

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS**  
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2013**

**BETTY SIMS INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL**

Blanche Touhill: Why don't you introduce yourself.

Betty Sims: Hi, I'm Betty Sims, Mrs. William A. Sims, Jr., Elizabeth Green Sims, lived in St. Louis my entire life. I'm 78 years old or about to be and have been, I think, serving our community since I was born.

Blanche Touhill: Well, talk about your early life, your mother and father, where you were born, did you have siblings, where did you go to school, was there a teacher that really...

Betty Sims: Got all that. I was born at St. Louis Maternity Hospital in 1935 with a twin sister. My sister, Marian Hungerford was with us until last year when she died and was totally the opposite of me. So we grew up, we have a younger sister who's 18 months younger so basically the three of us were the Green girls. Our father was Jack Green and he died in the second World War so we went through a period where Mom was a single mom; she worked for Famous Barr. It was after the war. We lived with my grandparents who had all of their three children and all grandchildren living in their house at 5260 Washington Avenue in St. Louis. So I went to Clark School which is a St. Louis public school. Then Mom remarried, Tommy Rosen, who became the man of our lives, if you can imagine getting married with a wife and three daughters. We moved and we moved to Clayton and went to DeMun School at the time. Tommy was the best father that anybody could ever have. My dad died just right at the end of the war so it was kind of that in between period. I think of us as almost like three puppy dogs doing everything, enrolling in everything. Our mom was definitely the mentor of not only our family but of much of St. Louis. Her name was Betty Rosen and we followed her as a good example as we did my grandmother because my grandmother had been the first woman to actually be involved with the United Way, which was

the United Fund or the Community Chest at that time. So we grew up in an environment of community service which is really interesting, and because we were three and we were so cute, we had pictures always in the paper. We were rolling balls of silver paper; we were collecting newspapers; we did all those things that kids were taught to do early, early on. Our mom was the Brownie leader so we were Brownies at St. Michael's and St. George Church which has been my church my entire life. We're Episcopalians. We, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, moved from Aberdeen Place out to Overhills Drive in Ladue and we went to Mary Institute. My mom was a Mary Institute graduate and Marion and I moved to Mary Institute and then Carol came two years later. So I'm a graduate of Mary Institute and, interestingly enough, in the rest of my life, have served on their board of trustees three different times. So I've been on the board for 27 years. My children are graduates. My grandchildren are now at MICDS. So we have a firm commitment to that educational institution.

Blanche Touhill: Now, where did you go to college?

Betty Sims: College was really...you think about the role of your mom. I went to Smith College and the reason I went...I realized, just not so long ago...the reason I went to Smith College is because my mom had been accepted at Smith College in 1931 in the middle of the Depression and her brother, who was the same year she was, went to Yale but they couldn't afford to send Mom to Smith. So Mom went to Washington U, I went to Smith for two years and then I came back, took my last two years in one, graduated from Washington University with a degree in Mathematics.

Blanche Touhill: Along the way, was there a teacher or two that...

Betty Sims: Well, that was so funny. I thought about that and I can remember our math teacher at Mary Institute was [inaudible 04:04:1] like this. But I always excelled in math and it became...I kept thinking in my mind I might be interested in medicine so I got big into chemistry at Smith and physics and all that but that takes so much time and I have always been a person eager to get through anything and I realized that if I wanted to get through college in three years, chemistry took too long. So I went to math and when I then, at Smith, took wonderful courses, came back to Washington University, I was the only girl in the engineering school majoring in mathematics which was hysterical and, talk about fun things! Let's say the class had about 20 guys in it and I thought I was a normal,

everyday girl but I never had any dates. Nobody ever asked me out. I thought, this is really weird. Then comes St. Patrick's Day, which is the big celebration of the engineers, they have a big party. Every single guy in the class called. Suddenly they all wanted to go out. But it was just, you know, one of those kind of weird memories of Washington University, but again, I've been connected to Washington U the whole rest of my life. I currently sit on the National Council for the School of Social Work. I love the university. I'm very proud of it as a major part of our community.

Blanche Touhill: So then, where did you go to work?

Betty Sims: Immediately, upon graduation, I was hired by Sperry-Rand-Univac to be a systems analyst and programmer for the Univac II, or at the beginning with...I had the opportunity to go to Philadelphia to serve...now I can't remember...Admiral...sorry, can't remember the name...but anyway, on the big Univac II which was as big as the room we're sitting in right now. I was programming; I was programming smaller computers so when we look at what we use today as computers, I think, hey, you don't know anything. We did punch cards. I had the opportunity because, again, I was the only girl and I had a wonderful time. I got to go to Denver and several federal installations: the Air Force base in Denver; I went to Olin Mathieson; I went to Monsanto, putting in computer early, early. I mean, these were early punch card systems that we were putting in but it gave me a wonderful opportunity to kind of get an oversight for the business community and then at some point I was even teaching executives of some of the major corporations, what computers meant, and this was so long ago.

Blanche Touhill: Now, was that the '50s and the '60s?

Betty Sims: Fifties, yeah. I graduated from college in 1956 and immediately went to work for Sperry-Rand, which was Remington Rand and I'll never forget because I was interviewed by a manager from out of town and then our branch manager, Larry Richard, and they took me to La Hacienda Restaurant for drinks. I had never gone to a restaurant for drinks with two older men. I mean, that was just unbelievable and I got the job. So it was a wonderful experience.

Blanche Touhill: When you were the only girl in the engineering school, did you know other girls on the campus?

