

RL10066_McMichael_access_master.mp3 / McMichael, Pam - interviewed by Rose Norman / Duke Digital Repository

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- And turn the tape recorder on and tell it that today is April 23rd and this is Rose Norman and I'm interviewing Pam McMichael by phone for the Southern Living Feminist Activist herstory. Okay have you, I'm just gonna start with a little brief bio that I put together from online. Do you have that in front of you where you can look at it?

- I saw it.

- I can just read it to you and you can, what is your year-

- Yeah here it is, I've got it.

- It's just very brief. I have a little thing like this for each of the people I've interviewed and basically-

- Yes well this is good.

- What is your year of birth? I want to fill that in.

- 1953

- '53 okay. And I have you born and raised in rural Kentucky. Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky.

- That's right.

- That's a small liberal arts college, I assume?

- Yes it is a Baptist college so I don't know if liberal goes with it. (laughs)

- Right

- But no this is fine.

- And then I have you having lived in Louisville.

- Well I would actually just one word her mission of building I would use the word alliances instead of coalitions.

- Okay.

- It's a little stronger in the knitting together.

- Okay. Now you were, you lived in Louisville until you took the job at the Highlander Center is that right?

- That's right.

- And was that in 2005?

- That's right.

- Okay.

- And you were director of SONG from is it '94 to 2002?

- Through 2001.

- 2001, okay I was trying to get eight years but you can count that both ways.

- Wait let's see (counting) yeah that's eight years.

- Okay 2001 okay.

- Yeah and that's still eight years. It looks like seven but it was a full '94 and like a full 2001.

- Right okay.

- So that is eight years.

- Okay. Okay the first question I asked the other SONG co-founders had to do with what made you, what turned you into a social justice activist? Was there an "ah ha" moment? You know you went to this Baptist college did something happen there? Did it happen before that? Where did you find that road?

- Well I think I would have to go pretty early in life to experiences of race, class, and gender. Class being like I feel like I grew up never hungry but always aware of the haves and you know we were a working class, farming family and so grew up with a strong awareness of the haves and the have nots. And my parents, I was also a strong girl child who just wanted to do things and had a lot of permission to do things. So in particular like strong, strong girl child, you know a lot of permission to be a strong girl. And also the push backs you know against that, and you know more broadly in society. And then my parents really raised they really talked and lived the same about the Golden rule, that you treat people like you wanna be treated. And I think that was the impetus that created the situation where both of them crossed the color line through their job. My mom at the work in the factory and my dad where he drove like this small hotel you know a

hotel grocery truck that did like deliveries, day deliveries to small stores you know in Kentucky rural areas. And both of them still crossed the color line. In the early 1960's I had as a white kid in you know central Kentucky I had a race experience you know in my family that's a little different than a lot of the white people around me. In terms of you know my parents then being having interracial friendships.

- So your mother formed friendships at work and so did your father with?

- Yeah both of them did.

- Okay.

- So that you know so that all just I think that combination of experiences just put me on a path and then when I got older and knew that also you know was attracted to other girls and that was just another way of coming to understand the pushing against society. So I think I was on this path for a very long time.

- What turned it into activism? Into you know taking action?

- I'm sorry?

- What turned it into activism as opposed to... I mean what got you to do, on the road to do things about it?

- Well I mean I don't know that this is an "ah ha" moment there's just these series of life experiences. I mean I was always active beyond the minimum requirements of life. You know like I did, I did things, I was active when I was in church, I was active in my church I was active as a high school student, I was a leader of you know groups for middle school and then later elementary school. So I was just always kind of interested in doing things. And so you know I as my consciousness got more aware I just I know that I was working. This was a pivotal kind of, I was working at a social service agency in Louisville that served economical, women within an economic, you know below the certain economic guidelines. So there were black and white women who were coming in for our services and I noticed that most of our clients didn't have a car but if somebody was gonna be in a situation where they had a car it was almost always the white women not the black women that had a car. So I was like you know I started exploring that because it was like well this can't what's going on here this can't be just because you know one group's better than the other. There's something special at work here and it put me on a on a kind of more of on a questioning path and meeting people and you know really intentionally started going to meetings at the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Oppression.

- That's in Louisville?

