

An Interview with
Sue Stepleton

at the Historical Society of Missouri St. Louis
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Interviewed by Dr. Blanche M. Touhill
transcribed by Valerie Leri and edited by
Josephine Sporleder



Oral History Program

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PREACE

The interview was filmed using a Canon XH A1S A camera on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

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

JUNE 6, 2013

SUE STEPLETON INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Blanche Touhill: I'm Blanche Touhill and I'm the interviewer today and I'd like you to introduce yourself and talk about your family and where you were born and where you went to school and did you have siblings and take it up to when you go to college.

Sue Stapleton: Okay. I'm Sue Stapleton. I was born in 1948 in Greencastle, Indiana, a small town where DePauw University is and had two brothers. My father was a minister of a local church there and my mother substitute taught at the time we were young children. A lovely place to grow up; brother on each side of me, two years on each side so I had kind of a nice position in the family and when I was six, my family moved to New Albany, Indiana on the Ohio River, bigger church and just time for a change. So that's where I grew up until I was 16 and left home for the first time which I'll get around to. It was, again, a very happy, fortunate childhood. By that time, my mother was teaching junior high math and so the pattern of the family was kind of doing that sort of thing and involved in the community and involved in the church. I attended the local high school, the public high school in New Albany and one of the things, very important, that happened during my adolescence is that I met an exchange student from Germany and I decided...I must have been 13 or 14...that I wanted to do that...probably 12 or 13...that I wanted to do that. So I kind of single-mindedly pursued how to do that. It was an intriguing idea to me. So I researched programs, mounted a huge campaign to...now, this is when I finally went, it was 1965, '66, when the world was a much bigger place than it is now. So this was a major decision for my parents to make and it was a dogged campaign for me. I graduated high school in three years so I've never read Chaucer but graduated so I could go and not lose a year of time. That year in Germany, when I was barely...I wasn't even 17 when I left to spend that year, obviously pre-internet, pre-almost everything. I had one phone conversation with my parents during that entire year. Consequently there's a wonderful correspondence which I will someday

go back and read. It was absolutely pivotal to me in a number of ways, not only living in another culture...and again, the year, it was not very long post-war in Europe and the family I lived with were good Germans. My German father had fought on the Russian front for the German army, not believing in the ideology at all but that's what had to happen. But it was also interesting to me, not only...I didn't have very fluent language at the time I went; that developed but they were a business family. They had a small printing press and a wide, extended family which was not the case for my own personal family. So I've always known that it was both a rich cultural experience...the opera, you go to the opera all the time in Europe and even in small towns and just a very different lifestyle from the one I'd grown up in. So that kind of charted a course and part of the campaign for allowing me to go do this was that I had said I would go to college on the cheap somehow. There was never any doubt that I would go to college but I was able to get some scholarships and fellowships which meant I could go, at least away from home. These were what were called Hoosier fellowships where Hoosier is a good word so they had to be used in Indiana. So I went to Butler University.

Blanche Touhill: Now, before you go on, where did you go in Germany and did you go all around Europe when you were there or were you mainly in this...wherever you were living?

Sue Stapleton: The name of the town was Bietigheim; it's near Stuttgart, a few miles north of Stuttgart and Bad Wunnenberg and the family did travel some. They were avid skiers. That was another thing, very athletic family; very socially engaged which was different from my own. So several trips to Switzerland. They made sure that I went to the places in Germany, Heidelberg and Nuremberg and where one could go, Munich...Munich, Koln, so within the country, a good bit of traveling and they were nicely educated people, not formally as such but they were very careful to teach me good German, although I can also speak in dialect a little bit, in (Schabisch?). So that year was in those two countries. I may have been in Austria once but pretty limited there.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to school there?

Sue Stapleton: Yes, mm-hmm, and it was in gymnasium. It was very difficult. There was no way that I could stay with my peers, not only because my language wasn't fluent enough, but they'd had much more math and science and

things than I did. So I had kind of a combination of some things with the age peer group and some things, the German classes with young kids and that was fun too. It was a magnificent experience.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go under some auspices?