Betty Sims: I didn't know many. My sister had gone to Bradford Junior College and then she came back in the Fine Arts School and she pledged Kappa so she went through the whole social end of it. So I knew some of her friends and I met some but there weren't many. I didn't spend a lot of time socializing, and because I was from St. Louis, I had other friends that were living in St. Louis but it was interesting. From going to Remington Rand, there was a guy there who had graduated from MSU who became a friend and he kept saying, "Well, you need to meet this other friend of mine who is a young doctor at Jewish Hospital;" "Oh, okay." They really wanted to swim in our swimming pool. But they both arrived. They both had white socks on. I knew I was in trouble. To make a long story short, I married the young doctor and we have now been married for 55 years. So that worked.

Blanche Touhill: That was lovely.

Betty Sims: That was lovely.

Blanche Touhill: Then, when you got married, did you quit work?

Betty Sims: No, no, no. I didn't quit work. Bill was a resident at...by this time, a resident at Jewish...no, he was a resident at Barnes. He took his internship at Jewish; took his residency at Barnes. So he was a resident in anesthesia. He made \$80 a month. So we needed my money. We lived in Manhasset Village. The rent was \$80 a month so he paid the rent. We ate at the hospital as much as possible. Both of us could eat on one tray and so I'd go to work and my office was on Lindell, drive to Barnes Hospital, we'd eat, go back home. And that worked out pretty well. Then he finished his residency and by coincidence, as he finished his residency, I was pregnant and so I think I worked up until about six months of pregnancy and then I quit and Betsy was born in November.

Blanche Touhill: And he then stayed in St. Louis?

Betty Sims: He stayed in St. Louis and he transferred...or not transferred, but he went to work at Deaconess Hospital and stayed at Deaconess until he retired now some 10 years ago, yeah. So we really had...talk about family planning and all those kind of things. Everything kind of came...we have been so blessed and so lucky. My mom and Tommy were still alive so we had grandparents. My sisters both lived in St. Louis so growing up, we

were a rock. My grandmother lived until she was 86. Mother lived until she was 86. So we had a strong family structure and it's been wonderful.

Blanche Touhill: When you were home with the children, did you start going out and volunteering at the time?

Betty Sims: Not immediately. What was really interesting...and again, you get this by heritage because, by this time, my mom had been a rock but she also founded the Candy Stripe Program at St. Louis Children's Hospital. So she had been on the Children's Hospital board, volunteer and all that. So my first job, volunteer job that I can really remember, besides doing stuff as a high schooler, was working as a candy striper and that was when Bill was still a resident because I can remember going and getting my little uniform. But I joined the Junior League again in 19...it was about 1955. Marion and I both joined. We were the youngest members and so had that good solid background in volunteer training. As such, then I got to work...I worked with the St. Louis Hearing & Speech Center; I worked...I did a lot of volunteerism and kind of little things and as I did that, my leadership at the Junior League continued to rise. So then by 1970, I was the President of the Junior League of St. Louis and from there, it just took off. So I had good training as a volunteer but it's funny, every little thing you learn kind of adds into the pot. The old mathematics keeps the brain going and then having a role model as Mom, and it was funny, I was looking back, in 1972, Mother was a Woman of Achievement and in 1977, I was the first daughter Woman of Achievement. So, you know, it was kind of fun to say, "Yeah, the heritage is there and we're continuing it," was kind of neat.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get into politics?

Betty Sims: By luck. Politics...what had happened, and again, as I was going, I had been...was true, I was the first woman Vice President of the United Way and I was serving on different things at the United Way. At the same time, I'd been involved with Girls Incorporated, establishing that and I was the President of the Girl Scout Council. So all these volunteer things are going on and Ellen Conant had been on the St. Louis County Council. So she came over and she said, "Betty, you're the only person that could succeed me. You've got to run for the County Council." I didn't really care that much about bricks and mortar and neighborhoods but, "Okay, fine." So I ran, which was really interesting because I lost and I lost to Gerry

Rothman whose husband had been a lieutenant governor at the time. But it turned out, I was the highest Republic vote-getter in St. Louis County at the time. So shortly...later, the opportunity came. I don't know if it was a question of re-district or (Ed Durke?) died, one or the other. They needed a senator so then I began to really look at, well, what's the difference between state, local representative, senator and Senator Cliffy Jones, who was a good friend, said, "No, no, no, you have to be a senator. The buck stops there. That's where you are accountable to the people of the State of Missouri." I thought, that's pretty cool. So I ran for the senate and at the first, we were running to fill in an open seat and shortly before the election, the governor...well, the election was called illegal because apparently we didn't live in the right district. So that was silly and I had raised a fair amount of money. So I gave the money back and people said, "Well, you're the dumbest person I've ever known." Okay, so then the next opportunity came for the right election. I ran again and I had one letter written...and this is true...which was kind of fun. But anyway, the first letter written by my treasurer and we raised \$64,000 in the first letter and we did it because people said, "Nobody ever gave us our money back. Obviously she's the right person." So we were... fundraising never was a problem. Now, granted, I represented the 24-senator district, which is Frontenac, Ladue, Clayton. It's the most affluent district in the state. People say, "Why do you get elected to whatever? Why do you do whatever you want?" I laugh and I say, "Because I'm a white Republican female and they don't have a whole lot of us." When I was elected in 1994, there had only been one woman in the senate at a time. There had been three but they were by themselves: Harriet Woods had been one. There had never really been...and Irene Trupler was there as a Republican. So in 1994, Roseanne Bentley from Springfield and Betty Sims were elected. Both of us had been Junior League Presidents. Both of us had been on state boards and commissions and we came and we didn't know anything about the senate. I mean, literally, it was like, this is a big boy's playpen and what are we doing here? It didn't take us long to figure it out.

Blanche Touhill: Did more women get to the senate then?

