

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript of Interview with Fliss Lord

Interviewee: Fliss Lord

Interviewer: Allison Murchie

Date: 6th April 2018

[00:00:01]

MURCHIE: This is oral history 1120, the fortieth anniversary project for WIS. Today it's Allison Murchie interviewing Fliss lord at her home in Kensington and it's the 6th April 2018. Firstly Fliss, thank you very much for agreeing to be part of the project and I really appreciate that. I should say we have company in Fliss' cat is sitting next to me and being patted and being very sooky. But let's get some details first. What's your full name Fliss?

LORD: Felicity Anne Lord.

MURCHIE: With an E?

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: And what was your maiden name?

LORD: That's it.

MURCHIE: That is your maiden name---

LORD: That's it---

MURCHIE: ---'Cause, I've, I've known you as a different name before---

LORD: I was, I was married to a Coleman for years...

MURCHIE: Yes---

LORD: ---And then I remarried, get down cat, I've had enough, then I divorced when I remarried I went back to my married, my single name---

MURCHIE: Back to Lord---

LORD: ---my, oh sorry, my second husband was called Kennedy and I didn't want to be Kennedy, that was too much of a mouthful.

MURCHIE: Sound fair to me, now what was your date of birth?

LORD: 15th of April 1947.

MURCHIE: So you have a birthday coming up next week? Happy, happy birthday in advance.

LORD: Yeah, 71, can't believe it.

MURCHIE: Well I can honestly say you don't look it, but anyway we're not here to just sit here and praise you. Where you were born Fliss?

LORD: In Melbourne. I was the third of five children. The first child was born just, just before my father went to Singapore in the Second World War and when he was demobbed he came back to Melbourne and suddenly my mother was pregnant with baby number two, then he was sent somewhere else with the air force and when he came back suddenly my mother was pregnant with me. So, it all happened very quickly---

MURCHIE: Very quickly, yeah.

LORD: ---for her. At that stage he was not a particularly well person. He, I think three years in Singapore facing the Japanese and the loss of many of his buddies and seeing things that no person should ever see, he carried those sort of scars for the rest of his life and very largely we knew about it.

MURCHIE: Was it post-traumatic stress?

LORD: Yeah, yeah of course, but of course you can't---

MURCHIE: But it didn't have a name in those days---

LORD: No, no, wasn't, it was just something that you just had to tighten your upper lip and get on with it.

MURCHIE: What was your father's name?

LORD: Howard. He had a beautiful singing voice. And because of that he never did take up smoking which meant when he did eventually come back to Australia he didn't get any form of, of assistance from the Government because they only assisted those that they gave free cigarettes to. And see, he used to get cigarettes and swap them for other stuff that he wanted but he never took up smoking because he, he really wanted to be an opera singer when he got home.

MURCHIE: What did he do when he got home?

LORD: He, he sang around Melbourne for until I was one, mainly to hospitals with recuperating defence personnel. When that, well, well, he had 3 children under 5 for heaven's sake, and they were paying rent and one of my relatives back here was selling up the family property, and they gave my mum and dad a block of land to build on if they wanted to come back to Adelaide. I don't think my Dad wanted to come back but my Mum did.

MURCHIE: So they were both from Adelaide originally?

LORD: No, my mum was from Adelaide, my Dad was from Melbourne. My Dad's father was a customs inspector in Melbourne. A short, stocky, I believe very handsome, black curly hair, blue eyes, Jewish man. He married a woman who wasn't Jewish so therefore the Jewish line

stopped. And he had two sisters, the younger one was a bit retarded mentally and the elder one was very intent on winning beauty contests.

[00:05:22]

MURCHIE: Oh dear, ok, so... to cut it short---

LORD: So anyway they came---

MURCHIE: They moved to Adelaide and your story's been here---

LORD: ---They came to Adelaide.

MURCHIE: ---Since. Tell me a little bit about your early employment. 'Cause you, you got married at what age first off?

LORD: Oh Glory, 20.

MURCHIE: Yes, well I thought it was, and you had how many children?

LORD: Three.

MURCHIE: Yeah, so your early life was pretty busy?

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: Let's talk about when you did get into the workforce? What, what did you do?

LORD: Got into the work, I had, I had lots of part-time stuff for local businesses just book-keeping or reception or typing, you know that sort of rubbish.