- I really credit that black and white civil rights leaders with you know with kind of schooling me and bringing me up in terms of an outlet for my activism and feeling like I was growing by leaps and bounds. And also I met people who were involved in international solidarity around Central and South America in particularly El Salvador and Nicaragua and other places as well. So it was just a real period of expansion in

terms of learning. And you know when I first came to Womonwrites race was a real active conversation there as well. You know through certain... I met Mab at Womonwrites. I met Minnie Bruce Pratt at Womonwrites. That was around the same time that I started going to trying to remember I think I started going to the Kentucky Alliance before I went to Womonwrites. I was interested in putting and reaching out and growing and seeing where I could put my activism. Just was fortunate enough to meet people, sought out people to meet and also met people that really helped me, helped me grow and develop and connect the dots.

- And what would be those dates do you think? How old were you when you started going to Womonwrites? Or when you started attending the Kentucky Alliance?

- So I think I was like 31, 32. So I had already been active, I had already been. So it wasn't the first time I did anything but my stuff before that had been more women and lesbian focused. I had help start this group called A Woman's Place which had operated for several years. Predominately white women. It was looking to do kind of women oriented activities that were a mix of educational, celebratory, cultural, and even athletic events. And opportunities for women to like get together and play volleyball together, or have an educational program together, or have a potluck and a dance together. So our goal was to actually get a building. We had ended up not doing that but being an organization that did a newsletter and sponsored a wide range of activities. I had been doing that for a number of years before, before going to my first Alliance meeting.

- So you were already doing, your first activism was with feminism then?

- Yes more so.

- Yeah well let's go back to that second topic then, about lesbian feminism activism. Does that term, is that a term that resonates for you? Is that what you would-

- Well it's a term that has resonated you know at different points of my life I don't, it's not it's not what I'd lead a bio, you know it's not, I don't, I am lesbian and I am feminist and I am also other identifiers. So it resonates with me but and it might not be, it wouldn't be the only things I would say about myself.

- Okay, but that was really where your activism started, with women's movement? Or is it and I write about that in terms of doing things like starting all the women's-

- Yes and with the consciousness about race and some places where... Yeah I mean yes it started, it started more around the gender piece, women and women and lesbian oriented activities and actions. Then you know through a convergence, through my own kind of thinking into a convergence of things really also expanded to more broadly.

- Okay. So let me try to put-

- In fact the fact that some of the women's circles that I was in was leaving out other kinds of women.

- Say that again.

- I'm sorry?

- I didn't quite hear what you said about some of the circles that you were in.

- Coming to realize that some of the circles that I was in was leaving out you know other kinds of women.

- Okay. So what kind of circles were you in?

- Well I just mean in some of those feminist circles, some of those feminist circles weren't so strong on race and class.

- Is this the art consciousness raising groups or?

- No, no I'm just, I don't mean circle literally.

- Okay. So let's just go back to how you got involved in the movement then. Was this in college? How did you become a feminist?

- Well see I mean I'm not sure what the movement you mean. I'm not trying to be difficult. It's just like for instance I was never active with NOW. You know but I was active with a women's group in the mid-eighties in Louisville, Kentucky that was mixed race was... I think that group started in '86 it was mixed race and lesbian and straight women working together on a wide range of women's issues. It was called the Alliance Against Women's Oppression and we really intentionally, you know we were doing things like connecting. Like the money that went to support war in Nicaragua and El Salvador and hurt women and children there was money taken from women and children's programs here in the US. So you know after kind of some of my earlier days and like in working with A Woman's Place which you know was a great experience and learned a lot there and also looking for a broader definition of what it meant to serve women and girls and to fight for them.

- Yeah, yeah. What about the seventies? I mean you're in college in the seventies, right? I mean I'm hearing you. I'm finding you in the eighties and I'm wondering where you were in the seventies in terms of all this.

- Yeah in the seventies I was in college and then I taught in a Southeastern Kentucky at a Baptist boarding high school. Then I went to grad school. So I you know I think the seventies was more you know coming to terms with who I was. Getting my education and trying to figure out what I was gonna do and within all that who I was.

- Okay, okay so really-

- Also I remember now I was also playing a lot of softball. (laughs)

- Right!

- I would you know I played on a big championship team and we won the state a couple of times and you know I played on this you know I played softball from like April to October.

- And this is in Louisville where you've got lots of-

- No I didn't get to Louisville till well this was the seventies, it was the late seventies when I got to Louisville. I played softball when I lived in other places in central Kentucky and also there in college and my first years of teaching.