Sue Stapleton: Yes, part of what I had to do was find a program that would make it possible. The one that was best known at the time was American Field Service, I think. It was not available in the town where I lived. There was another one called the International Christian Youth Exchange which was not at all a religious program but under the auspices of several progressive Protestant churches. So they made certain...one thing that year stands out vividly, is a trip to East Berlin, and again, it's 1965, so even crossing into East Germany, remember vividly being on the bus and the guards come on with their rifles and take all our passports and then we'd cross the East into the West zone of Berlin and then were able to visit in East Berlin as well, to cross the wall, and it just happens that my husband and I were back in Berlin for the first time last year. It was a really amazing experience, to see what it has become but it was a great learning, and really good people who ran the program.

Blanche Touhill: When you went to East Berlin, were the people friendly or stand-offish?

Sue Stapleton: They arranged for us to meet with some youth groups that were somewhat underground, not entirely but they were church groups, the state church they had in (Geilenkirchen?). So they were certainly receptive. I think we went into a store or two. I don't have a lot of memories of interactions other than touring around and then going back through the wall.

Blanche Touhill: Did you see the Soviet statue or was it up in those days?

Sue Stapleton: It was up, mm-hmm, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to comment on that?

Sue Stapleton: Well, the wall is the much more vivid memory. It's all true, the glass on top of the wall and the barbed wire, the houses built right up to the wall. You can just hardly imagine what it must have been like when the wall went up and then again, to watch years later, that wall be taken down and Beethoven playing at the gate. It was magnificent, and then to see

that now, in very prosperous Berlin, it's a little stripe along the sidewalk in many places.

Blanche Touhill: Did the youth groups that you met with, did they practice their religion or did they...

Sue Stapleton: Yes. We didn't have to sneak in or anything. I think they were allowed to meet. They were allowed to interact with us and I, of course, don't even remember what the logistics of how that happened or what connections the administrators of the program had.

Blanche Touhill: Did you make any friends from Germany that you're still...

Sue Stapleton: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk about that?

Sue Stapleton: I'd love to, and actually, the relationships that remain are the family that I stayed with. Now, the father and mother are both well into their 90's now and pretty well into dementia. I haven't seen them in several years but there was another interesting aspect, was I, who grew up with two brothers, had a German sister who was six years younger than I was who delighted in correcting my language and helping me along the way. We're very close friends. She married a laryngologist who is frequently in this country and we are strongly connected, and again, it's interesting to kind of watch the political scene. They were supporters of Obama before I actually got there, very quickly. So it's interesting. Again, it's possible to talk about this forever: When the reunification happened, they were extremely excited about that and thrilled about that. Over the years, they've commented, though, on the social problems that were created and the economic problems that were created, the inequities that had to be worked out, and that are still being worked out to some degree. So, yeah, they're very special.

Blanche Touhill: Now, talk about your college years and how you found the major and were there any faculty or friends that you made that have continued or something...how it set your life course, if it did.

Sue Stapleton: Sure. Well, it did in an interesting kind of way. Butler University in Indianapolis...now, by this time it's '66 so it's a little bit later but the period when many college campuses, of course, were kind of exploding.

Well, Butler was not exploding by any means. It was a very quiet place. I was already interested in a direction of political science, policy, politics even, so really, I had some excellent teachers. I took the first course in what was called black history at the time by a national...Emma Lou Thornborough, you might know her work; I don't know, but she was a magnificent teacher and there were others, very fine history professors I remember mostly. But the things that I really treasure from that period, I spent two afternoons a week through most of my college career working in Senator Birch Bayh's office, just answering the phones and filing and being around that atmosphere, was able to meet him a time or two, that, and the McCarthy campaign, the Eugene McCarthy campaign. There was a small group of folks very active in that campaign and so several of us were known as McCarthy girls at the time. That's what women did, at least what college girls did, college women did, and Robert Kennedy was there several times. So those things...I got a fine education. Butler was, at the time, a very heavily Greek campus, a lot of fraternities and sororities which interested me not at all but I found plenty of other interesting things and I actually met, on the first day, the person who is my absolute dearest friend who, coincidentally, is on the faculty at the Brown School and after we had various life paths but we have both located in St. Louis and have really raised our children together and it's one of absolutely life's serendipities that was here in St. Louis also, and her family and my family are very, very close friends. So, to go on from there, again, I'd gotten the Europe fever by that time, seriously. I'd been back once during the summer with a Eurail Pass, that kind of traveling one did but I really had this sort of fear of starting into any career before I got some significant time to travel again. So I applied for a Rotary International fellowship which at the time was incredibly generous; again, a full year studying at a European university or at other outside the country university with a really good travel budget. You were expected to do some traveling and the chance, good, bad or whatever, to visit a lot of rotary clubs in various places. So my assignment then, I had pretty good German by that time so within the universe of universities that participated, I was sent to the University of Innsbruck in Austria and it was spectacular. It was not a degree program but I did take a full load of courses and at that time, I had good spoken German and have, after I've been back a day or two, today, but the written language was not excellent. So in any case, a wonderful year. I travelled to Spain,