Betty Sims: I think slowly but surely. I think the most that there's ever been now is maybe...I think at one point there were seven. I don't think there are that many now. There are 34 members of the senate so having three

women...but what was so funny was, the men had never experienced having women, particularly more than one and Rosanne and I were the first women to serve on the Appropriations Committee. If we were told once, I can't tell you..."Are you still talking about children? What do you mean, it's a woman's issue?" They just didn't get the picture. So we have wonderful, wonderful stories. The first opportunity that we ever had to actually speak on the floor of the senate: Jim Matheson was the Protem and he said, "I'll teach you how to hold the senate." So he did. He had us in his office. He told us, "I'll pass the gavel to you, Betty. You start and you and Irene and Rosanne have a conversation," and it had something to do with the women's health issue and I don't even know what it was but the men had a bill. They'd asked none of us to be involved with it. They were debating the bill and we thought, this is ridiculous. I mean, there are three of us. So, honestly, and this is true, we held the floor for about...I want to say about 20, 25 minutes and what had happened was, as the women were elected, the administration decided that we needed to have microphones on the desk because obviously the women didn't have voices loud enough...ha ha! So they put microphones. Well, those microphones went into every office across the capital. So as we finished our debate, they opened the two doors of the chamber...the anti-rooms of the chamber and they were filled with balloons because all the secretaries had gone out and gotten colored balloons to celebrate the fact that we had held the floor and at the same time, when I got home, President Clinton had called, left a message that had gone through from the Associated Press. So I don't think we were very effective but we had a wonderful time doing it. We learned a lot and I think the guys realized we were there.

Blanche Touhill: Did that affect the men then?

Betty Sims: They knew we were there. Did it affect the piece of legislation?

Blanche Touhill: Well, did they ask you?

Betty Sims: Did they ask us ever to sit in on a bill? No, no, but they did later and I did not go to the senate as an advocate for women. I say that, I'm not a big women's libber. I'm a people libber and I'm a (Kate Winston?) advocate for children, but when you're there and you're the only ones, you are an advocate for women and we felt very strongly, the three of us...number one, we would look the part; we would act the part; our offices would act

the part. So we always were dressed with skirts and high heels and stockings and none of this casual atmosphere that's kind of going on right now. And so we were the ladies of the senate and I, frankly, regret that that demeanor, if you will, has gone by the by because the gentlemen were the gentlemen of the senate and at the time, the Republicans were in the minority; the Democrats could not have been nicer. I mean, they taught us how to be senators and loved doing it and we loved having them. I mean, some of the gentlemen had been there for 30 years. They knew the law and if you knew they knew the law, you could ask a question and it would come right back to you.

Blanche Touhill: Should I ask about term limits?

Betty Sims: I hate them. Term limits, to me, have been the undoing of a lot of that demeanor, if you will. I think what's happening now, first of all, everybody said it will be an opportunity for the bureaucrats to get in there and the lobbyists and every time I go to a meeting...and I do sit on several state boards right now...the lobbyists are there and there's no question but, equally, what I'm finding is, getting candidates, it's not the same...not just not the same quality but people can say, "Well, I can give you eight years," and they come with very vested self interest. I mean, what's been going on in the House is absolutely ridiculous and I don't think it's a whole lot better in the senate. So, much as I have been very critical of the number of vetoes that the governor put on, in certain instances I think he has to do that because there's some hair-brained stuff going on down there right now.

Blanche Touhill: Can you name one or two of them?

Betty Sims: The hair-brained stuff? In my opinion, the gun bill that just...they did not get the override. The governor vetoed the gun bill which was saying the State of Missouri did not have to accept the federal regulations on guns. Now, come on, give me a break. Things like that are ridiculous. Now, I also...I think the situation on the tax bill, major, major tax bill is questionable because there's some very good parts of it and the problem, again, you get a lot of new people who don't really know; they don't totally understand; they're putting amendments on and off; time gets down...time is everything and the legislature's not in session very long. So by the time a bill finally gets to the floor, they may have two or three weeks and they got to get it to the House. That bill will come back.

That tax reform is not going to go away, God willing, and equally, I have in my own life, I have never seen the relationships between a governor and a legislature at such a pitiful situation. I mean, I can remember when John Ashcroft was governor, Republican, both houses were Democrat but they got things done. They talked civilly to each other and we worked together for the betterment of the people. I don't see that happening right now. I just see chaos going around and that really bothers me.

Blanche Touhill: While you were in the senate, did you co-sign a bill or...

Betty Sims: Thirty of them, yes. I was really lucky, and Rosanne was really lucky because we were both married to doctors. So both of us sat on the Public Health Committee. Jet Banks, Senator Banks from St. Louis was the chair but Senator Banks was at the time, in his late 70's and he always insisted that our meetings were at 8:00 o'clock at night. Well, he was almost asleep at 8:00 o'clock at night so Rosanne and I were there pretty much controlling the Health Committee so that basically, between the two of us, our names were on every health bill that went through for so many years. I ended up chairing families, aging and mental health so I had mental health bills. My first major bill had to do with abuse of children. We had had a situation in my district where a child had been abused and then killed. So my first opportunity to "be a senator" was when I said, "Can I put together a task force to stop this kind of thing?" and they said, "You can have anybody you want." We started with the Attorney General, got the top prosecutors of the state, got legislators and put together a major piece of legislation and, in fact, again, a Democrat governor, but they were so happy with it that he invited me to be on his airplane to fly around with him as we introduced the bill. So that was the kind of cooperation that was wonderful. I mean, I never had to think, oh, my gosh, there's a Democrat governor or Republican governor.

Blanche Touhill: Which Democratic governor was it?

Betty Sims: Well, at that time, it was Mel Carnahan, yeah. That was my very first one that Roger...I mean, so we had both. I had Matt Blunt, I had...and I always worked well and, in fact, Jay Nixon was the Attorney General. So Jay and I are still friends.