- Okay. Okay and where was that before Louisville between you were at college in Georgetown. What was it called, Georgetown?

- Can you turn off recording this?

- Sure. Okay we're back on.

- Okay.

- And we're looking at the path that led you to SONG. So maybe you could just start with how you knew those other women. You knew Mab from-

- Actually I need to, the path that leads to SONG I need to back up.

- Okay.

- So I was working with this group called the Alliance Against Women's Oppression. also a group connected that helped us, I had gone to Nicaragua as part of a national women's delegation, was doing you know work around work around women's and children's issues at home and abroad. I was working with a group, a racially mixed group of women, lesbian and straight women, who were doing these annual, international women's day events in Louisville that were all celebratory, educational, and also fundraisers for women and children's programs at home and abroad. Out of that we also then started this thing in Louisville called the Fairness Campaign, not out of that but during somewhere in that time. We started this thing in Louisville called the Fairness Campaign. The Fairness Campaign was to add sexual to try to get sexual orientation and gender identity added to the Louisville civil rights law. And so it was a big effort that really was part of transforming that Louisville community because we were situating lesbigaytrans concerns within broader race, class, gender and sexuality issues. For instance it was never just single issue identity focused. That work was launched in a way where people were really making connections across issues and if there was a white police officer shot and killed a young black man in Louisville the local lesbigaytrans organization that

called you and motivated you you know you'd get a call from your queer group to get out and be part of the community response to that. Or if Fischer's meatpacking company goes on strike and you want to support the strikers you get a call from your queer organization to go out and be part of that. So I was doin' all that work and I was in Cincinnati temporarily, I had gotten laid off from my social services job, in Cincinnati was in '93 Cincinnati was facing an anti-gay initiative and I went up for three months and was working as an interim director of Stonewall Cincinnati during that anti-gay initiative. We were at the '93 Creating Change in Durham and I would back up before Mab's plenary. I would say some things in terms of the context. So the right wing had released this video called Gay Rights Special Rights which situated lesbigaytrans people as the enemies of people of color. So it was a racist video that also kind of appealed to people of color and they mailed it to black churches all over the country. And the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force was doing a series of Fight the Right kind of summits so there were four people on the Suzanne Pharr and Barbra Smith were two of them. Suzanne Goldberg I think and Scott Nokagawa. So they were doing these kind of summits tryin' to you know across the country. And so that right when that Gay Rights Special Rights video was an important part of the context and the second part of the context was that NAFTA was being debated in Congress at the time of the '93 Creating Change conference. So there was this pre-conference institute on the Thursday before where there was this day long session on race, class, and gender. Some of the single issue identity folks were literally saying in the hall "Why are we talking "about NAFTA at a gay conference?" So out of that context of Gay Rights Special Rights you know that video that situated lesbigaytrans people as the enemies of people of color and out of that you know and the NAFTA stuff we started to you know some of us got together at that Creating Change and said these are trying times we need to you know we we need to so there was I think all of the founders were there except Joan Garner and another person in that conversation who didn't become a founder but was really instrumental in the start of SONG was Carla Wallace out of Louisville. So there were these conversations. It's like you know we were all having done multi-issue work in our communities and done that multi-issue work as out lesbians and done and had strong ties to wide movements. Strong ties to women's movements, strong ties to anti-racist movements. You know I would say all of us so we had this early meeting and Joan was identified as somebody that we needed. I'm pretty sure Joan was not at that Creating Change.

- No she wasn't.

- I remember the first meeting being at her house in Georgia kind of after that. So I knew in terms of going through I had met Mandy at Rhythmfest so I knew Mandy well through Rhythmfest. I had met Mab I guess the first of those no I met Suzanne through the, the first time I ever met Suzanne was through the domestic violence work and I had whenever her first book came out, I knew who she was. Homophobia a Weapon of Sexism.

- Yeah.

- I had met Suzanne then and that was eighties, right?

- Yes.

