

Transcript

Interview with Jo Ellen Force, Professor Emerita of Forest Policy,
Public Relations and former contributor to *Women in Natural Resources* (WiNR)

This interview was conducted by Flori Tulli, English M.A. and Library Dean Fellow in Special Collections, on the 14th of June, 2022, at 1:30pm, in the University of Idaho's Special Collections.

Speakers:

Jo Ellen Force: Professor Emerita of Forest Policy, the University of Idaho's Department of Forest, Rangeland and Fire Sciences.

Dulce Kersting-Lark: Head of Special Collections, Public Historian, Activist and Librarian.

Flori Tulli: English M.A. and Library Dean Fellow in Special Collections.

Flori: For the context of this recording, this is Flori Tulli. I'm interviewing Jo Ellen Force, who is Professor Emerita from University of Idaho. Today, we're talking about *Women in Natural Resources* (WiNR) and getting her perspective with a few questions here. So I think we're all set to go!

Jo Ellen: Ok, well I'm not sure where to start, but I came here in 1979 from Ohio State. Myself and Molly Stock, who's the editor of the journal most of the years—the early years—her name's on all the issues—and Lauren Finn, who was a tree geneticist and came here to do tree improvement genetic work, we were all hired in the same year in 1979. Molly had been here a year or two. I'm not sure of her title...she may have been called assistant professor, or she may have been a research scientist or something. She had a PhD, but I'm not sure she was in a faculty slot...anyway, at that time the College was called the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range (FWR) and the department that hired the three of us was Forest Resources. The Journal was *Women in Forestry*. There were a few women faculty in "natural resource" programs at other U.S. universities. There was one woman (Dr. Winifred Kessler) in the Wildlife department if FWR here at Idaho. We were the first women in tenure-track faculty positions in Forestry departments..

Flori: That's amazing.

Jo Ellen: And that was due to Dean John Ehrenreich. Someone said you were looking—Dean Becker—he thinks that somebody is looking more at the legacy of John Ehrenreich.

Dulce: Yeah, his family's interested in having some papers donated, and I think he is willing to make some financial contributions to help with that consolidation of record.

Jo Ellen: Well, we hope so! So John had become Dean, I believe in '71, the year the building was built and opened. His wife had a PhD—I believe in anthropology—Dixie's her name. Her name's in a lot of those journals

Flori: Yes, she's been the managing editor for a long time.

Jo Ellen: She's been involved too.

Flori: She's been like the core of the journal.

Jo Ellen: Certainly the "core" in getting it started and getting Dean Ehrenreich to provide some funding for initial publications. I don't think she ever formally did "editing" work like Molly did, but she helped find people and articles a lot in the beginning. Molly could clarify Dixie's role in the early days...but anyways, Dixie was a very different faculty wife of a Dean, in the College of Natural Resources in the '70s, because she had a PhD. She could have had a career in her own life, and she really was always advocating for women. She convinced John to hire us. If he saw good people—I found out he did this with a lot of men also—but the story is that, when they moved into that building, there was about 21 or 22 faculty. There's actually a book there of our 80th—no, our 75th anniversary—in 1984, which was written by an English professor. All this being there to check facts, but around 20 some faculty had moved over from Morrell Hall, where the Forestry Program was before they moved into the new building. That building is now 50 years—it actually had won some architecture awards in the early days.

Dulce: It's a throwback when you walk in.

Jo Ellen: Well we still have our Snag! We will always have the Snag. Anyway, by the time that the three of us were hired in '79—Molly had only been here maybe one year before—we had almost 40 faculty. We were told from day one that you that gotta get grants. This is long before much of Idaho was really into research. You gotta get money to support 30 percent of —your faculty's salary—because “we're kind of spread thin to get everybody here.” He wanted us to do this, so we do this. And as I said, there's no other one—I mean, there's two women. Sally Fairfax, who wrote up significant several books. She ended up at Berkeley, and she's published several books on Public and Federal State Lands. If you Google Sally Fairfax you'd see there's a lot there—and Ann Forest Burns, a lawyer who was the first woman to go to Forestry School at the University of Washington. Sally and Ann have a lot of great stories of going to the Society of American Foresters (SAF) in in 70s—they were new professionals, and they had to meet in the parking lot to speak to each other, 'cause they were afraid to be singled out in this sea of 1000 white men.