throughout Austria, obviously kept in contact with this family that I was so close to and one significant piece that I left out was one I knew at graduation that college that one had the fellowship but it didn't start for a year so I had to do something for a year. So I had two temporary jobs: one was teaching high school social studies in Madison, Indiana, also on the Ohio River, which I absolutely loved doing but I found myself very much drawn to the children and adolescents who came into the classroom with a lot of baggage, not developmental issues but poverty, family dysfunction, disheveled clothes, not ready to learn at all, mean. I was really interested in that sort of child. That was for a teacher who was on sabbatical. Then I knew I had six more months to spend so I worked for the Jefferson County Public Welfare Department, and again, a totally different animal from the way we think about welfare today, social welfare.

Blanche Touhill: What did they think about it in those days?

Sue Stapleton: The job of the case worker was to make sure that the woman didn't have a man hiding under the bed. If there was a man visiting, a relationship then it was assumed he should be taking care of her and the children. So that was what the case worker did, and I was actually hired by a visionary county director who had a little slush fund and she said, "Just pay attention to the children here; just pay attention to them," which was not at all the case at the time. So what did I know at the time? But what a learning experience, to meet these five and six-year-olds. One child who I remember vividly who had been sexually abused by her uncles when she was four years old. So I don't think I did any damage to anybody but for me, it was another one of those absolutely incredible learning experiences, and not insignificantly, my now husband for 41 years was doing alternative service at the Welfare Department and was Viet Nam and he was not going to serve in one way but he was going to serve in the other.

Blanche Touhill: And is that where you met him?

Sue Stapleton: Yes, and he was very interested in the children. The rest of the welfare office was sort of the stereotypical person, my demographic now, although we were not at the time. So, yes, we had then a wonderful relationship not everybody would find great but we wrote papers together. Nixon had some very interesting family policy going at the time

so we did interesting things and had these children on welfare reading Shakespeare, just kind of for the fun of it.

Blanche Touhill: When you say “taking care of the children,” what did you do with the slush fund?

Sue Stapleton: Well, the slush fund just allowed me a little bit of money to live on for six months. No, it was just a matter...my instruction was, “I’m concerned that there is more going on with this child than anybody has seen. Just take her out and talk to her and walk her around,” and these were children who, as I look back on it now, had almost no appropriate stimulation. Some of them had very limited language. They had been exposed to nothing or very little. I mean, their lives were very narrow and in some cases, this county director knew there were issues, developmental issues that they didn’t have referral processes in place, so I kind of lumbered along, trying to help with those things. One child I took and enrolled in kindergarten; one...the child I mentioned who had been sexually abused would not interact with men at all and so would kind of...I didn’t know what I was doing but we sort of eased her into a little bit of a relationship with Jim, this case worker, my husband, so she would eventually interact with him. So that was huge. So then we had already decided to get married but I have a year in Europe so we’ll do it afterward and he had to finish his service anyway. So off to Europe, knowing by that time that my career direction was likely social work, is what I thought at the time. However, I’ve loved school; I’ve been in school all my life so it takes me a long time to talk about school. We had decided before I left that we would go to graduate school when we got back. I had, by that time, a good bit of German. I thought it made sense to go ahead and get a Master’s in German studies. He was looking for law and social work. Washington University had one of the few joint programs at that time so we came to the university. I finished a Master’s in German studies at Wash U and he did his two degrees and he was still in school well beyond the time that I finished. So I went to work in a social service agency in a residential program for children that no longer exists at this time but, again, plunged into a situation where a former orphanage was being transitioned into a treatment center. So there, the assignment was, teach these children, these children ranging from nine to sixteen with very serious emotional problems. You may want to bleep this but I thought my name was “Fuckin’ Bitch” because that’s what they

called me a good part of the time. But we made some progress. We created a token economy which was in vogue at the time with rewards for appropriate behavior and...you may want to bleep this also...but one of the things that one of these 15-year-olds could buy if he accumulated sufficient tokens was cigarettes which I was happy to provide for him. We're now in 1971. Anyway, that very much...