MURCHIE: Things that allow you to still have time with the children and have a job.

LORD: Yeah, yeah those were the days when women were expected to be totally responsible for children and house and my husband at the time was a public servant who took himself very seriously and we only had, we lived in, we built our house in the hills and every day he took the car. I think back on it now and it makes me laugh.

MURCHIE: But you would've been a very, very typical housewife of that, of that era---

LORD: Oh yes, we were all the same---

MURCHIE: Not an unusual story.

LORD: Nope, nope.

MURCHIE: How long did the marriage last?

LORD: Thirteen years. Lucky thirteen.

MURCHIE: Lucky thirteen. And then you moved on.

LORD: At thirteen, what happened at thirteen was my husband came home one day and said, "I want to discuss with you our future with my superannuation". And he started to tell me that he was going to get all this money at this stage if he put all this money in now. And I didn't really understand but what hit me the most was he said "When I am sixty five you and I will have a life together and we will have the money and the children will be grown up and it'll be just you and me". And I looked at him and I thought I can't do that. And---

MURCHIE: So maybe that was a good conversation in the end?

LORD: I realised I was going, yeah, I realised then that my future had to be different from that. I couldn't imagine living with this humourless,

mediocre person until I was sixty five. Lordy, lordy I was in my early thirties.

MURCHIE: So, this, this woman of the thirties that's stuck in this, this life how did she become the active feminist fighting for women that I met? How, how did you make that leap and that progress?

LORD: Well, it, I started off when we lived in Glenalta, when the kids were little and I joined school and kindergarten committees. Then at one stage I was the president of the Kindy committee and a woman came along by the name of Elizabeth Mansutti to talk to us about the effect of television on children and I had fairly recently moved back to Adelaide from Darwin, I didn't tell you that bit---

MURCHIE: I don't need, this, this is the story---

LORD: ---Yeah, we went to live in Darwin and when the cyclone came we had to come back. Elizabeth Mansutti blew me away because I had had three children in Darwin without any television. Suddenly here we were, my children turned into little goggle eyes, they couldn't leave it alone and I was really worried because before that they were playing outside and reading and all that stuff. So i became very good friends with Elizabeth. The, one of the workers at that Kindergarten at the time was a woman by the name of Pat Hempell who also lived up in the hills and later became the president of the Children's Film and Television Association. Children's Film and Television did a lot of public speaking and media education for, for parents and children and other half we had film festivals every, international film festivals, every other year. When we moved down from Glenalta down to the, we moved down because the house, the house got a bit small and my parents wanted to move out of the family home so my husband and I built the, bought the old family home on that block of land that---

[00:10:29]

MURCHIE: Oh, from the original. So where was that?

LORD: On the corner of Watson Avenue and Prescott Terrace in Toorak Gardens. Because my, my grandmother's family were the Prescott family and they owned a farm all around there. It's ridiculous isn't it, you look at it now.

MURCHIE: So that was the beginning of the change, wasn't it, really?

LORD: Yes, yes.

MURCHIE: Meeting Elizabeth and---

LORD: Elizabeth Mansutti.

MURCHIE: ---and coming back to Adelaide. Yeah.

LORD: Now, Elizabeth Mansutti also is one of those people who's been on the library board for years.

MURCHIE: Oh, it's a well-known name. Very well-known.

LORD: Well known. You've never met her?

MURCHIE: No, but I certainly know the name.

LORD: Oh, she's dynamite. Really, I think Elizabeth was the one who jumpstarted me. But when I moved down from the hills to the city I started applying for jobs, keeping in touch with the people that I knew, and I was offered a job with Children's Film and Television. They at that stage were out at North Adelaide and they were just about to organise yet another international festival and they needed another person, oh, on board. And so I was really very pleased because they were quite happy for me to keep it to 25 hours a week so I could still be there for primary school children. At

that stage I still had a couple. And that was great. I really liked that. It was one of those jobs where you have to do everything. I spent a lot of time going out to primary schools speaking to parent's associations, teachers, talking about the impact of television and why it was important that they try and limit children's daily hours to television, and of course meeting a lot of international people who brought their films to Adelaide to show to children, which was absolutely fantastic. I just, I just revelled in that part too. And the film-making scene in Adelaide was, in those days it was just bubbling along very nicely. I met Scott thingamebob---

MURCHIE: Hicks.