Flori: What would you say the demographic was when you guys came in? You said that you were the first three women with tenure—how many or how much were men?

Jo Ellen: It was about 20 men in Forestry, getting close to 40 in the college. Actually, Winnie Kessler was in the Wildlife and Range Combination—she only stayed here about five or six years—but anyway, you know we—for example—there was the SAF at the National Convention, where you couldn't be seen together, except if you found each other in the

bathroom. You know, the reason that you weren't supposed to be together—it happened to the three of us a few times—we got over it—I don't know if you have ever been in the CNR conference room 200. Well, anyway, there's a big conference room, with a big table, where we would have faculty meetings. Well, if the three of us were sitting together—once in a while, we happened to come in, and we'd sit by each other—we all had tenure, and they were still saying this—some white men—they were all white—would come in, and a couple of those men—most of them were very good—but a couple of them would say “Ooohhh...what are you women plotting today?” You know, 'cause we're sitting together.

Dulce: You must have some nefarious purpose!

Jo Ellen: Yes! We never got smart enough to say, “Well, I see eight of you together, what are you plotting?” You know? Yeah, but we were just so into this environment, where there's almost no women. They were still arguing in many schools across the country whether they'll let women into forestry, and if they do let them in, what to do with them at summer camp—field camp. We don't have two bathrooms, we don't have any facilities for the women. Down at McCall, at the field station and stuff—there's probably a better story, if you really want this, in some of the articles. My memory of the story is that, this is also happening in the Forest Service: there's no women, there's no women District Rangers, there's not very many women hired, and something happened—probably, I'm not sure if it was associated with Title 9—but anyway, you gotta also remember that—

Well, you two weren't there—but women were burning their bras in the streets. In the '70s, I mean. Gloria Steinem was a big deal and all kinds of others.

Flori: You're freshening up my historical background!

Jo Ellen: Yeah, right! Anyway, it was becoming aware that there's some way you could solve this problem of how you could let women into the Forestry Program. Maybe they were already backpacking—maybe they could survive in the wilderness. Nobody brought up that we all share the bathrooms in the airplanes: why can't we at summer camp, you know? None of that! I'm not sure when the first woman went to summer camp in Idaho—down at McCall—but anyway, this is kind of happening everywhere. And a couple of us—I think it was Lauren and I, because Molly never went to the SAF very much—but I remember meeting a John Beuter. Associate Dean in the College of Forestry at Oregon State at the time. He was very friendly to us and included us and stuff. When he would meet us at the convention, he'd introduce himself and so on, and he told us about a—I think it was probably typewritten then—you know, sent through those purple machines.

Dulce: A mimeograph?

Jo Ellen: Yeah. Anyway, it was almost at that level, but there were some women in Oregon and California that were the only women in their job site—and some of these women are living out in Bovil-type places. I mean, it's not very like Iowa, where there's somebody down the road every mile, you know. Yeah, there were in some in California, and where the national forests are. Some of those work sites were very isolated, and anyways, this group of women had somehow gotten in the Forest Service. These women would hear that they hired a woman down in Ukiah—

well, that's only 100 miles away—but maybe we could meet for coffee or something? You know each other—it (Women in Forestry) just started out more as a very informal mimeograph-newsletter, sometimes two or three pages typed up. He (the faculty member from Oregon State) had a copy of it, and he gave us one, and we kind of got on some for a while, and so, that's kind of how it was—a support group. Our only objective was to survive. Survive in a white-male dominated, pretty-powerful-in-some-states forest industry and the National Forests. Those National Forests come to half to 2/3 of the lands of Idaho.

Flori: Something interesting that I've been finding about their correspondence to some of the men in power in these organizations is that, they're supporting these women. They're also giving justifications—like, these are the reasons why we need women in these fields—or like “I can speak on your behalf to vouch for you.” I've been finding some correspondence that talks about that. Even then, there seems to be a bit of a power dynamic with the support. It is really fascinating to see.