Blanche Touhill: So how soon did you get married when you came back?

Sue Stapleton: Two weeks later, and four days later moved to St. Louis, so right away.

Blanche Touhill: So talk about your marriage and how that affected your career.

Sue Stapleton: Oh, gosh, I can't imagine the good fortune and, of course, when you've been married as long as we have, you don't know anything when you get married. You kind of fall in love and hope. It's wonderful. Jim actually kind of dropped social work after finishing the degree except for supporting my work all along but he did corporate law, securities and so forth. He was editor and chief of the Law Review at Wash U. He was a good student. I was doing German at the time. It's hard for me to even visualize. He's an extremely intelligent person and very quiet, reserved, extremely supportive, even though we both came from sort of traditional families. His mother didn't work at all. His father was a pathologist. Mine I've already described. But we went into the marriage understanding that work was going to be important to both of us and so we had to figure out how to do that. He interviewed with all the large firms, had great offers and finally retired from Husch where he started right after law school about four years ago and he's absolutely the stalwart. He has allowed me to have, in many ways...I mean, he was a highly successful lawyer who made us very comfortable for many years but I'd had much more the visible, public community-involved career than he has and we'd been married eight years before we had our first child, by choice. We wanted to finish school; we wanted to travel some more, but from the get-go, it was, we were in it together. I think there are still legends at his firm about his bringing the ill infant to work with him on a day when I had a United Way hearing to go to and that wouldn't be unusual now but at the time, it was quite earth-shaking, and no big deal. It's just the way we raised our children. The son was the first child and then Kate, our daughter, was born three years later and, again, I continue to have a very active career and he was working long hours at the time too but it works

for us. A question I've often gotten, which I'm sure you get all the time too, how do you balance your life, and my life...well, I shouldn't say it's never felt out of balance but it's never felt that work was depriving the family and I am in immense good health, spectacular children with robust health who were able to understand that both parents did work on which other people depended and that that was important and, of course, we had options that many families don't have in terms of care when we were not there and so forth. I can't imagine having had the career that I've had without Jim being the person he is.

Blanche Touhill: Did your children follow in either his path or your path or career?

Sue Stapleton: My daughter did, yes. First our son did a PhD at Carnegie-Melon and works at Google now as a programmer and flies gliders as his avocation. Kate did...she did social work at University of Chicago and then worked...without all the details...wound up in Washington several years later just as the Obama Administration took over and was working for a think tank at the time, the Center for Social Policy and part of her assignment was to help Brian Samuel who is the commissioner for Administration of Children and Families, prepare for confirmation hearings. So, as soon as he was confirmed, she went to work for him so she's been there through the first years of the Administration and will start a PhD in social work at Rutgers in the fall.

Blanche Touhill: Now, talk about when you got married and you were back in town and your husband was still going to law school and eventually went with Husch. What did you do?

Sue Stapleton: That's the next hugely important chapter: Well, two things: when I was working for this first social service agency that no longer exists, I had assumed I would go back to school and do social work fairly soon but...and this is interesting for the story we're all trying to tell...I worked for a woman who was a terrible boss. She was corrupt; she was inept; it was a really difficult experience but it made me think for the first time how a place is run matters. I couldn't teach effectively because of some of the ways she was managing the organization and it began to occur to me that I was probably...if I have any gifts, they're probably more in that direction, an administrative direction than in individual case work or even teaching. So I was advised very wisely at the time, at Washington University, at the School of Social Work, "If you're serious about

administration, we don't have that curriculum so go get an MBA." So I had taken baby math in college. I had to take a couple of math courses here before doing an MBA here at University of Missouri-St. Louis, which was a wonderful experience. I was working very much full-time at the time but I wanted to...and I'll get back to what I was doing...I wanted to get through that degree as quickly as possible and then go on to social work school afterward. But the experience here was magnificent. There were not programs in non-profit administration at the time but to a person, the professors here understood and were very sympathetic to my wanting to go that direction, so projects and papers, dealt with problems that I was seeing at Edgewood Children's Center which is where I went after leaving this other social service agency. I'd met the director of Edgewood which is a large social service agency also with a core residential program but very long and successful history of being cutting edge in work with children and adolescents and their families, who mostly had been through, at least in the recent years, serious abuse and neglect experiences.