LORD: ---several times. He was lovely. And his wife, and all sorts of people, and of course because we work hand-in-hand with the Education Department Media Studies Unit, I got to meet a lot of teachers as well and used a lot of their knowledge as teachers of children with too much television. We also ran a state survey on videotapes. In those days videos were very new, there was no classification system---

MURCHIE: That's right.

LORD: ---and we were really worried that very young children were getting access to very violent videos. And they were. The State Government reeled in horror when they found out what was going on. It was very much like today, when we have parents who are sexually abusing their children, this was a form of sexual abuse.

[00:14:03]

MURCHIE: How long did you end up working there?

LORD: Oh, 15 years?

MURCHIE: So a huge part of your life.

LORD: Yes. Yes. Well I loved it, and it grew with me.

MURCHIE: You both grew together.

LORD: Yes, yes. In the end I was working four days a week which was lovely. Four was ideal for me. In the meantime our marriage had broken up and I was teaching my children, ah, that they shared the responsibility of the house. So we had, everything was divided by four, all the housework, so one week you'd get vacuuming, and another week you'd get all the washing and putting away, all that stuff.

MURCHIE: So you helped them grow up properly too---

LORD: Oh yes.

MURCHIE: ---because they got---

LORD: They had to.

MURCHIE: ---they had to for the family to survive.

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: And they got those---

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: ---life skills at the same time.

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: And you're still very---

LORD: And cooking!

MURCHIE: ---close with your children, aren't you?

LORD: Yeah, yeah. And cooking, they all had to have a week a month of cooking, because by then I was a member of Women's Electoral Lobby [WEL].

MURCHIE: Now that's, that's where I think I first started to hear about Fliss Lord.

LORD: Oh, yeah.

MURCHIE: Now, how did you get involved with, from a film industry background, for children, how---

LORD: It's funny isn't it.

MURCHIE: ---how did you make that jump, although I know---

LORD: I think---

MURCHIE: ---many, many women in Adelaide were doing that same jump.

LORD: I think it was Joan Russell. I can't remember where.

MURCHIE: Well she was certainly one of the key movers.

LORD: When I first met Joan Russell I thought, "Oh my God, is this what a feminist is?". I was (gasps in awe) so, shocked. And she said something or other about the fact I was wearing pearls, and I've never worn them since. (laughs)

MURCHIE: What was---

LORD: Isn't that lovely?

MURCHIE: Did you---

LORD: I can't remember.

MURCHIE: Did you consider yourself a feminist?

LORD: I didn't know what a feminist was.

MURCHIE: Okay.

LORD: And I, I, I really didn't know. It was about that time that I---

MURCHIE: So this is, so Joan introduced you to feminism as well---

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: And that sort of link.

LORD: Joan, and it was meeting Joan that I bought the book *The Women's Room*. And reading *The Women's Room*, I signed up with Women's Electoral Lobby. *The Women's Room* had an amazing impact on me. I, yeah. And from there on I just went on to, oh, I met Anne Summers and all this amazing books that were around, and of course we had the women's bookshop down on the Norwood Parade with Fij. Oh! To die for. And I just leapt in feet first. I know I alienated a lot of people, and especially my estranged husband, he went off the branch at how... he actually went so far as to say I really should go and see a psychiatrist.

MURCHIE: Did that sort of comment bother you?

LORD: Yes, it made me angry. Now I laugh at it. But it did make me angry because it was, because I had discovered this fantastic thing that was going to make my life worthwhile. I couldn't understand why other people didn't see at all, so. What was wrong with my parents and my siblings and my ex-husband? They were all stupid! And that---

MURCHIE: Well I think you were proved right.

LORD: (laughs)

MURCHIE: And, I mean, the reason I'm saying that is because some women would be put off by that sort of disapproval by family, but your story is similar to a lot of women that I'm interviewing.

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: Once they'd found the light of feminism, through whatever source---

LORD: Oh, yes.

MURCHIE: ---there was no looking back.

LORD: No.

MURCHIE: And you fit into that as well?

LORD: And the fights it caused.

MURCHIE: Mm-hmm.