- Then Mab at Womonwrites. And I had actually brought Mab to Louisville in the mid-eighties when she was working with North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence. I had brought her for both activities in the women's community and also activities with the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Oppression. And Pat I also met at Rhythmfest. And Joan-

- Tell me about-

- Then I met through you know other folks. And so we used to tease, Rose, and say that we were you know that we were six women and that the three black with three white and that some of the black women were not African American but the African Americans were not black and the lesbians were dykes but the dykes weren't lesbians. So somehow we had some number where we used to break that up you know where we were made of six women four lesbians, two dykes or that kind of or how you know we'd laugh about that. But we, that's how I came into those relationships. You know it was a matter of saying you know some of us go into these conferences and saying and having you know it's like you've got this institute on race, class, and gender and there's this burning question because you can see it like what do you do with this? Now when I wake up and go home how do I apply this in my local community or what do I do with this. So that Creating Change, being in the South for the first time, having the first race, class, and gender institute, just the things in the air around the right wing's activities on the use of that video, and NAFTA. NAFTA being discussed at the time you know that Creating Change was happening. So there was an opportunity to push the envelope about why we should be talking about something like NAFTA at a gay conference. And then Mab's plenary I think Mab's plenary was on Sunday morning and you know it really rocked. We had begun the conversations already in that weekend.

- So when you, well the way Mandy put it was that she started getting the vibe for planning the Durham conference.

- Well this is all at the Durham conference, I just I mean yeah, two days before Mab's speech there was a race, class, and gender institute and my memory is that coming out of that institute is when the conversation started.

- Okay. Race, class, and gender institute. Is this like a pre-conference thing for Creating Change or?

- Yeah. Creating Change used to do these day-long institutes and some of them were skills building and some of them were talking about issues and as soon as SONG formed we actually started you know becoming the organizing body for those institutes. But the first one, they had never done one on race, class, and gender you know as it pertains you know as a discussion and this was their first one. So there was a group of you know progressive lesbians and gay men who had worked on that and formed that.

- Now so-

- So I had talked with Suzanne earlier. I had not gone to Rhythmfest that year because I didn't have the money for the ticket. I had been laid off from work and so I went to this Fight the Right summit instead and

Suzanne Phar was there and Barbra Smith, Suzanne Goldberg and Scott Nokogawa were these four panelists who were talking about you know a more progressive, you know a broader agenda for the lesbian and gay movement than a single-issue identity focus around queerness. And also talking about the attacks on queer people and the work we needed to do you know to stop that. And I say queer for shorthand I'm one of the last ones to come to it.

- So that goes back then to so you and Suzanne were already talking about this?

- No we weren't talking about forming a regional group. Well we were talking about the issues, you know facing our community, definitely, yeah. You know as far back as that Labor Day. But the conversations that really sparked let's get together and start this, you know. But like Suzanne and I had a particular conversation at Creating Change and that particular conversation you know things we were saying to each other and that particular conversation was also it was you know we realized as we were reaching out to people that other people were thinking some similar things about we need to do something regionally with this. Or what can we do regionally as black and white women who are you know connected to different movements. Does that make sense?

- Yes.

- And it's-

- Go ahead.

- It sounded a little bit like you had the impression that they formed SONG and then asked me to join it.

- At one point I thought that, yes. I didn't have it clear that you were there and were already part of all that.

- Well no I was one of the very earliest conversations. In fact, yeah. I mean, yeah.

- I'm really glad to get that straightened on my end. I don't know that... Here's what I'm trying to figure out and do with this special issue. You know we start in the sixties in Gainesville, the feminist movement, the art groups, and a ton of stuff about that, and we're ending, SONG isn't the end of our study period, '68 to '94 is our study period. '94 is the year that the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance closed. So what I'm seeing, I was gonna have ALFA be the last chapter but after interviewing the SONG people I thought well SONG is really the last chapter because it's a new beginning.

- Yeah I really like the way you were thinking that that like here's this piece and it's still going, but no I think I wasn't at some of, I was at the earliest I was part of and at the earliest conversations that launched SONG.

- So you would say that you and Mandy and Suzanne are, were the?

- Well-

- And Mab? I don't know. We don't need to say who was first you know.

- Yeah no we don't we just like we you know we came up and how we have always told it is that you know it came out of conversations at that Creating Change.

- Yeah that's clear. And you're right it wasn't clear to me that you were there. I guess because of where the conversation was goin', the interview was goin', but I don't think the interviews make it sound like that.

- Yes.

- Okay you were the first director, co-director with Pat you're saying.

- That's right, Pat.

- And Joan-

- And I, oh go ahead I'm sorry.