Blanche Touhill: As a treatment of those children when you went to Edgewood, was it much different than when you started years before, dealing with children that had no real...anybody really to love them?

Sue Stapleton: Well, yes, and even the kinds of issues that the children were presenting, people at Edgewood knew something about that which, when I had been doing it in other settings, had not been the case and there were many periods...Edgewood's history kind of parallels Child Welfare, was a pre-Civil War, started in 1834 as an orphanage, had all sorts of interesting history throughout the war and St. Louis leading families in and out of Edgewood's board and so forth along the way; always thought in terms of, are there better ways to do this, and there were many revolutionary milestones. They knew children with this pathology, if you will, needed to have men in their lives. Many of these children didn't. So they went to Washington University School of Social Work and recruited students to be around the children. That pre-dated even my being there. So, yeah, there were a lot of changes and, importantly, while I was there...I had signed on basically saying, "Just pay for my gas and I'll be here." I wanted to learn from this man who I had met who was the director who was a wonderful mentor. This is sort of the classic sense of mentor: when people just gravitate to each other and one of them wants to teach and

the other one wants to be a sponge. So it was a wonderful experience and, importantly, in the late '70s, early '80s, federal legislation began flowing. Title 20 of the Social Security Act was enacted which may never happen again but there was federal money flowing into places, into social service systems. So I was there at the very interesting period when Edgewood was growing rapidly and not just in size, but in the way of doing business. Now we no longer held all the children on the campus but created a day school and family programs and, because I was there and eager, I kind of figured out how to do this so it was a hugely important learning time for me. And again, my interest in policy and the macro systems really developed there strongly, even more strongly than it had. Much of Edgewood's funding became dependent on both Jefferson City and Washington and because it had national stature, Edgewood was very involved at the national level but my boss and mentor didn't particularly like to do that and I absolutely loved to do it. So I had a chance to learn things about how you do that.

Blanche Touhill: So you get your MBA and then you enroll right away at the Social Work Department?

Sue Stapleton: Yes, the school, yeah. And I stayed at Edgewood for eight years the first time, come back to Edgewood but during that time, actually did the MBA and an MSW and had a baby. At that time, I moved to, again, a program that no longer exists that the Salvation Army ran in the old Booth Hospital off Broadway for very young children who had the same social histories but it was much earlier in their span of time. And I was administrator there. There is always a hierarchy of Salvation Army people...men, at the time, almost exclusively...no, I shouldn't say that; there were women too but anyway, it was moving into a very interesting culture that was...I mean, Edgewood was and is an open, transparent...even though we didn't use the term...culture, very outwardly-focused, community-focused, the Salvation Army was different in this program and so those were seven challenging and very interesting years. One thing I might just note that always sticks out in my mind there is HIV was beginning to be discovered and there were infants at...Hope Center was the name of the program...who either were abandoned or were removed right at birth so as we began to learn about HIV, dealing with or thinking about how to deal with that when everybody, ourselves included, were terrified about how it's transmitted

and what precautions you had to take. At the time...this almost makes me smile now...but we had to work ourselves up into the fact that infants had to be diapered wearing plastic gloves. Now, of course, nobody would think of diapering, at least in many settings, not at home, but you always use universal precautions. Well, the thought of not touching the babies while we cared for them was really astounding. But again, it was a very interesting organizational structure to work in. My own research interest is around non-profit organizations and the Salvation Army is a most interesting organization. So I was there seven years. By that time, the director, my mentor at Edgewood, was ready to retire so I was invited...actually, there was some significant number of invitations to come back and be director there. By that time, I had a second child but that really was not significant in the thinking. It was more...I had been at Hope Center long enough that it was a reasonable interval. My questions were more around, was I ready to do that, to go to a much more public, much larger organization, without the protective shield of the Salvation Army? So I said to anybody who asked, including the decision-makers, "You have to do a national search, a serious national search and if you still want me to come, then I will compete in that national search and if you want me to come, I will. So I was fortunate enough to be asked back and spent 13 years then as director of Edgewood and have just a wonderful, heartbreaking, fulfilling, magnificent experience.

Blanche Touhill: Were you there when they made that transition to take over children who were...