LORD: Oh, my father wouldn't talk to me and my mother just burst into tears and said "Darlin, look what you're throwing away" and I couldn't convince her that what I was gaining, I just---

MURCHIE: Okay. Now, the purpose of this interview is to really find out, how did you hear about WIS? And what did you know about WIS?

[00:18:40]

LORD: Well, after being in Women's Electoral Lobby for a while, of course with people like Betty, Barbara Polkinghorne, now Barbara was a part of the women's liberation movement, she was gorgeous, she was a wonderful influence for me, and mentor, and our meetings, we were, we were the women and media committee. Barbara and, there were six of us, and we

used to meet down underneath my plum tree with, with a box of red wine on every second Saturday and Ba- (laughs). We met there simply because I had three kids that were coming and going and I couldn't just walk out on a Saturday and leave them alone.

MURCHIE: I can almost see this little group of collaborators there with their glass of red.

LORD: (laughing) Yeah! Oh, boy! And of course in those days also, I was also, my mother was on the committee of Cottage Homes, which is just up the road, and Barbara became homeless, she had three months to get out of her room that she was renting, and I got her into Cottage Homes so she was living just up the road from me and she was so happy. So when we got this media group together she could just come down the road and I'd put the, the red wine in the middle of the table and away we went.

MURCHIE: There's gotta be a link here, I've had so many people in the feminist movement and red wine, there's a very strong connection there.

LORD: (laughing) Yeah.

MURCHIE: Maybe there's a thesis there for someone. It certainly is a strong story. Sorry, I'm side tracking.

LORD: Well we had to limit it to one box of red wine. Yes.

MURCHIE: (laughing) Okay.

LORD: Now, Barbara was a Women's, ah, what were they called, libbers.

MURCHIE: Ah yes, Women's lib.

LORD: They also scared me a bit, because they were very outspoken, very anti-elitism, and of course I'd been brought up with this, as I said earlier, wearing pearls, and twin sets for crying out loud. And you can see by that

photo that I was pretty docile. But she used to talk a lot about, about the Women's Information Switchboard, so I decided I was going to go to the Women's Information Switchboard and go to their meetings, so I did, and it was great down there in Kintore Avenue.

MURCHIE: Do you remember when you started going there?

LORD: Oh it would've been, well, when did, when did, it was about two years before it moved down to Roma Mitchell.

MURCHIE: Bear with me, I'll... I have got that written down here somewhere, let's have a look.

LORD: And that was, I was never sure about that, and neither was Barbara.

MURCHIE: Moved to Station Arcade in 1997.

LORD: Okay, well it was about two---

MURCHIE: So about mid-nineties.

LORD: ---it was about mid-nineties. Yes.

MURCHIE: And was it already called the Women's Information Support Group when you joined it?

LORD: No.

MURCHIE: What was it then?

LORD: It was the Switchboard something-or-other, I don't know.

MURCHIE: So it was, there wasn't people that were working at WIS, but it was like, um, other organisations.

LORD: Yeah, how would all the---

MURCHIE: So you were representing WEL, or---

LORD: When we, yeah, when we moved down to Station Arcade we were all very nervous because we thought we were losing our autonomy.

MURCHIE: Get to that in a minute, I really want to talk about the Kintore Avenue part, so, you represented WIS, how often were these meetings?

LORD: WEL.

MURCHIE: Oh, WEL, sorry.

LORD: I really can't remember, it---

MURCHIE: I'm guessing monthly---

LORD: ---it might have been monthly?

MURCHIE: I think they were monthly, yeah.

[00:22:53]

LORD: But that's where I met, you know, Liz Ahern and all those---

MURCHIE: Carmel was there at that time?

LORD: Carmel, oh yeah, Carmel. She was just gorgeous. But Carmel I understood and Carmel I think helped me, because she also came from a middle-class background of, you know, "Do the right thing and be a nice girl", and she understood that it was going to take me a while to liberate myself from those, don't be "too polite girl" stuff. (chuckles)

MURCHIE: There was, can you remember any of the other organisations that were in that group as you were representing WEL?

LORD: Lots, we used to have meetings of fifty old women.

MURCHIE: (gasps) Wow! Fifty!

LORD: All the churches were represented. Um, oh giddy aunt, there were lots and lots.

MURCHIE: Have a look at that list I've just left you, is there any of those that ring a bell from those early days when you started?

LORD: And of course a lot of women pollies came along.