Jo Ellen: Well, you know, they didn't believe then that one: a woman could survive out alone, and that two: a woman could run a chainsaw, or do both! Particularly in the early days of forestry. I never did any of that stuff, but some of the undergrad women, they got involved in some of the logging activities—they eventually became smoke jumpers and different stuff.

Flori: Could you describe what a smokejumper is? I'm a bit unfamiliar with the term, what is it?

Jo Ellen: A smokejumper is a very physically-fit firefighter, who has gone to smokejumper training, down in McCall, one of the bigger training schools. They get flown up into a plane or a helicopter, and they jump out on top of fire. There's always a few killed almost every year—there's a few—but it pays very well, and it's a very premium. You know, it's a big deal if you're a smokejumper—you're better than the other firefighters that are digging trenches and trudging away.

Flori: Like the special forces of firefighters?

Jo Ellen: I can imagine so—well, yeah—it's not easy to get into. You got to walk 40 miles with a 50 pound pack or something. I think our magazine then featured a lot of these kinds of jobs women got into—but, in terms of your first question, how did it start—it was simply that our goal was to survive and to be successful professionals, even though we were women. That somehow, we could crack this culture. I'm not a traditional forester—I don't even have a forestry degree—I have an Iowa State degree in chemistry and math, and then at Ohio State I got into Natural Resource Policy degree, so I never did field work.

Flori: But you were there during the creation of the *WiNR* journal?

Jo Ellen: I knew all this math, in physics, and I've done a lot of modeling in my PhD program, but I was involved in—there's a book called *Limits to Growth* that was a big deal in the 70s—that was textbook in two or three of the classes I took—and we learned and wrote those kinds of models: what's gonna happen if airplane pollution goes up like this, or population goes like that? And so on. So I had some technical skills that he (Dean Ehrenreich) liked, I didn't just break the

mold to get in—I was so frustrated in the '70s as Earth Day was going on. I got interested in this stuff, that the environmentalists were losing all the lawsuits to the engineers, who had all the formulas and the models and the technology. And so, when I was looking around for a graduate program, there was this one called Systems Engineering, but it was looking for you to work on some of the projects like “where do you cite a nuclear power plants in the Ohio River valley?”—very much a social economic problem as well as an engineering problem. So I came by a very different path to get into forestry and natural resources, but Ehrenreich gave me a career.

Flori: It almost sounds like, at that time, with what you're saying about the environmentalists versus engineers, there is a preference for and kind of power to mathematics and engineering. Would you maybe say that, when you came here and got involved with *WiNR*, you brought a power with you? A power of statistics?

Jo Ellen: Well, the three of us—and even then, a few others schools began to hire one or two women on their faculty—I don't think we thought about it so much as power. We were there as mentors—I mean, whether you want to be or not. Like, if any undergraduate woman student—we didn't have many—but the ones we had, if they had any problems—like we found them crying in the bathroom or something, from something that was done or said to them about being there—how the only reason you got the job was because you're a woman—even though they all had the highest grades in all of our classes—I mean, generally, almost every one of them. I probably taught for 10 or 15 years before I had a woman student that got bellow a B—most of them always got A's and B's in the class. When you survive to get to the College of Forestry, you put up with a lot already. I don't know about today...it's not as bad, but we don't have a lot of women. But as the three women in the department, in practically the whole college, problems that came up with women students—between their advisor or their professor—you know, well, go talk to Molly or Jo Ellen or Lauren. They'll help you.

Dulce: With your lady problems.

Jo Ellen: Yes, right. So then, another thing that happened—this is going on more in the Forestry community—but somehow, Ehrenreich was very interested in international stuff. A lot of stuff was going on with international social forestry—they called it community forestry—a lot of stuff in developing countries. The USA had a big program in the '80s for helping developing countries with their agriculture and natural resources, to get the skills of the Green Revolution—though we didn't have any name so formal at the time—but anyway, there's somewhere in some of that stuff about this big conference we had, that Molly and Dixie and I got together.