- I was asking Joan to talk about how it went from just talking about these needs to forming an organization that actually did things. And she-

- Well that moved very quickly actually. Because Creating Change was in November of '93 and Pat and I were on part-time payroll in January of '94.

- Wow.

- So we had a very small budget in '94 and we went I think full time in '95. So in '94 we focused on you know we had a meeting in early January at Joan's house and we set out some activities. Part of the activities were to kind of map, you know find out who was out there in the South that was interested in hearing what we were doing and doing a lot of listening. We were going to different conferences where lesbians and lesbians and gay men would gather to and progressive people and gays and lesbians were present to just you know to explore with people what we were trying to do. And we used these, and so we were finding that there were you know there were many people really interested in talking with us and hearing what we were trying to do from a kind of vision-based organizing that was really trying to cross these lines of difference and build a movement where people didn't have to leave their identities at the door.

- Yeah.

- And you know saw coalition or alliance building as a way to liberation for all of us. That no group was strong enough to get there on their own and that also, Rose, we're not just you know we're not just one thing in our identities as lesbians you know we're also women, we're also working class, we're also people

of color, we're also differently abled, we're you know we're many things. So like Pat used to have a saying. She'd say you know I'm no longer willing to choose, she might have said this in her interview, but she'd say and we put it on our fundraising envelope: I'm no longer willing to choose between my skin, my ovaries, my wallet, and my partner Cherry. I'm all one person. And that was really you know the tag-line on our letter heads was building alliances, connecting race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

- Yeah.

- Not saying that those were all the same, but saying that we needed to build you know the kind of movement that really really recognized the connections and within that how important it was to have a strong anti-race movement you know seeing that as some really core and key underpinnings of all of this. We had a beautiful set of what we call assumptions you know, we believe it, we believe it, we communicate it through a bookmark, and I would have to look to find that, but it was you know we set about to communicate what we were about and what we were trying to establish so that we were clear in communicating out to people. So we used and we did a lot of trainings, we did. We did this retreat model early in the years where either by geography or identity we would bring people together, lesbian, gay, trans organizers to talk about... We did a men's retreat because we had found that as women we actually did a men's retreat we did some based on geography like we did one in the North Carolina that pooled North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Or we did one you know in the Florida area or we might do one around people like we did one with cultural organizers here at the Highlander Center actually and brought lesbian, gay, trans cultural workers and organizers together and to help people develop these tools. It was skills building in the sense of organizing but it was also skills building in the sense of relationship building so it's about relationship building and skills building. So people very much in the model you know before I'd ever worked at Highlander about you know people coming together to learn from each other. So it was facilitating the conversations that created the space for people to get to know each other and through that to see what they had in common about building a strong liberation movement that had room for all of us and how we might go about doing that.

- So that's what you did, you and Pat were doin'. Were you working together like going to these things together or were you?

- Yes, mostly we were. And then we did this one series, well we did the retreats and we always facilitated those together. We came on this one thing, Rose, where we said okay we've got building alliances connecting race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, it might've said sexuality, I'd have to look, and we felt like as far as we had to go on all of the conversations that class was one that we had that we needed to list up and bring into the conversation more. So one of the things that we did was hired an economist, an economist, Teresa Amott, from Bucknell University at the time, who was actually an adviser in one of Jesse Jackson's campaigns against the '88 campaigns since we started SONG in '91. I mean '94. Maybe it was the '92 campaign, anyway I'm sorry. So we hired, we developed a participatory and popular education workshop on the economy. We did it a lot in North Carolina because of the, there was a race where an African American man had been was takin' on Jesse Helms and the way, you know the way that the race was being run Jesse Helms was doing these racist things. We wanted to, we couldn't work on the election as a

501C3 but we could work on education around the issues. So more broadly we developed this economy workshop to show the connection between the conservative social agenda and a conservative economic agenda. Because sometimes people like say okay I'm a liberal economically and a conservative, I'm a liberal socially and a conservative economically. Our premise was that really you know, one conservative agenda drives the other. And there's a lot of scapegoating going on, there was deregulation you know in the environment and also in business practices. We were seeing the gutting of the social safety net. We wanted to develop a workshop that really got people talking about issues and talked about what we could do. This is a long answer, I got off here on this road because Pat that's the time when Pat and I worked separately because we could cover more ground that way. So we did this workshop numerous times in North Carolina, South Carolina, we did it in Kentucky, we did it in Tennessee. And we would be hosted by a local organization. Like in Asheville it was hosted by Malaprop's bookstore and some other place it might be hosted by a community group. It was hosted by the Fairness Campaign in Louisville, Kentucky. So that you know so depending on what it was sometimes Pat would represent SONG, sometimes I would represent SONG. On those retreats though at a lot of the trainings you know we would always, the co-directors would always do that together. Sometimes with other people as well.