MURCHIE: They were very supportive, weren't they?

LORD: Yeah, they were great. But we were very, very suspicious. Oh Alison Jen, yeah. Dear old Alison.

MURCHIE: Oh, yes, yes.

LORD: She was great. Of course she lived just down the road, um, so I saw a fair bit of Alison. Oh have a look at them all, yes, Beta Sigma Fi Catholic Women's League, yes, church women, AFUW, I was not yet a member of AFUW but there was---

MURCHIE: You became heavily involved later.

LORD: Yeah, I yeah, Democrats, they were all there. Yeah yeah, know all them. Mm-hmm. I don't remember Child and Home Safety, oh the Breastscreen girl, what was her name? She was fantastic. No, I can't remember. Ah- dee dee, dee dee, dee dee. Yes, ah the um, the Asian women's group, Pan Pacific or something, um, Virtues of Christ, CWA, oh yeah. Mmm.

MURCHIE: The YW, were they---

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: They were there early too?

LORD: Yes. Definitely. Yes, she was on executive. What was her name? Blonde, curly hair. Not very chatty. Not Denise, something like that. Yes. Tea Tree Gully now there, Tea Tree Gully YWCA, she used to come along, National Council of Women of course, Nursing Mothers, Mother's Union, Legal Services, oh yes. Oh yes, all them. Yes. Nurses. Rape Crisis. Oh, there's---

MURCHIE: Don't bother going through, what we've identified there is that was a real cross-section of society.

LORD: Oh it was wonderful.

MURCHIE: And it wasn't what you would traditionally call a group of feminists. It was a group of women representing---

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: Every other woman that was around.

[00:26:20]

LORD: Yes, and that made it very difficult when the time came for us to gather around and talk about the abortion law reform because some of us didn't want it, some of us were dead against it, and lots of us were really very much for it and prepared to march the streets for it, and it did cause a lot of trouble. I don't know how Carmel ever managed that because that was difficult.

MURCHIE: So the whole time that you were there Carmel was managing those meetings?

LORD: Yeah. She was wonderful, she had great people skills. And women really liked her and respected her, which was most important in that role.

MURCHIE: What would you say, at that early stage, even though you weren't a member of the working WIS group at Kintore Avenue you were clearly heavily involved. What do you think was the strength of WIS? What were they about?

LORD: Giving women a voice. Introducing women to each other as friends and not competitors.

MURCHIE: That's a good way of describing it. And did you think, through your involvement, that they were a feminist organisation?

LORD: I didn't have that label at the time, but by the mid-nineties I was very proudly calling myself a feminist. But not a radical one, that scared me. I wasn't going to, I wasn't going to throw bombs and (laughs) at the male politicians that I couldn't stand, but I was quite happy to write letters, I was quite happy to hold placards, walking on International Women's Day, go to meetings about abortion law reform and of course later on we had the right to life and all that crap. Mmm.

MURCHIE: That's probably a good way of describing it.

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: What did you see as the role of WIS Support Group? I think WIS had become quite established, women knew what they were there for, what they were about, I've discussed with people that worked there the sort of clients, the sort of advice and training they got, but yours was a very different role.

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: Because you weren't an employee or a volunteer, but you played an equally strong role in quite a different aspect. So as an early member of this group, what did you see your role as?

LORD: I was responsible for getting as many delegates from women's organisations around the place to come along to a quarterly meeting to talk about what they were trying to achieve, what their goals were, and to become familiar with the Switchboard, with WIS, as their home base, and to meet other delegates. And there were times when that just got extremely difficult because a lot of organisations decided to fade away.

MURCHIE: Oh, for what sort of reasons? A lot---

LORD: If we had meetings after working hours, the older women didn't want to come. If we had meetings during working hours, the younger working ones couldn't come. So---

[00:30:12]

MURCHIE: So when you started, when were they meeting?

LORD: Night-time. So we were half-past---

MURCHIE: So what, like, six o' clock, half, right.

LORD: Half past six, and I used to say, bring your, bring something to eat if you want to, or, but of course the older ones constantly, Heather Beckmann, that's who I took over from. She was lovely.

MURCHIE: So when did Heather take over the leadership of that group?

LORD: Heather led the group until 2000, when I took over.