Flori: I might have found that—there was some international conference I found with photos of women at the conference. There's even a floppy disk with it.

Jo Ellen: Well, there's also a couple books. I still have some of those somewhere, but anyway, Ehrenreich was so interested in putting us on the map internationally and nationally that he got one of these big USAID grants—they were called Strengthening Grants—they were several million and were big deal at the time—and he concentrated on strengthening the college to deal with international programs more. Part of that was he sent a bunch of new assistant professors, with two or three years' experience, off to China for the summer. Part of that money, Dixie

talked him into—supporting this international women's conference—and we were given quite a lot of money to give travel grants to women that got identified through various ties. I mean, a lot of this is serendipitous. That conference—I don't remember what the first year is, of any printed *WiNR*, or *Women in Forestry*—it might have been called that first—but it was Molly's idea. She loved writing and editing. She and Dixie decided they're gonna start this journal, and I don't know whether I was offered one of the associate editor labels, but I knew what was all going on. Molly lives in Portland now with her daughter, but I don't know whether you could talk her into interview or something. But it was more the idea that we'd go beyond this mimeograph newsletter, to talking about—What do you do when this happens in a meeting?—What do you do when this happens within the field? Loneliness—I mean, we didn't have the Internet—and places like Elk City can be lonely. You know Elk City?

Flori: I think so.

Jo Ellen: How would you like to live there? As the only woman within 100 miles, working in the forest? To survive and to talk about when they say something to you or when they're telling you the dirty joke, this is what you do or whatever.

Flori: You know, it's interesting when you say that some of these men were saying that they don't have the resources for these women out in the field. But it sounds like a lot of resources include having solidarity with other women, in your organization and in the forestry.

Jo Ellen: Right, that was a big part of it. And then, in the magazine, we discuss—if you read some of the articles—we tried to find women—I think the first woman National Forest Supervisor before us, Geri Bergen from California—she later returned to her maiden name—she was a fantastic role model, with many "firsts." I don't know whether we had her on the cover at some point or not—we also had a woman, Denise Meredith, who was the first woman to be a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director in Arizona—that is, BLM Dept. of Interior. Denise was also the first black woman to be in a leadership position in the BLM. So, as women got hired or selected or won an award or something, we tried to feature them in this magazine, with the idea that say somebody made it. Or somebody did what I'd like to do someday.

Dulce: You'll be able to see yourself in those roles. And that's much of what we are learning now about raising young women, is that you have to be able to give them the view that those roles are a possibility.

Flori: Real-life examples.

Jo Ellen: I guess if we had any objective, that was kind of it: to make the world aware that women could probably do some of these jobs just as well as men. Certainly African American and Hispanic people in the Natural Resources and Forestry fields have had the same challenges. I mean, here it is, 2022, and finally we have a Native American as Secretary of the Department of Interior!

Flori: You know, that's pretty insane...thinking about it like that.

Jo Ellen: Her name is Deb Haaland.

Dulce: I think she might be the first female Secretary of the Interior—certainly the first indigenous person.

Jo Ellen: Gail Norton was the first woman Secretary of Interior in George Bush's administration, 2001-2006. But anyway, I remember writing a couple articles—I didn't write a lot in it because I was trying to get tenure and get promoted to full professor—it wasn't the priority—I didn't do much research on women—though in the 90s I started having some of my students look at gender difference. A lot of my research was on social science and forest planning and who is in the Forest Service, going through the first round of Forest plans after the National Forest Management Act. They were required to have public involvement, to present what they want to do up in Clearwater or on the National Forest—how much they want to harvest for timber, what they're gonna put in roadless areas, how much wildlife, all this stuff. In the 90s particularly, they held a lot of workshops—I mean, open houses and things—and so I did have a student, I think Leanne Marten, who's now the regional forester in Missoula. I think she graduated in the mid 90s, and she did a survey and analysis of who is it that is trying to influence the National Forests, 'cause mostly you hear about the Timber Beast and the extreme EarthFirst environmentalists, and they're both ends of the spectrum. The National Forest is always trying to find some balance, because there's a lot of pressure, and we all use wood everywhere, and paper—people want wood products from the forest. These meetings would be people giving input and so my students looked at who's coming: old people, young people, environmentalists, Democrats, all this stuff. That's the only kind of research I ever published in the journals, with some other things we learned about: women are underrepresented. I think I've got a couple articles—I'd have to look at my resume again—I remember giving talks at a couple places about the different management styles that women in non-traditional fields have. I don't know about English Majors, but in engineering, agriculture, forestry, different management styles that are fairly universal. I mean we women tend to supposedly care more about people—have a little more sensitivity about body language and reading people's reactions.