Sue Stapleton: Actually, yes. The most significant piece of that actually happened during my first incarnation there when a program called The Girls Industrial Home...called the Girls Home...merged into Edgewood which meant older adolescent girls...and I'm doing this because that program was located in the city and moved into Edgewood's campus so gradually the age did move up but didn't really negate the younger years. So it was one of the few places that could deal with four and five-year-olds in residence and often those were kids...at least in the last few years I was there...who were from Eastern European orphanages in adoptions that were breaking down, that were tragic also. But it was wonderful. It was that period of work for me, it was all-encompassing. I joke with my children today that they always knew they had an older sibling who was named Edgewood and on Christmas, we were going to open our presents and then I would

be off to Edgewood for a little while and 24/7, even there was a hugely competent staff, it was a totally engrossing kind of work experience where I thought I would retire. I should say one more thing that's relevant. Maybe it's the last chapter, I don't know yet but I taught a couple of classes at the social work school and just one a semester and really enjoyed doing it. I taught budgeting and fiscal management which nobody on the social work faculty wanted to teach and that students didn't want to take it but I really liked doing it and then I did another course on Boards and Volunteers and I kind of thought at that time that eventually I would like to do teaching more seriously than one can do it as an adjunct. So I've already said I love school. It's obvious. So I decided to do a PhD and it was also...the job at Edgewood was so engrossing. As my children got older, why not? Why not? So I did this time at SLU, at St. Louis University, did, over the course of 10 years...I thought I should get tenure as a student...but over the course of 10 years, did a PhD in Public Policy Analysis and Administration. In the middle, I was already into dissertation research; I'd finished all the classes and I had fully expected that I would just stay at Edgewood until retirement but, along the way, the national director of Parents as Teachers retired and they've hired once and they needed to hire again a few years later. Edgewood, at that time, had just completed a major capital campaign and built buildings. It was on a really good footing. If I was ever going to leave, that was the time and the three things that attracted me about Parents as Teachers were working with very young children, often the kids with the pathology at Edgewood. If you didn't see them until 12 or 13, the prognosis was difficult. So very young children whose parents were around and you could do prevention kinds of work with them and then probably the major factor was a chance to keep living in St. Louis but do a lot of work at the national policy level in Washington. So I, again, was fortunate enough to be asked to take that position, kind of a new world since I had lived in the social welfare world. Parents as Teachers lived much more in the education world, in early childhood and I wound up staying there almost 10 years; again, wonderful experience. I've had the best jobs in the world. That one was fascinating, Parents as Teachers, I know you're aware, it's family support parent education program that started out research-based and continued in that vein and grew in ways that one might have done differently if there had been planning involved but instead, it's a very interesting public policy story about how legislation

was passed in Missouri that mandated, after a small number of pilot projects, mandated that Parents as Teachers be offered in every school district in the state. That was, over time, generously funded to provide that. Then somebody in Oklahoma heard about it; and then somebody in Ohio heard about it, and then Peter Jennings actually did a story on national news about Parents as Teachers which somebody in New Zealand heard about and so it just kind of kept growing and growing and growing, with extremely interesting manifestations, first outside the country, in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Great Britain and throughout, just gradually growing in the United States so that by the time I left, it was in all 50 states. Then we began adding. On my first day of work there, literally my first day, there were people from Beijing who had done research; they were very interested in American methods of parenting, up and coming middle class who was interested in their children in different ways. So we began negotiations as soon as I figured out where the bathroom was, that were very interesting that lasted about a year-and-a-half with very interesting learning about intellectual property considerations and all kinds of things. But the program is operating in China today and doing well. Not too long after that...well, the chronology doesn't matter. As the internet spread, people are interested in young children in many parts of the world. One that was absolutely delightful to me that I had not expected at all was one day received an e-mail from the city government in Nuremberg in Southern Germany and, of course, I was absolutely thrilled to be able to respond back, to their great surprise, in German, and they were not interested in working with German children. This was a very fine sort of public/private social service agency, a large one, interested in or kind of mandated to do something about the children of immigrants from the Middle East and from Russia and from Eastern Europe. So we, again, did interesting negotiations and they're doing a fine program now, very high quality and had just been picked up with a research program at the University of Zurich in Switzerland. So the international work was highly, highly interesting. Two other things, without keeping all day on this, but Parents as Teachers had been invited by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to work with a couple of other organizations to try to impact literacy among Native Americans. That program was well underway by the time I got there but it continued to be one that really spoke to my heart. I mean, visiting some of these reservations where the poverty level was just astounding,