MURCHIE: But I think it would be fair to say that during that time you were a very strong deputy to---

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: --- I mean we saw you as taking over. And so it was all, not a deputy but almost a shared leadership to a degree, would that be a fair comment?

LORD: I didn't mean to, I was just super keen (laughs) and I could see that while Heather was really good at the advocacy, she was great at letter-writing to politicians or whoever needed to be written to, keeping in touch, and being a strong democrat, she was very, far more involved in politics than I was. But I could see that, um, a lot of that was too academic for some of the younger ones who were trying to represent their local, you know, it may have been school, or kindy, or, YW, or church groups that, um, and I didn't want her to be too academic, but it had to be a little bit because that was the purpose of the advocacy. So Heather and I---

MURCHIE: So it was getting that balance, wasn't it?

LORD: Yeah. And we worked really well together I thought. Then poor old Heather, her husband died and she just, she dropped her bundle, poor love. So I just kept it going, thinking that she could come back when she felt a bit stronger and her life levelled out, but she moved on instead.

MURCHIE: And you were well prepared---

LORD: Oh, yeah.

MURCHIE: ---having been in that deputy role so, it was probably a godsend in a way that you'd had that strong bond with Heather in working together.

LORD: Oh yeah. Yes. And also with Carmel.

MURCHIE: I didn't have the opportunity of meeting or working with Heather. My time on the support group was entirely with you so I have no comparison.

LORD: Oh, right. Yeah.

MURCHIE: But during that time, you were always so full of energy and drive. Was that just part of your development as a feminist and as a woman?

LORD: I think so.

MURCHIE: Yeah.

LORD: I was just charged by it all. And I just kept in touch with, I had (laughs), it was just amazing though, I think back on it now and I don't know how I did it, with three kids on my own, working, and I just loved WIS. And I had papers all over the place. And that's when I started to get political. I didn't join a party because every time I thought of joining a party one of the men would do something that incensed me. And, and to this very day I'm not sorry, because there are still some men there that I'd like to punch their lights out.

MURCHIE: Well I can't ask you on tape because that would be libellous---

LORD: (chuckles) Oh?

MURCHIE: But you can tell me afterwards. Um, so you never joined a party at any stage after that?

LORD: Nope. Nope. Nope.

[00:34:30]

MURCHIE: But your political views would have been clear.

LORD: Oh, yes. I think everybody knew that I was---

MURCHIE: And---

LORD: ---I was that way.

MURCHIE: ---one of the strengths of the committee, I've found, not that they were always able to attend because it often clashed with parliamentary sitting, but there were a lot of politicians committed to that group weren't there, who were some of them?

LORD: Yes, well some of them were committed and some of them were there for what they could get out of it.

MURCHIE: Let's do the committed ones first and then we'll... can you remember some of the ones that you felt were really behind you?

LORD: Oh, Sandra was wonderful.

MURCHIE: Yeah. She's still very active.

LORD: Oh, she's stunning. Sandra was just---

MURCHIE: Sorry, I should say for the record Sandra Kanck.

LORD: Frances was always around, Steph was magnificent, I never got on at all well with the lady from Port Augusta.

MURCHIE: Lyn Breuer?

LORD: Lyn Breuer, she said to me one day she's got no time for feminism and I thought "Uh-oh!". Even when she was the speaker in the house we didn't get on. Isn't that funny. Um, oh look, there were so many---

MURCHIE: Tammy Franks was there from the Greens?

LORD: Oh, Tammy, yeah. Well she was YW.

MURCHIE: She was at, yes, she was at that stage, that's right.

LORD: Yeah, um.

MURCHIE: Just trying to think.

LORD: Sandra from Working Women's Centre---

MURCHIE: Sandra Dann.

LORD: ---was fantastic. Yeah. Um.

MURCHIE: By the way, she still is (laughs).

LORD: Oh she still is, isn't she gorgeous. Yes. Look there's been lots of women who have come along for a couple of years and then someone else has come, but most of the women polities were, now there's people like Vickie Chapman. Now she would come along sometimes.

MURCHIE: And she was there from the very start.