Flori: That seems to be a very strong suit in the humanities. I teach some introductory English courses, and that's a big part of our emphasis: flexibility. Knowing your students in smaller classes, and self-expression.

Jo Ellen: Oh that was true even of the women who had been fairly non-traditional in terms of choosing these fields, like engineering or forestry, but, you know, I've always thought that all these traits—with any trait of human behavior—it's kind of a normal curve right? But I do think there's a normal curve for men on how they approach some of these things, and there's a normal curve for women, and they're not separate. They overlap, and there's a lot of women and a lot of men out in this tail that are more typical in terms of sensitivity or emotion or feelings. There's a lot of men out in that tail too, but the women tail comes over here. There are women who are very masculine in terms of the way they react to things, in terms of rigidity. I think women that have children have to become more flexible to survive. I mean, Dulce, you've been more recently a mother, don't you find this?

Dulce: I think yeah, certainly flexibility is really important. When you say this, it's making me think I've had this conversation recently—that I really believe that there's a lot of gender that is societal, but that there's a lot of things that we say—“Oh, that's a very female trait”—Well, it's really a continually reinforced trait, right? But I tell you what, my little boy loves trucks, and I don't know why! Maybe if he was a little girl, he would love them just as much, but I swear to you—I have not encouraged it in any way. But every truck he sees it's just “truck truck truck truck.”

Flori: That always seems to be the debate.

Jo Ellen: The journal that we published, for several years was kind of saying that. These are all the things women are doing—some of these are like the men do—and we're trying to break the glass ceiling—or even the plastic one—you know. Maybe it's societal, but I don't think it's all societal. I mean, you gotta remember—supposedly—men were the hunters and women were the gatherers. Now why did that happen? It happened because—I mean, I guess I don't know, I'm not an anthropologist—but men didn't have to have children. Women had the children, and once you have a baby, it's easier to stay around the hut or the tent or whatever cave they're living in and collect the grasses and fruits and mushrooms and things that are around within walking distance. And therefore, if we're going to have a deer or whatever, you're gonna send the man, who can go off and chase him for a week. They weren't successful a lot of the time—I mean it was considered successful if they got one deer a week or something, like the Native Americans around here would feed the family—that's a lot of meat. But it wasn't a daily activity.

Flori: No.

Jo Ellen: Anyway, a woman friend and I in Columbus, Ohio, where I was living when our first daughter arrived, we decided that we would each take two classes at Ohio State, because our husbands were both faculty members. But anyway, we scheduled our classes so that she could keep Emily while I went to my class and I would keep Rachel and Allison while she went to her class. We did that for a year and then she decided to move—they decided to leave Columbus—and went back to Washington DC area—Ohio State offered me an assistantship—teaching assistantship—in the Natural Resource Program—because I was older, but I was also one of the only graduate students because I had already taught for some two or three years in junior high schools. And I taught a 102, hundred-level class at Ohio State, and so then I had to go full time. I had to find somebody to take care of Emily. I think in the whole women's movement, there are those who chose not to try to figure out how to be both super mom and also super chief.

Flori: Talk about being a multitasker, that's a lot.

Jo Ellen: Well, I don't think multitasking is just something we learn. I think our brains must be different, that second X Chromosome or something must help us multitask. Men cannot do it as much as we do.

Dulce: Or to be a little less flappable. You know, to be able to deal with multiple things at once without feeling totally overwhelmed. That's interesting...so did Lauren have kids?