Blanche Touhill: In the bill, when you brought together the Attorney General?

Betty Sims: Right, he was the Attorney General.

Blanche Touhill: Can you name another bill that you...

Betty Sims: Well, I worked very hard...again, because of the healthcare situation, was involved with managed care and worked on the task force with managed care and the original concept of managed care was marvelous and I think of some of the insurance companies who actually had wonderful staff doing true managed care and, in fact, Missouri's Medicaid Program has been quite successful and equally in the St. Louis area under the Gateway Program because we did managed care of the indigent and equally, managed care of pharmaceuticals, which was really interesting. The state had an opportunity to identify which people were using what drugs in the Medicaid population and could then put those together, save some money, get rid of any kind of abuse and take care of good health needs. So that was a very significant thing. The other bill that, to me, was just the most fun, Suzie Shear was state rep, lived in U City and I was the senator and Suzie had a bill that had to do with reconstruction after surgery of the breast. So, the problem was, the insurance companies were willing to reconstruct one side but not the other side...this is true. So Suzie's bill was, if you have reconstruction, you get to re...anyway, this is when you have the gentlemen of the senate, the older gentlemen, gets presented and I then have to present it back and I'm sitting at the dais in the senate hearing room and I got up and I literally was going around like this. Well, poor Senator Milton was just dissolved on the floor. He could hardly...he was so embarrassed he could just...you know, that bill went through so fast you can't believe it because it was ridiculous. So, catching some of that kind of stuff. But that was, again, we were women and therefore we recognized it and we did it. There were several pieces of insurance. When I got into the aging families and mental health, the nursing home industry totally dominated the nursing home business and so we could not add beds. Now, I lived in the most affluent district and I couldn't have an Alzheimer's bed. I couldn't have a bed for a person that had Alzheimer's because you couldn't get past the nursing home which...and I said, "That's ridiculous." So we put in a bill, again...I mean, I think about this and I laugh, but the bill basically was to expand and allow the state to add 100 beds, looking at Alzheimer's and mental health issues and the nursing home administration didn't think I could get it passed. Well, somehow, nobody was paying attention. That bill went flying through, did get passed. It was signed by the governor and the nursing home industry sued, saying, "You can't do that. You can't add to

what the total number is.” Well, it was interpreted by the Department of Health, that I really didn’t mean 100 beds; I really meant 300 beds and the judge ruled with the Department of Health. So the nursing home industry really lost out on that one. We got 300 new beds which included Park Provence which was the Gatesworth or One McKinght Place, Center for Alzheimer’s in my district and, to me, if you have Alzheimer’s, I don’t care if you’re rich or you’re poor, you still need care. That was the thing that was interesting. Healthcare, to me, doesn’t pick on any one person; it picks on all of us and so you’ve really got to look at the total picture and you’ve got to be fair for everybody. I mean, this business of nursing homes buying and selling beds from each other and stuff, I resented that and I think a lot of work that we did then, in the ‘90s, late ‘90s, early 2000’s, kind of revamped a lot of how the nursing home industry. We look now at a continuum of care. For a while, you were either in intensive care or you were independent living and you never talked to each other. Well, now...and it’s really neat. You can go in in independent living. A lot of them have three areas and then you get into kind of...you might need some assisted living, some needs, maybe just pharmaceuticals and then you get into...and now, as it happens, with that kind of plan, very, very few people are in true nursing homes. Most people, God love them, go to their Maker in the assisted living phase and that’s wonderful.

- Blanche Touhill: As you were growing up or, let’s say, in college, because you did go to a girls’ school, when you were in college...well, your college education was co-ed...
- Betty Sims: And girls.
- Blanche Touhill: Then you went to the Rand Corporation and then you went into raising children and volunteering and in the senate. Did you feel it was hard for a woman to move up the ladder?
- Betty Sims: I have to honestly say I don’t think I’ve ever really thought about it in that nobody...there were doors, and funny things that happened, the business of being the first woman Vice President of the United Way. Well, John Irvin was the first black Vice President of the United Way. He was the black and I was the beautiful and together, we went around town. I mean, it was a joke. So, kind of things like that. Ruthie Betman and I were the first women to be appointed the St. Louis Union Trust Company board and, again...

Blanche Touhill: What year was the United Way, roughly, and what year was the Bank board, roughly?

Betty Sims: They were kind of about the same...

Blanche Touhill: The Trust...

Betty Sims: That would have been...I finished my Junior League Presidency so I would say late '70s, early '80s, around in there and funny thing, what happened, because of my involvement with the United Way and Girl Scouts, I guess, I was being asked to sit on Personal Practices committees and hiring executive directors who were then, at that point, coming in with maybe \$100,000 salaries which I thought at the time was a lot of money and I thought, I'm not...I don't know that I'm really qualified to do that. So, as my youngest daughter had her senior year, I decided to get an MBA, which I did. I went to SIU, I decided I didn't want to go to Washington U because my kids...you know, it was too close; didn't want to be too close. So I did the weekend program at SIU, got an MBA...big deal, but I got it because I thought, if anything ever happened to Bill Sims, at least I can have the letters by my name. I'm now thinking it would be fun to have a Doctorate in Social Work, I might add; I might go after that one next. That was fine. So then somebody said, "Well, okay, Smarty, what are you going to do now?" Well, I thought, okay, what am I going to do now? And I'd come up, again, the volunteer ladder and at the same time, I had been the buyer for the gift shop at the Missouri Botanical Garden, which I started right after my Junior League Presidency. So that would have been the early '70s; 20 years I did that; loved it, two days a week. But anyway, I decided...my father had been in the food business all along and an opportunity came along to buy a potato chip factory. Everybody does, right? So I bought a potato chip factory. I'd been paid money by the St. Louis Union Trust Company, to be on their board. They gave me the money, I bought the potato chip factory and had three employees, a little factory down on Gravois, had cockroaches like you can't believe coming out of the walls, so I bought the building and then took the building back to bare bricks and made...I said, if they can do it down at the landing, I can do it here. I got the City behind me and learned a lot about the City, learned a lot about the political innuendos, if you will, of urban government and working with the state and, again, a learning institution. I learned how to drive a broken down bus until finally Bill said, "Honey,