LORD: She, yes. And she was a member with Women's Electoral Lobby for a long time too. But she never really relaxed into the way most women relaxed when they get with a crowd of other women. She always had a bit of a, excuse me, that's my refrigerator, she had a sort of defensive um, yeah, it was interesting. And there were a couple of others, polities, there was one from Port Lincoln, I can't remember her name, she came along for quite a while. If our meetings coincided with sitting dates she would come in, um, but I did notice that as the advocacy dropped off, so did they. Which said to me that there were quite a few there to hear what we were saying rather than to come along and be a part of it. Um. And that got trickier as time went on, because towards the end as you will know, the same old ones were coming along, meeting after meeting, and none of them were interested in the advocacy. I'd talk about, for example, the um, what was it called, um, the right to die.

MURCHIE: Euthanasia, voluntary euthanasia.

LORD: Thank you. Um, and I'd say "can we all agree on a point of view that we can write in?". No one ever volunteered to write the letter. Um. I knew

that abortion law reform was going to come up again. And it will now. Which pains me. But. Someone else is going to have to handle it.

[00:38:28]

MURCHIE: Just reminded me of another name, Anne Levy. When you said abortion law reform.

LORD: Oh, Anne came all the time. As did Heather Southcott of course.

MURCHIE: Sorry for interrupting there, just---

LORD: Yes. Anne, oh, dear old Anne. She's okay? I haven't seen her---

MURCHIE: Yeah, absolutely fine.

LORD: ---for a couple of years.

MURCHIE: Oh yes, still see her at functions here and there.

LORD: Oh, good.

MURCHIE: So, I noticed towards the end, the word I latch on is "old". It tended to be women from a whole range of organisations that had been there from the start. And the only thing they were interested in was their own organisation. Very happy to share information which was a good part of the meetings as to what was on but not really interested in anything outside of that view.

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: And it was clear it was going to end because you were the only activist on the group.

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: Over the many years that you were involved, what were some of the issues that the group did get involved in, whether it be advocacy, letter-writing, what are the sorts of things 'cause the big ones you have mentioned were abortion law reform and certainly in more recent times the voluntary euthanasia.

LORD: We also did a fair bit with public transport, disability issues, older women's issues, social security, social security was a very interesting one because things were changing in those areas and not necessarily for the better, you know, things like single mums were having a pretty tough time, and still are I believe. What else. You know when I think now about the sexual assault, we didn't even stop and think about that.

MURCHIE: And domestic violence I don't think we really were onto until quite late either.

LORD: No. No, we weren't, you're right. Domestic violence was something that happened in to other people.

MURCHIE: And as a general rule, I hate to generalise but, most of those women on the committee were probably middle-class.

LORD: Middle-class, yes. Yes.

MURCHIE: Perhaps not exposed to---

LORD: No.

MURCHIE: ---some of those um---

LORD: No.

MURCHIE: ---I mean it---

LORD: And even if they were, nobody talked about it.

MURCHIE: They wouldn't have talked about it. That was just exactly what I was going to say. It impacts on every part of society but that particular group, it was happening, wouldn't talk about it. And I think that's the big leap we've made now.

LORD: That's right. One thing I did try really hard to do but it just failed at every turn, was to get indigenous representation. I remember talking with Cheryl Axelby, who was at that time at the um, Aboriginal Law, god I can't remember it, was it ALRN? I can't remember.

MURCHIE: Could've been.

LORD: Yeah. Um, because I was really aware that there was a division, you know we had women there from overseas, we had refugee representation, but our own Aboriginal women were nowhere to be seen. Um, and thanks to Carmel, that gradually changed and now we have the Aboriginal women's health get-togethers and all that stuff, but to get a delegate to come along to a meeting was just. That was too hard. Um. Maria Lane, she came a couple of times representing the Federation of Graduate Women. She was fantastic, she was also a lecturer at one of the universities in Aboriginal something-or-other.

MURCHIE: Part of your role was working with the paid staff at WIS and we always had a manager's report, and 99 times out of a hundred we would have the manager there, at the meetings. Um, again showing their support for what we did. Who were the managers or the WIS staff that you worked directly with?

LORD: Oh, heavens. After Carmel, who came after Carmel, oh, we had all sorts of people, we had Vaia Proios.

MURCHIE: Oh yes, Vaia, yeah.

LORD: We had Sandra Dann, we had, oh dear oh dear.

MURCHIE: I must say, I don't remember them either, that's why I'm pushing you to see if you can.