Jo Ellen: Well she chose not to have children until she got tenure. She had another earlier career before Forestry. She was a social worker in New York City into her early 20s. So anyway, she had one daughter after she got tenure. Molly and Lauren and I all had kids within one or two years of each other—we're all 75—I'm 79 now, Molly is 80, and Lauren about 78 or so—maybe 77. So Molly and my kids are close to the same age, in their 40s and early 50s. Anyway, we all three had men that were—well, Dave was a professor in mechanical engineering at WSU, Ron was a faculty member here at Idaho in the library all his life, and Lauren's husband was the Intel tech guy, who actually long before anybody else was talking about commuting. He was basically commuting between San Francisco and Moscow the first decade they were here. Anyway, we all had very flexible, supportive husbands. So have I totally blown all your questions?

Flori: Oh no, you have actually touched on a lot of things that I didn't even have to ask you. You've given me so much, which is great!

Dulce: I guess I'm gonna pop out, Jo Ellen. I'm gonna go to my next meeting—I'm glad I got to see you! See you soon!

Jo Ellen: It's good to see you again, Dulce.

Flori: Yeah, thanks for talking with us!

door closes

Flori: I think I just have one or maybe two questions left for you. When did you get involved with *WiNR*?

Jo Ellen: I was pretty much involved from the beginning, but not in a formal position. I was always supportive of Molly, and sometimes, I'd write articles. I did more public things, particularly in the SAF, and because my field was Policy and Social Science—rather than Ecology or logging—I had a lot of people contacts and I was active in the SAF from the very beginning. Even though there were almost no women there, but we eventually got one woman as president. I often would know people or meet people because I—she was an entomologist and lab researcher, Molly was, before this—and she continued that—and so I had in many ways a broader circle of people and opportunities to hear about women.

Flori: Public relations?

Jo Ellen: Yeah, like when I would go to the conventions of the SAF—the national one—from almost the very beginning, and I had a lot of opportunities because I was one of the only women alongside Sally and Anne—Sally Fairfax and Anne Forest Burns—after those two, there had gotten to be a group of probably eight or ten of us by the early 80s that would go to the SAF convention. Then, we would—Dulce would have loved this—we would meet one night during the convention, and we called ourselves the bitter-old-bags: BOBS.

Flori: Do you want me to write that down?

Jo Ellen: Well, it's on your tape! But anyway, yeah, we would all share our bitterness about what had happened. Like there was one of the older women in our group, a very good scientist in the South—she was probably the only woman to be nominated as a Fellow in the SAF in her region—there's only so many every year, and it's usually people more near the mid-to-late careers—she was nominated to be a Fellow two or three times, and always lost...because your colleagues in your state had to elect you. So she'd share her stories. We all knew what was happening...we would also celebrate the first one of us who got a job—I mean like the first one who was a Department Chair.

Flori: It's good that you were all venting together! It's like being part of the support base, yeah?

Jo Ellen: Right, yeah. So I wasn't participating in the journal anymore, but there were so many of those people in the journal we interviewed or something. I guess I was kind of a supportive role. And as I said, I do remember meeting people at my circle that I would meet at national conventions. There were so few of us, women in the 80s, in the SAF, but there were some very supportive men too. We were often put as the token woman on the National Committee—the first one I was on was placed on the SAF's committee on women and minorities, as was this black woman that got put on that too. But anyway, when you're one of the only women in an area, you know you're being placed partly because they want some women on the committee. But if none of your other women see any women on the committees—so far I'm the first and only woman to get the Gifford Pinchot Career Award in the SAF, which they didn't start till about 15 years ago, I think—but I got that award, and one of the reasons I got it is—well, women often volunteer for positions they need somebody for. The chair of the committee or secretary or treasurer, or some job that needs getting done. And some of it's just my personality—I mean, I just happen to be a woman, but I also like doing things. So does Dulce—or you—we volunteer, and men don't often, unless it's seen as a powerful position. We're doing it 'cause we volunteer, 'cause it's the job that needs to be done if we're gonna function.