you got to buy a decent truck.” So we bought a bus and we literally started making homemade potato chips and what I found was, it was the marketing side of it that I loved. I had an opportunity to design a canister, a big canister with all pictures of St. Louis, so this was The Potato Chip Factory from St. Louis. I sold Neiman Marcus and at Christmastime, I’m out at Neiman Marcus peddling potato chips. I mean, don’t ask because I did it. But what I began to realize was, as I got into, again, human issues, one of my employees ended up marrying a woman and adopting her child and so I helped him through that. The wife was very happy. I got her into a program, help her get better and then, after I had sold The Potato Chip Factory, found out he had AIDS. So I got into the whole AIDS issue and helped him to the end of his life. But it was the people, it was the passion and I realized that it was fun doing potato chips and it was fun learning how to do it. I was never going to make a fortune in potato chips. So I figured, get out when the getting was good and I took a little course on how to buy and sell companies and they always refer to the “lady of Ladue” and I thought, hm, I’m right here. So I had an opportunity to sell the company, and this is true: I bought the company for \$10,000. I sold the company for \$250,000. I had never made a dime on the company. I paid for all the salaries, ended up, I had opened at Union Station. I had a total of 13 employees. I did the social part of it and the buying it back, the man that bought the company from me wanted for his sons who were kind of flakes and thought this would be a good way to add to their company. Well, the boys took it right down the tube, which is the sad part, but the father was an honorable man and he continued to pay me until he had paid. We negotiated. He wanted to make sure that it was based on a percentage, that if the percentage went up, that I wouldn’t get any more money. I said, “Great, that’s okay with me, but if the percentage goes down, you owe me.” So it ended up, I was the smart one on that one and so I got the little bit that was left over. That’s a whole nother thing, how to buy; how to sell; how to...you know, there’s the MBA coming out. That was...

Blanche Touhill: Was that before you were a senator or after?

Betty Sims: Oh, it was all before I was a senator; oh, yeah. This was, again, early ‘80s, coming up the ‘80s and...

Blanche Touhill: And you didn’t find that being a woman...I mean, you were able to...

Betty Sims: I had all men employees. I had all men employees and what was really interesting, again, talk about diversity: big black Al shoving potatoes in there. Then I had a retired General Motors guy named Irv whose hands were kind of like this and he was stuffing potato chips in a bag and he was kind of retired. I mean, talk about a motley crew; you've never...but they needed jobs and the cute little building and, you know, I think Bill let me do it because I wasn't hurting anybody. I mean, I was totally harmless, plus the fact, (Hedgie?) Barksdale told me, "Betty, if you come to me and ask for money one more time. I've had enough of that." So I thought, okay, he had given me the message...back off. So this is my back off period but think what I was learning. I mean, that was the whole...talk about life-long learning! I'm still learning.

Blanche Touhill: Were there other women starting small businesses at that time?

Betty Sims: It was beginning and it was funny because I had not gotten into the Missouri Women's Forum. I had not met any of those kind of people but just in talking to people, not so much a potato chip factory. I mean, that was kind of weird.

Blanche Touhill: No, but small businesses?

Betty Sims: But people were beginning to...and particularly into kind of consulting type things they were doing and I think of some of the small businesses some of my friends are doing now, I think, gee, that's terrific. There's no question, I was knocking on the ceilings and I honestly believe that it was my family...I had such tremendous support and my mom, "You go; you go!" They were right there behind me. I had nothing to lose. I had a very successful husband, brilliant children; just go for it! I guess there are people who have cups that are half full and half empty. Well, mine has always been full, my whole life. In fact, when I was at Smith College...this is a true story...I was walking someplace and a friend of mine said, "If you don't get that smile off your face, I'm going to hit you." I mean, it was just like, they're tired of looking at me but that came with my...you know, as my mom said, "You got a big smile and curly hair. What more could you ask?" So that's gotten me through most of my life.

Blanche Touhill: When you left the senate, what happened?

Betty Sims: Okay, so, when I left the senate...this is another interesting thing...because of being involved with mental health, particularly in

health, I had an opportunity to be invited to serve with a group called The Reforming States Group, funded by the Mill Bank Foundation out of New York and as a senator, I was representing Missouri on the Mill Bank Reforming States board. I had, again, worked my way up. I was on their steering committee which meant that we met usually two or three times a year all over the country looking at cutting edge healthcare issues. Well, in order to stay on that Mill Bank board, I either had to work for the executive branch or I had to work as a legislator and so I thought, ew, I don't want to leave that. I mean, that was really exciting. I met fabulous people from all over the country. So I convinced Peter Kinder, God love him, to help me get a job with the Department of Health. So I had a job, I think it was two or three days a week in the director's office and just pretty much doing mental health issues and other issues and helping. I didn't work terribly hard but I kept my finger in the pot and I got to them [inaudible 36:49:9] Mill Bank and all the things that they did, which, for example...and this was really interesting...when 9/11 occurred, at the time I was going to Jefferson City but shortly thereafter, I went to another meeting in Charlotte and coming home from that meeting, began to realize that we have very little communication with the neighboring states and if our nation were really attacked, why would you not attack the center of the water flow in the country? Where's the center of the water flow? We're looking at it. So I called the Mill Bank Foundation and said, "I think it would be imperative that we, the health community of Missouri, meet with their counterparts at the nine states that surround Missouri." They thought it was fabulous. We did that. We met in Kansas City and it was outstanding. I mean, we had people from the National Guard; we had the governor's office; we had the health people and we talked about setting up a communication dialogue of the important people all around the nine states...that is still in existence...and went on. Well, it was so successful that Mill Bank then replicated it across the nation so that all the areas of the country could have this opportunity to talk and it was funny because they got all of the Mexican part all hooked up and they only missed one group of states up at the Canadian border, in one part. Several of the Canadian borders were in but somehow they missed...I don't know whether it was the Minnesota group or whatever but it was really interesting. It was very successful and that was giving us the opportunity to work with the Reforming States Group as I did several workshops with the School of Social Work at Washington