and just learning about that culture, a little bit about...or those cultures in the United States and becoming much more sensitive to all of the history, good, bad and some of it's awful but highly, highly interesting, and learning to value the parenting that Native American families do. The oral tradition: how do you teach literacy when the tradition is primarily oral? So hugely interesting. I guess there are two more things, one quickly: At some point along the way, again, a very interesting public policy story: the military began to get interested in Parents as Teachers, not because...and this started with a member of Congress who I won't name, but who didn't particularly care about children but he served on the Armed Services committee and was concerned about recruitment and retention, primarily of soldiers, the Army, so I thought, this is a good idea; this is something that Parents as Teachers could help. So we worked with other members of Congress. One of the most interesting stories of absolute lobbying campaign to create enough support to do a pilot project through that bad word, earmark of defense funds to experiment with doing Parents as Teachers in a number of locations around the country. The program went very, very well for several years. Then it was caught in one of the waves of privatization and concern about too much privatization so it ended but it was a magnificent...one other thing I have to say about Parents as Teachers: the reason it started or one of the pivotal figures in the starting of Parents as Teachers in Missouri was Kit Bond, then Governor Christopher Bond who became senator. He became a parent himself for the first time and only time when he was 41. He was the youngest governor. The research about brain development was just coming into the public domain and he decided that would be a cornerstone of his time as governor and he very skillfully pulled in public sector people, private sector people. You may have been involved and certainly people you know who were interested in education from both parties across the state so there was kind of a ground swell to support it. When Senator Bond went to Washington, he continued to be extremely interested in Parents as Teachers. He was actually very helpful in this military campaign. He also arranged for several earmarks which I ought to apologetically say there are good ones, there are bad ones, just like the use of discretionary funds. There's good use, there's bad use. So we benefitted heavily from several of those. Finally...and this is the last of the Parents as Teachers story that I'll get into...we introduced legislation to have a discrete line of federal funding for home visiting, the general

category in which Parents as Teachers fits and that was pretty much life for six years, of doing all of the political maneuvering, the coalition building and there were plenty of others but because Senator Bond had started it, Senator Clinton actually got very interested too because there was another home visiting program in Arkansas that she cared deeply about and it was a classic case that I now teach about, of how legislation goes from a glint in somebody's eyes to the fact that as soon as the ACA passed, the Affordable Care Act, which ultimately, this little piece of legislation was attached to, there is money flowing to children and families now over the course of that, now seven or eight years and it's, for policy (winks?), it's a magnificent story and frustrating along the way. It was just pure fun. So, in any case, that was the years of Parents as Teachers.

Blanche Touhill: I know then you left Parents as Teachers and you went to do this center at Washington U but before you get to that, I want to ask you two questions. I want to ask: What is it in your personality, in your early training or your growth, what is it that you think has set you on this path of policy and social services?

Sue Stapleton: It's a great question. I think I would start with my parents. I grew up in that household where service was kind of what you did and it was a very positive experience. My father had been...well, actually, both my parents...my father was born in Savanna, my mother in Birmingham. They came north deliberately during the civil rights era and had not quite estrangements from their own families, which later got repaired but it was not seen as positive all the way, among their extended families or my extended family. So there was always that example. Social justice was always important. I have vivid memories...I don't know, what year was Adlai Stevenson...I remember going to vote with my mother then, just holding my hand and we went into the voting booth together. So I think I would describe them as patriotic in all the ways that, to my way of thinking, are the right ways and had some, certainly, spiritual and religious motivation for social justice that was a tradition of the church, the denomination I grew up in. So those things were there absolutely and I don't know, the activities that drew me even in high school were student government...I guess even in junior high school. I've just always kind of been intrigued by how things work. I'm a patriot too. As crazy as it is, and even now, the process of how this government works is

fascinating to me and this comes from the later experience, that you really can make a difference, not all the time and not as many times as you want to but you really can make a difference. Then certainly these campaigns in the '60s were really important to my own development. All these children that I've worked with all the years...I think I mentioned this before...I would probably be a very poor clinician but the idea of let's get things better at this level and then figure out how to do it at this level...

Blanche Touhill: Let me ask about the Civil Rights Movement that really came at the same time, '64 was the Civil Rights Act and then the reorganization in '72 and the Title Nine, did any of that affect your career and your life?