- Can you spell Teresa Amott's name? That's that Bucknell person.

- I'm sorry?

- Teresa's name? The woman from Bucknell?

- Teresa Amott?

- A? A-M-M?

- It's either A-M-M-O-T or A-M-O-T-T. I'd have to look it up.

- Oh I can look it up.

- She's no longer at Bucknell but she was at the time she worked with us.

- Okay.

- We just hired her to come in and teach us basic economics and then help us develop a workshop that made that accessible to people. So we did like a four hour version and then a two and a half hour version that you could also, the four hour version you could do on the weekend and the two and a half hour version you could do on the weeknight or at a conference.

- Okay.

- I've got a big ole scrapbook from the first big year.

- Oh wow I would love to get my hands on that. (Pam laughs) How far is New Market from Huntsville? Do you know where is it in relation?

- You know I think from Birmingham it's five. How far are you from Knoxville? We're just a half hour on the other side.

- A half hour on the Western or the Eastern side of Knoxville?

- We're Northeast of Knoxville.

- Northeast of Knoxville.

- Northeast about a half hour.

- Yeah we're three and a half hours from Knoxville. I would love to come up there and visit sometime.

- Well I would love for you to.

- And I could take my camera and take pictures of your scrapbook. You can get pretty good pictures off of a camera you know when it might be hard to scan.

- I've just walked in here to my library. So we did, we did this thing called The Journal of SONG in the Spring of 1996 we did one called Class the Missing Link and then in '98 we did one on welfare and then in 2000 we did one on race and those are also, those would be interesting to see if you come. I was looking for one of those little bookmarks that had our assumptions, I don't know. They might be printed in one of these journals. And then we also did like I'm looking here in this one like we used to work with Highlander we did these things called Mountaintop Festival three times at Highlander cause we were trying to get people you know make connections and also provide organizing opportunities for people in an isolated region. Like one of the retreats we had done had been working with either lesbian gay trans people living in Appalachia or working in Appalachia and out of that came you know people talking about some of the isolation they were facing and also Highlander was interested in integrating work against homophobia more into what they were doing. So we came up with this idea of doing the Mountaintop Festival and we did three of those. The first year, I mean yeah I've got a lot. I could go on about I worked there for eight years so. But are you serious about wanting to come?

- I am. I think it would be summertime before I could do it.

- Okay.

- It would be after this.

- Okay, all right.

- In fact so much of what I'm doing right now is sort of blossoming out way beyond our boundaries.

- In the scrapbook I've got a copy of the letter that I wrote to Judy Hatcher, the director of grant making and education, it's a funny exchange in December of 1993 and that was before we even had the name SONG yet.

- Wow.

- That was like a month after the Creating Change thing.

- Wow.

- We were calling it the Southeast Alliance Building Project.

- I wish I could figure out-

- And you know we'd have different flyers from different things and different pictures.

- I wonder if I could-

- I'm sorry?

- The deadline that we're working on right now is Womonwrites.

- Yeah that summer is too late for this, right? To be helpful for your article?

- Well, yes and no. The article-

- Hey Rose?

- I'm here.

- I don't know what's going on but the phone's cutting in and out a little bit. Am I cutting in and out? You know what, I'm gonna go plug up, let me plug my phone in I think my battery's getting low and I think that's causing me to cut in and out a little bit. Can you hang on just a second?

- Oh sure, yeah. Yeah yeah it hasn't been cuttin' out on my end.

- Okay sorry I think this will be better off plugged in here.

- Oh good. I was gonna talk about the deadlines. This May deadline is really for what we're gonna send them

this summer so that they can tell us how much they can use. Our real deadline is November.

- Oh wow!