LORD: Oh. And of course we had, um. Oh! Cortisone's taken a lot of my brain away I'm afraid.

MURCHIE: Let's, let me have a look at my list.

LORD: It's terrible isn't it? Oh isn't that crazy. Yes, they used to present a report---

[00:43:40]

MURCHIE: Oh, I haven't got that in my, yeah, yeah.

LORD: ---at every meeting. About what they were doing and how we could be involved and all sorts of stuff, ... oh, Bridget Wansey of course, she came, remember Bridget? Yeah. She was there, she was one of the older ones.

MURCHIE: One of the other things I liked that you did, you'd always do the minutes, occasionally you'd get the odd helper but 99 times it was you that was doing the minutes and you had difficulty writing so I always found that a bit mean.

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: But when you sent out the minutes you always included clippings from the press relating to women's issues, many of which we didn't see because we don't necessarily get The Advertiser and things like that.

LORD: Of course not.

MURCHIE: And that must have taken you quite a bit of time to compile and---

LORD: Yeah.

MURCHIE: ---yeah.

LORD: But I thought it was important. I thought it was important for, not everybody receives a paper, sometimes I'd get interstate papers, and of course being in Women's Electoral Lobby, they would send me a copy if there was something in a Sydney paper or in a Melbourne paper. And I thought they were important enough to share. But also our own things, you know with, Steph's office was always very very good if I needed anything like that, and back in those days of course, I don't know why, but I, when I was working with children's television I also did a lot of paper reading there to keep up with what was going on in the media, so---

MURCHIE: So it's a habit you maintained.

LORD: It's a habit I maintained. And it still fascinates, I'm still a newspaper person, I'll never get over it.

MURCHIE: There is something I do want to talk about, and you touched on it earlier, you started at Kintore Avenue, the institute building, then the big decision was made to move down to Station Arcade, I'm not sure what the reasoning---

LORD: That was Diana, the Liberal party got in---

MURCHIE: Ah, okay.

LORD: ---and Diana wanted us in one place with the Office for Women. Where Carmel was the boss, of course. But half of us were excited and half of us were very nervous. The older women, most of the older women, were very cautious.

MURCHIE: Why was that?

LORD: Because if the Government is paying for you to do your work, then the Government is going to want to keep a foot on you. And we were really concerned that there would be pressure from the minister on the way we ran WIS.

MURCHIE: Did you find that happened?

LORD: There was an influence, but because that influence was Diana, it was really easy to understand and it didn't really make things difficult. Um. Simply because, when the Liberal party came into power, we were able to present to Diana to take to the executive a minute of one of our very early meetings where David Tonkin was present and he was minuted as saying "The Liberal Party will always support the Women's Information Switchboard um, without, without interference" anyway.

MURCHIE: Okay, so, the move worked.

LORD: The mo--- this was thanks to Don Dunstan.

MURCHIE: Yes, of course, 'cause he started it.

LORD: Yes. Well, no he didn't, but he was the first one to come along and say "the Government should be supporting you".

MURCHIE: That's right, he saw the need.

LORD: Yes.

MURCHIE: Then, the next and final move is to where it currently is in Grenfell Street. Um, because you'd already made one move I guess that second one was a little bit easier and again, moving with the department was the focus. So you've worked at all three of those environments. Was your heart mainly with the first one at the Institute?

LORD: Oh, yeah. It always is---

MURCHIE: Because that was the woman's hub in Adelaide, wasn't it?

LORD: Yeah, it was great.

MURCHIE: People still mention that, that it was such a friendly organisation---

LORD: (quietly) Was great, was great.

MURCHIE: ---and it was this little haven for Adelaide women. That's how you'd still see---

LORD: Lefty women.

MURCHIE: Yeah.

LORD: (chuckles) It was great and I could take my kids in there and nobody went, "tut tut tut". It was never quite the same after that. I know that the two offices that we've had since, we've nearly always had a children's corner, but---

MURCHIE: Not the same.

LORD: It's not the same. Not when you've got old couches and tatty old rugs on the floor and radical stuff hanging from the ceiling (laughs).

MURCHIE: And on that really positive note, we'll stop the interview for today.

LORD: (laughs)

MURCHIE: And thank you very much, that was delightful.

LORD: Oh, gawd.

MURCHIE: Thank you.

[00:48:52]

END OF INTERVIEW