U and the Mill Bank Foundation bringing in speakers and stuff like that. So we got to take advantage of knowledge that I don't think we would have had.

Blanche Touhill: Now, would that have helped, if there had been a crisis or there was an attack?

Betty Sims: Oh, yeah, yeah, because some of the issues, for example, is that if you're a doctor licensed in Missouri, you're not a doctor licensed in Illinois. Okay, so then there's absolutely...something happens and we need the doctors over there. Well, we've got to be able to break some of those rules right now and we've got to go quickly. It was those kind of things that they were talking about and we did look at the water situation. Thank God it's never happened but a lot of it is just kind of thinking logically, kind of stepping back and thinking, what if something really did happen? What would you do? How would you do it? And then to get a collective group doing that is fabulous and it was fun for me because I got to meet the director of the Department of Health from Illinois, the director of the Department of Health from Oklahoma and...

Blanche Touhill: Well, you're still involved, aren't you, in mental health?

Betty Sims: Oh, yeah, very involved with mental health.

Blanche Touhill: Why don't you talk about that.

Betty Sims: Yeah, the mental health thing was really interesting because I kind of fell into the chairmanship, doing the families and the aging, then you get to the mental health part and I was shocked, if you will, at how bad I think the State of Missouri treats the mental health community and particularly the Department of Mental Health. If there's a chance to cut the budget, they're going to cut it there. So I have to say, I'm giving Governor Nixon some credit because they are finally beginning to realize the needs of the mental health community have a huge impact, particularly in the urban area on all other social needs. So, anyway, I got involved and I was working on various things and I was at another meeting of the Reforming States Group and I met a gal named Betty Kitchener from Australia. She and her husband, Tony, had developed a thing called Mental Health First Aid and they said if we can do first aid on the body, most of us are more likely to find someone with a mental issue than we are a physical issue. Why can't we do something mental health?

And Mental Health First Aid basically is a 12-hour course which we're now trying to make an 8-hour course but anyway, it's a 12-hour course teaching the likes of us laypeople how to recognize mental illness and/or a mental emergency, a crisis. We are not teaching you how to be a psychiatrist; we're teaching you what to do between the time that you can refer the person to a professional. It's funny, to me, we have ALGAE which is the name of a Koala from Australia, is their goal and it's, always be prepared but listen, is the second thing, the "I" is listen and listen non-judgmentally. Well, that for Betty Sims, has been a real challenge but it's really...it really helped me. I mean, you begin to listen to what people are saying to you and particularly if there's a question of a crisis. You don't have to talk for them. Let them tell you and you'll be able to hear. So the course...we got involved with Betty and Tony and said, "I think it's a great idea" and John Commerce was the director of the Department of Health in Maryland. So I said, "John, you like it?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "I like it too. Let's go back to our state." So I went back to the Department of Mental Health. I'm just a, by this time, a little senator; what did I know. I said, "I think this is great," and our director said, "You like it, Sims?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Then go do it." So, bang, we had carte blanche. So it was the State of Maryland, the State of Missouri and then the National Behavior Health Council became involved which, they had been talking to Betty Kitchener. We didn't know it, "we," the states. You talk about developing a heffalump, huh! The problems of having three different groups of such power was difficult but by now, it's all been worked out. They had a notebook, if you will...it's wonderful...that we then used, the University of Maryland Press, to rewrite in Americanese and to show how far we've gone, our second badge has just been developed, teaching Mental Health First Aid for people that are working with adolescents which includes high school through college because we began to realize the problems in that young early 20's, late teens. So that's been very successful. We have trained trainers. We train trainers; trainers go out and teach Mental Health First Aiders in the thousands now, probably close to hundreds of thousands: the East Coast. Missouri has trained...we trained Oklahoma; we trained Washington; we trained Iowa. So we're spreading in the Midwest, big group, and interestingly enough, we originally were in Jeff City, our office. Well, the office is now being done under the auspices in St. Louis. So we're picking up a lot more in St. Louis, working with the university here and it is a fabulous program that I

would...I mean, I'm dying to see somebody like the Red Cross or somebody take it on as a national venture and make sure that every person in every company, every teacher, every policeman is trained in Mental Health First Aid because I just know my own reaction. I'd go to these meetings and every time I came home, Bill would say, "What's the matter with me now?" I mean, he was convinced that I had another opportunity to find something wrong with him. But it is amazing. So that part has been fun and exciting and you're right, I move around. The current governor came into office and decided that they no longer needed me. So that was okay, partisan politics get into the play there. So I came back to my roots of volunteerism and I'm back on the Girls' Inc. board and soon to be their President. So we go Ring Around the Rosie.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you're also in CBHE.