- Yeah but we have to, in May we have to find out we have about more than twice as much as a single issue of Sinister Wisdom so they have to tell us whether we can have a double issue, and we will still have to cut, or if they want us to just select certain things, or if they want us to... I don't know what they're gonna tell us. But we're trying to, they encouraged us to pull together everything we could and send it to them after Womonwrites. So I'm seeing the summer as the time when we start winnowing but also we would be doing things like filling in gaps. Such as if I were to come up there in June and look at that scrapbook and take pictures. I might be able to fill some holes in what we, in the SONG chapter.

- Well I yeah I would love for you to come. I'm gonna be out of pocket like June 18th, before the 18th, before the early part of the month is better I'm gonna be doing a multiple day women's white water trip out in Utah in later June to celebrate my 60th birthday.

- Oh wow! Oh that's right 1953 that's 60 years there you go. (laughs) Well I'm gonna-

- I did this same trip when I turned, I did this same trip when I turned 50, so I'm excited to go back and do it again.

- Well I'm gonna make a note that early June might be a good time to visit because I've always wanted to visit up there anyway. But this would be a wonderful excuse or reason.

- That'd be great and we're also doing, we're doing I don't know I can send you pictures, you know give me your mailing address. We're doin', the founder of Highlander is that was, the key founder was a man named Myles Horton and his great nephew is actually a successful screenwriter in Hollywood. So Robert Ben Garant is a fundraiser for Highlander and we've never done this thing but this idea is to do a writing, a screenwriting workshop here at Highlander that people you know people pay for these kinds of things-

- Wow.

- He's already come. So the money for it is gonna support our program for you know our organizing and movement building groups. So that's another thing that we're working on writing. Do you mind if I just send you a brochure?

- Sure! In email is that?

- That'd be great.

- In Knoxville?

- Yeah I'd love to. Just email it to me, or if you want to mail it to me it's 1003 Wells Avenue.
- 1002 Wells Avenue?
- Three! 1003 Wells Avenue.
- 1003 Wells Avenue, all right.
- Zip is 35801.
- Is Barb Parkinson in Huntsville?
- She is and I ran across a picture of you and Barb, and Susan Gorell at Womonwrites. (laughs)
- That's awesome, that's awesome.
- I can email it to you, if you want. I'm making a slide show for the 35th, this is the 35th Womonwrites, this year.
- When is that?
- May 15th through 19th.
- May 15th through 19th?
- Yes.
- Is the 35th Womonwrites?
- It's the 35th Womonwrites, yes.
- Wow I didn't even know it. Where?
- It's the same place it's always been there in Indian Springs.
- Oh heck well it's the 15th to the 19th?
- I'll send you the stuff and you can put it on your-
- Oh please do! I would like to put down for that.
- Well it would be great to have you.

- I might not be able to come the whole time, but I'd like to come for part of it.

- And it really starts the 12th because we have the camp for the whole week, so we have pre-conference, and then you know it starts on Wednesday, everybody, people start getting there Sunday. So we'll be working on this herstory project during pre-conference and then the conference itself. It's great.

- I probably couldn't come till Wednesday night or Thursday but I would love to do that, oh my gosh. You know there is a really pivotal experience with the SONG stuff for me and Womonwrites it's, I don't know if you want this story.

- Yeah I do definitely.

- I know we've been talking a while.

- Go ahead and tell the pivotal experience with Womonwrites, we want anything to do with Womonwrites.

- Well the first, that first year we you know we were trying to talk to people, we came to Womonwrites, Pat came to Womonwrites, and we did a series of workshops, you know writing workshops like we always do. You know at Womonwrites, you just can't really, you know you're running around in your shorts and your tshirts and your tanktops, and clothes is an indicator of different classes it's not an operative in that environment, right? You know we're all just kind of like dykes and lesbians running around.

- Yeah.

- And then in the writing workshops one of the sentences we asked people to write about was to complete "The first time I realized people "were a different color was.."

- Yeah.

- And we were really, there were a number of women in that circle whose experience with women of a, whose first experience with women of a different color was the hired help in their home. And that was actually pretty, I just hadn't stopped and thought about that before. Yeah. So there was something about, there was something about class within that. Am I making any sense?

- Yeah I can see what you're saying is that you're looking at something from a different point of view. That you feel, you have the sense that it's, you've always had a sense that it was a shared experience, and then you realize that it's not.

- Yeah. Yeah. I think that you know, you know you're kind of like you see yourself as all kind of the same thing and then there are in fact, there are differences and so yeah and then we did some other. I probably have it, I'll have to look. In fact let me see if I can find it. Hold on a minute. I've got this big thing out now. If I

come, I'll bring this.

