was part of it. But as I look back I realized it had to happen.

JM: Yeah, it's interesting—

CB: And so, you know, it isn't that, but please don't talk to Gloria about that unless she brings it up.

JM: About the— No, I haven't. I haven't brought it up to a single person that's what's so interesting. I have stayed clear because I appreciate how delicate that is. But every single person has brought that up to me.

CB: That's interesting.

JM: And I'm not saying anything. And I haven't said well so-and-so said or so-and-so.

CB: That's very interesting.

JM: Leave it as it is. Yeah, it is and I think that's what Natalie was really stressing. That she feels that was the time when the town had to decide, was it going to stay the same or, really, it had to, what she thought, it had to face— Now I'll tell you what Natalie said because you're friends and I know you're very similar—

CB: Yeah, oh yes, yes. Definitely.

JM: —otherwise I would not. But she felt that you know, that it was time and that it sort of had to change because it was growing right after the war. Which makes a lot of sense. Because economically it was the post-war era boom. So, so that's what I'm trying to find out more about. Um, I think I'm going to go to the town offices to do some research.

CB: Oh definitely.

JM: Do you know who might be good to talk to or where those records would be kept?

CB: Um, yes—

[end of transcript]