Betty Sims: I'm on the Coordinating Board for Higher Ed. I'm also on the MOHELA Board which is the Missouri Higher Ed Loan Authority which is now a five billion dollar company. So, yes, you're right. I mean, I have a few fingers in the fire.

Blanche Touhill: Well, talk about both of those organizations.

Betty Sims: All right. Well, that's...somebody said, "How do you do that?" It's the same old thing, you need a Republican woman. There aren't enough of us to go around. The Coordinating Board is the board that coordinates all four-year institutions, public institutions and 17 community colleges so that...what we're really focusing on now is a K-14, K-16 education and for years there's been kind of a split between DESHE, Elementary and Secondary and Higher Ed. Well, thank God for small favors. We're now in the same building. We at least talk to each other on the elevators. We're having meetings together and, of course, DESHE is looking for standards. We're looking for...one of the goals of the administration is that, in the year 2015, 60% of the population will have college degrees or certificates or Associates Degrees. It's pushing, but we're finding a lot of things...for example, I'm encouraging people that took a couple of years in college, got some courses but they never got a degree or they didn't finish it, give them that opportunity; equally, if you're in the community college system, making sure that your courses will transfer and that you don't get blocked up. That transfer business up and back has been just horrible. So that's getting...you know, it's shaking out but it's getting better and one

of the things that our board did, which I really have liked, is we started a program where annually, we meet with the board members of those universities so that they begin to share with us their issues and they begin to understand what our issues are, talk to each other as people. That had never happened before and you can't just have this kind of elite body up there doing nothing. We're really lucky because the commissioner is David Russell who, himself was military and then 21 years at the University of Missouri, a lovely, gentle man who really understands higher ed and that's made it...the staff is excellent and things are slow. Plus the fact, no offense but the money situation, there's been too many people playing politics with the money situation going to higher ed and it's very frustrating.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to talk about your other responsibilities?

Betty Sims: The problem with me, I guess, in my whole life, is that I don't really understand the word "no." As my husband said, "Would you just once tell them no," and I keep thinking, well, why would you say no; there's such an opportunity here; I can learn so much. So I continue on. I mean, I must sit on every advisory board in town and that's fun because I like to go and learn things. I went to a meeting at the Humane Society last night. I'm on the Friends Board, talking about estate planning and learned that I should have a card in my purse that says if I go, who do you contact. Now, wouldn't you think any fool would know that? I don't have a card in my purse that says that. I have my Medicare card and my other card, but this was such a simple little thing and I thought, I learned something, and how to get your husband to talk about money. Money is the biggest issue of adults at our age. So it's fun to go back. I sit on the Altnheim Home Board because I still care about the aging. I was on the Bethesda Board and I realized that it's so big and they wanted me because of my political connections. I still have those: if you need me, call me, but I didn't get the same feeling. I thought one nursing home board is probably enough. So I did get off of that.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about the International Women's Forum.

Betty Sims: Well, the International Women's Forum, how I got asked to be on it, I'll never know but I love it. I was a senator so maybe that's probably how but I have become such good friends with so many people, many of whom I knew before, from just interaction, friends and different things

but now we're really good friends and the one thing that I love is that I can call any of them and we talk like we saw each other yesterday and everybody kind of knows and I'm really excited because we have a whole new bunch of new members. I'm just getting to learn them but the older group, as I would call it, are dear, dear friends and even becoming friends with our husbands, which a lot of times that doesn't happen but sometimes it does happen. Sometimes we talk about issues; sometimes we talk about nothing. It doesn't matter and the fact that once a month or every other month we have something called "the dine-around" and we meet in each other's homes and just chew the fat and I just...that's an opportunity and I have lots of friends. I mean, I have lots of friends: old friends; new friends, but this group is...I think it's that we accept each other for what we are and we applaud the accomplishments of our colleagues. We certainly, when they're down, we reach out to hug them and we're not judgmental of each other at all, that I can tell. I just love it.

Blanche Touhill: If you had been born 50 years earlier, would you have had a similar life?

Betty Sims: That's so funny. Fifty years earlier would have been my grandmother and the answer to that was, probably not, although she did have an opportunity to have an education. She, during the second World War, had the first job. She went to...

Blanche Touhill: What do you mean, "the first job"?

Betty Sims: She, in addition to doing the Community Chest that I mentioned, she became the public relations person for the Sealtest Dairy Company. Can you picture that? Yeah. Meanwhile, while her kids and grandchildren are all living at her house, she's working down at the Dairy. So I think I come from women who have let not much get under their feet plus the fact, I have to say, and I laugh about the smile and my hair, my mom was the most beautiful woman on God's earth. She was perfectly gorgeous. My grandmother, equally, was a very attractive woman. That helps a lot and my children are equally blessed.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about your children. Are your children active?

Betty Sims: Active? They're the pride of my life. My older daughter, Betsy, followed me with volunteerism. She became the President of the Junior League of Washington, D.C., has served in all the communities. She had been with Bank of America for 31 years, graduate of Brown University, went to

China, came back speaking Chinese and immediately went to work for the Ex-IM Bank, thanks for Senator Danforth, then moved on in the banking business with Bank of America; left Bank of America two years ago with five men and set up their own family investment trust company in McLean, Virginia. She has two children, one graduated from Vanderbilt and one is in the Engineering School at Southern Cal, a female. So that heritage is going on. My second daughter, Molly, lives in St. Louis and is, again, the managing partner of Group 360 Advertising Company down on Washington Avenue and Molly has triplets who are 10 years old. So we have and we're right there to support her and her husband and they are the pride of my life. I mean, if you asked for my greatest accomplishment, it is my girls. They are fabulous.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to talk about some of the awards you've gotten?