Sue Stapleton: It certainly did in just evolving my own thinking. I have very few stories of discrimination in any way because of being a woman. The Salvation Army did tell me at one point they'd tried to hire a man but I was just as good. When I became director of Edgewood, there were very few organizations the size of Edgewood that had a woman as director. So that whole...and I'm not answering your question directly but I was aware that...at least I felt like I needed to work harder, be better, the things women often say, to be competitive and also that, if my language needed to be salty, I could do that and I could act like a man when I needed to act like a man but my personal stories, I've already said, the person who negatively but importantly impacted my career path was a woman. The mentor who chose me and taught me was a man and I had male and female board presidents. I worked for 14 board presidents over the years at Edgewood and Hope Center and Parents as Teachers. Maybe it's 16 by now. I felt well treated by all of them but certainly, that going on, it affected the way I raised my children, or we raised our children. It certainly affects the volunteer work that I've done. I think being involved in political campaigns is hugely important. Some of the early...when we were in a position to do any philanthropic giving at all, some of it went in those directions. I feel, in some ways, painful as it was to watch many times and knowing how many people were horribly treated more than now, it certainly was an exciting era to come up in, to become an adult and grow and evolve.

Blanche Touhill: If you were born 50 years earlier, would your life be much different?

Sue Stapleton: I think so.

Blanche Touhill: Do you have any vision of what it would be like?

Sue Stapleton: I guess I'd answer that a couple of different ways, although the first one, I can't even explain myself. I like doing stuff. I like managing things. I like making things work so wherever that comes from, would that have been there 50 years ago? Well, if my mother had been my mother, probably, but I don't know. But when I think of my mother-in-law particularly...and my mother taught but my mother-in-law never had a chance to go to college. She was brilliant, the mother of my brilliant husband, brilliant, married to a pathologist. She went the route of volunteer work. She was very active in League of Women Voters. She was on the school board. She had those outlets. I've always felt that she had some frustration. She was not a happy person. My own mother was a radiantly happy person. She was not and I think it may well have been...even though she was very successful in this volunteer work she did...that there may have been some...so I don't know whether I would have gone that route. I'm not proud enough to think I would have been one of those pioneers that, regardless of anything, I would have forged into a new direction. So it was a good time and the women's movement certainly supported the way Jim and I were deciding to have our marriage and it fit. It fit.

Blanche Touhill: So now, you're finished your job that you currently have?

Sue Stapleton: Yes, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Not to say it's your last but the one you're in.

Sue Stapleton: Well, we'll see, the one I'm in now, yes, and have been for a couple of years. Again, I had decided some time ago that I would like to do some teaching at some point and my husband had retired three or four years ago. We love to travel. All of my career prior to the Brown School was pretty much 24/7.

Blanche Touhill: And what do you do exactly?

Sue Stapleton: I chose to leave Parents as Teachers because it was time to do a little different level of involvement. I teach social welfare policy and I'm director of the Policy Forum which is a new initiative that's trying to move the Social Work School more in the direction of policy, infusing policy in what students are getting and what we're providing as experiences for them. So it's exciting to sort of evolve, how do we get

research into the hands of policy makers often using students as the vehicle. It's a great job.

Blanche Touhill: And the IWF?

Sue Stapleton: I was thrilled to be asked to join the IWF. I wasn't familiar with it. It's very low profile. Carolyn Losos, a dear friend, was the one who really, I think, moved me forward. It's been a wonderful experience. There are women from such a wide spectrum of society, doing different kinds of work that I've never even thought about and women who are not only successful but they...I think I can say this for almost all...they're comfortable with themselves. They have had good success but I think it's in sort of a holistic kind of way. Maybe that's a way that successful women, if they're fortunate, define success a little bit differently, to have a little more balance of just where their heads are, not that they're working any less hard or any less diligently. So it's been great. I love the sistership and I love the programs. It's a great organization.

Blanche Touhill: Is there anything else you want to say?

Sue Stapleton: Well, I've already said I've had the best jobs ever and a supportive family that allowed me to be involved in all of those jobs in important ways. The things that interest me outside of work are, again, traveling, opera. My husband and I were both opera fans before we met and have continued to be strongly. Other than that, our interests tend to be around human services and schools. I've forgotten the number, when you add up all the schools our children have been to and he's been to and I've been to, you need both hands and maybe a third hand. So higher education is very important. I serve on the board of Eden Seminary. I'm actually vice chair of that board and I really like that involvement as well as some of the more human service-oriented board work that I do. I enjoy that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Sue Stapleton: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.