- Oh great!

- I'm pretty sure I'm free that weekend.

- Well that would be so wonderful to have you there especially if you could bring the scrapbook!

- Oh I'm so happy to!

- Well we have a lot a whole lot of sort of anniversary kind of things. You know there'll be a tshirt.

- Uh huh.

- I've got over 400 pictures that I've collected from over the years.

- Wow.

- Yeah and you're in a lot of them too! There's the 1983 one, a big group picture, you're in it.

- The Womonwrites Workshop 1995.

- Whoa!

- So we did three workshops: Southern Cooking: Stirring Up Change in the South, one called Making Change Within the Sound of My Own Voice, and Transformation Stories, and they were all writing workshops. One was through writing and discussion this workshop will grapple with difficult questions about racism in our communities and organizing work, how white women combat racism, build alliances with people of color, how we nurture one another, and turn barriers into strategies. I could take a picture of this and email, I could actually copy this and pdf it and email it to you.

- Oh that would be great.

- Yeah. Do I, I have your email? Yeah of course.

- Yeah rose.norman-

- Yeah when I'll go to the office tomorrow I'll just make this into a pdf and send it to you.

- Oh yay! That's exciting. That's great! You know we're calling this a Womonwrites project because we've been working on this at Womonwrites this herstory stuff. Of course Womonwrites doesn't technically do projects like this but women at Womonwrites do. Anyway we have a whole section, the story of

Womonwrites, and whenever we have a Womonwrites connection we like to emphasize it in the memoirs.

- Yeah, yeah. Yeah you know I really I'm gonna move heaven and earth to come in May, and if you will email me the stuff on it. I haven't been in so long that I've gotten you know-

- You fell off the list! I'll put you back on.

- Yeah I would love to like I say I probably couldn't get there though. But I came, the first time I missed, I came for maybe nine or 10 years in a row and then my mom died and then I came a couple years after. So it's been a while, it's been a long while since I came.

- I think you were there, my first year was '96 or '97. I think you were there that year. I think I met you that year with Barb and Suzanne.

- Yeah, yes, I was there both those years I think. Yeah oh this is fun! I'm gonna work that.

- I'll put your email address, we mostly correspond via email nowadays, we have a snail mail list, it has about six people on it. But you know we don't mail out the flyer anymore, we email it.

- Uh huh.

- So I will put you on that email list and you'll get-

- Great!

- And every now and then you'll get a little reminder of it it's coming.

- All right! Well yeah I'm sitting here I'm really clear that I'm, I'm sitting here looking at my calendar. I go to New York on that Sunday or Monday. I go to New York that Sunday night.

- Uh huh.

- So.

- The 19th?

- Uh huh. So I can actually maybe come back up and fly out of Atlanta.

- Oh, well that's true it's probably cheaper to fly out of Atlanta.

- I could come on down and then fly out of Atlanta. (Pam laughs)

- Wouldn't that be fun?

- Yeah that's really good. That's good, that's good.

- Great, well. I feel like I've got enough now that I can send you something to work on.

- Okay.

- I don't know how fast I'll get it. I've been typing my notes but I have lots of big holes. I'll have to listen to the tape and pull it back together. I will maybe we'll stay in touch over email about your correcting anything I get wrong in this.

- Okay.

- But we've still got Pat Hussain to do. Lorraine Fontana is supposed to interview her in Atlanta. She lives in Atlanta.

- Okay.

- And they're in touch. Pat's partner is having a knee replacement or something. So there's, it might've been faster for me to do it by phone. But anyway that's the last SONG person we haven't talked to.

- Okay. Yeah that'll wow, cool.

- I haven't actually talked to Mab but I emailed her and she says she would answer the questions. I'm gonna have to remind her though.

- Okay. All right. Yeah it's interesting I was down at the 20th anniversary. I think all the founders were there but Mab. 20th anniversary in Atlanta. Yeah, cool cool. Well Rose, what a gift! Thank you for this. I think you can count on seeing me you know if something unforeseen comes up, you can count on seeing me.

- Well I sure hope so, that would be just great.

- Yeah that'd be great.

- Okay well.

- Okay you take good care and call me if I can do anything.

- I will. Thank you so much.

- All right.

- You have a good night.

- Good night. Buh-bye.