Betty Sims: That's a funny thing. I guess if you're a senator, you can do...probably there are a couple that really were exciting for me, obviously the Woman of Achievement in 1977. I wasn't very old, when I look back on it and again, it was for community service which was really wonderful. It wasn't for politics or anything like that and meant a lot to me. As I tell friends that receive that award today, it's an award of love. People come because they love you and I really recognize that. I don't use it for networking or anything like that. I just love...the other one I received was the Mary Harriman Award from the Association of Junior Leagues which is the outstanding volunteer nationally and that was very exciting. The year before I had been nominated and Betsy called from Washington and she said, "Mom, I got some bad news," and I said, "What's the matter?" and she said, "Well, you didn't win." I said, "Oh, well, that's okay." She said, "Sandra Day O'Connor won," and I said, "Okay." So Sandra Day O'Connor won the year before me and then I won the next year. I like the company; it's okay but it was really cute. The Junior League of Washington and the Junior League of St. Louis were in cahoots on this thing. So that was really nice but as a senator, interestingly enough, I must have been...and I'm sure Rosanne was the same way...every outfit wanted an advocate of the year so I'd go from the deputy sheriffs to the police department to all the mental health agencies. One of my favorites, and actually was kind of a combination of both worlds, was a lovely award from St. Louis Children's Hospital which is a gorgeous bronze statue of three children. It's just lovely. I have more glass things than

you'd ever want to see and more bronze plaques than you'd ever want to see. So I laugh when you say, list awards. I mean, it's pages and it was fun. I mean, every award, and just having given awards myself, are important to the people that are giving them and so they're, of course, important to the people that are getting them too. It's something that kind of, I don't pay a whole lot of attention to anymore. That's getting old, that's all I can say.

Blanche Touhill: I know you were a great advocate of the Girl Scouts. Do you want to talk about your years as the head of the Girl Scouts?

Betty Sims: Yeah, it was interesting. Again, I laugh because I'd been on the Girl Scout board...Carolyn Lassos was President and Carolyn and I were kind of doing things, getting different people involved and stuff and my term was up so I thought, great, I can get off; I'm done; I've done my Girl Scout nine years or whatever it is; I'm done. Well, three years later they came back and said, "No, you're not done. You got to come back and be the President," which I did and to me, one of the exciting things was, I came back and I knew what they were doing. They were setting me up and I knew it, for a major building campaign. So, wonderful people; they're just people I've been working with but we found that Anne and John McDonald were the perfect pair to chair this campaign. They have four daughters and they love everything about it and they were fabulous. So that basically we could rebuild three camps, which is huge. We are now one of the...well, we always have been...one of the largest councils in the country. Close to one out of every three girls is now serving in Girl Scouting. So it really is very significant to our community and, again, my own grandchildren are in scouting. I mean, the teaching of young girls responsibility, self respect, how to manage money. It's amazing how many kids don't understand what a quarter is and how to teach...I mean, all of that they learn through scouting which is kind of funny. But with John and Anne, it was great because every time we'd get to kind of a bump, John would ask for more money and so we raised about eight-and-a-half million dollars which was amazing because one of the things that John did that was so fabulous was that he would go to his counterparts and [inaudible 57:06:7] the Boy Scouts and then start the conversation so that we put the Girl Scouts...we raised them. Now, unfortunately that raise goes kind of up and down. I think we're looking now to kind of re-raise that visibility in the community. It's something you can't let drop.

You have to just keep it up and I'm finding the same thing with Girls Inc., had gone way up. A director got sick, things kind of fell apart. Then they called some of the old board members to come back, look at it; got a gorgeous building; got kids in the Normandy School District begging to work; let's go; let's do it. Suddenly you can bring that energy just right back. But if you don't do that, you'll die. I mean, it's like any business, every small business. A non-profit is a small business and they have to be treated that way. What I'm enjoying in the non-profit world is that, in the past it was kind of, well, that was cute; they were girls. Now it's like, yeah, it's cute and they're girls but how accountable are you? What are you doing? Do you have the data? Do you know that you're really getting the results that you're talking about? That kind of accountability wasn't happening before but it's happening now and it's happening big time. So that, I like. I don't like the fact that it costs a lot of money to put these systems in place but we're going to have the data; we're going to know what works, and I hope, in the long run, we're going to be able to help a school district like Normandy, say, why are you that way? I mean, I would love to see some things we're working on now being picked up then in the school systems, to be able to...I mean, nobody said to the school system, "Be accountable." When the state auditor said, "I don't think that saying it's too hard; we don't have the money; therefore we'll let the kids go even though they can't read," that's not being accountable. So I think that if we can take the pieces and put them all together, we're going to come up with a better community for our children and really make a difference.

Blanche Touhill: And you're doing that in Normandy with the Girls?

Betty Sims: I'm doing it with Girls Inc. I also sit on the Wyman Board. I also sit on the National Council, Beyond Housing. That's what's been so fun for me. I had a meeting at Boeing yesterday and we were talking about the fact, how do you re-vitalize a neighborhood, and we started dropping these names; that's really what we were doing, and I thought, I sit on those boards; I sit on them all and I like it. I like the fact that when you talk to me about, well, I have a grant so...oh, I know that and I don't say I know that but I do and so I can think about, well, if you did that for that and...mmm...go there. It does make a difference and that's just me. Besides the mouth and the hair, have been blessed with obviously incredible energy. I sleep well. Put me down and I'll be asleep but I don't

need a whole lot of sleep. So that's good. Anyway, I just wanted to say that having more and more women coming into corporate leadership and non-profit leadership, I think is an asset for our community and I would like to see more women in the political arena also because I think that our teamsmanship...made that word up...is beginning to make some significant results. I think we think differently sometimes than the guys and I love working with them all but I think we can and we will make a difference.

Blanche Touhill: Thank you.