Flori: Rather than somewhere on a hierarchy?

Jo Ellen: Right, I mean—I'm just as happy being a vice chair as being a chair—but if nobody will be the chair, I'll be the chair. I don't think of doing things because it was gonna give me power, but it did, you know. But that wasn't a driver.

Flori: It's almost as if you seek meaning, and then the passion and work you put into it gets you somewhere.

Jo Ellen: Yeah. So, um, I had an interesting comment made once by one of my male faculty members, but he's a very close friend and one of the most supportive, and he was also pretty active in the SAF. One day, I told him that I just got asked to be on the National Ethics Committee. I can't remember why I brought it up, but somehow, I kind of said “You know, have you ever been on that one?” or “Would you like to be on that one?” And his basic comment was “I've never been asked. You got asked 'cause they need a woman.” I mean, he didn't believe that I was incompetent—he really believed I would do a reasonable job—a good job, or a competent job—but he was right. The reason that, early in my mid-career, I got asked to do things was because I was going to be the only woman on the committee, or one of only two. And there were

ten men, so why would they go choose him out in Idaho, when we got eight other white men from the West and everywhere else? I mean, we got a good distribution, yeah, but we don't have a woman on there yet, or we don't have very many blacks in forestry, and there still aren't. President Gibb—the president of Idaho from sometime when I got here in '79—I don't know his exact years—it might be up on the Administration Building—when you're walking through the auditorium—Richard Gibbs was here quite a while after Hartung was before that. Then Richard stayed through this Centennial in '89, and then that's when Elizabeth Zinzer was hired as the President. Anyway, he had in his mind—it may have been influenced by Title 9—I don't know exactly what was going on. The Women's Center was starting here at Idaho, you know?

Flori: Like the late '70s-80s?

Jo Ellen: It must have been '72, 50 years since the Women's Center started—they're having their 50th anniversary this year. So anyway, he got in his mind, by the time he was president that he needed on every search committee for a Provost or Dean or a leader, he wanted women. At least one or two of us on every search committee at the university. After Ehrenreich hired the three of us—and there's no women in CALS—the only women in Ag. were in what we called Home or Family Consumer Science. There were some women, a few, in English and Class and Letters and Science at that time—there's Jean'ne Shreeve, the only woman in the Chemistry Department here at U of Idaho—I don't know that there were any in biology—there's very few women across campus except in the Humanities, Arts and English. Even some of those areas I don't know that they were even anything close to equal. So he got in his mind that the three of us were women that he ought to be putting on these committees 'cause we were in male-dominated fields. So Molly and Lauren and I did get appointed to quite a few of these committees or task forces and stuff, which again gave us an opportunity to meet people across campus that did have power.

Flori: They needed those positions filled, and then you gained a lot of insight within the network of who's there.

Jo Ellen: We gained a lot. We had to be there, and that's what this friend, Jim, was saying—that I've signed up for lots of these committees—the SAF Policy Committee—has vacancies because I'm a woman or she's a black woman and that's a two-fer, you know. So he wouldn't get it.

Flori: Yeah. I can I imagine that might have created some tension from your male colleagues.

Jo Ellen: Yeah, I mean, in his case, he wasn't bitter—he just explained to me, that's why you've had these opportunities. He was supportive, but he just was pointing out to me realistically, “How am I gonna get on them? There's another 100 white males just like me with the same background in the same field.”

Flori: Yes. I'm not sure what the Forestry or Natural Resources demographics are now, but I've been hearing that colleges are now becoming a little bit more majority female and more diverse. I'm not sure if that's because of the acceptance rate, or it's more encouraged to go to college and more women and diverse individuals are applying and coming to colleges. I'm not sure.

Jo Ellen: I'm not sure either why it's tipped over for the whole university, because it's not tipped over in Natural Resources. Although, the Wildlife field and Parks and Recreation have many more women now—I don't know whether they're over 50%, but they're much closer to at least one third women—whereas Engineering and Forestry, particularly people whose view of forestry is more traditional, quantitative stuff—modeling like that—a lot of that is still fairly a small group of women, nothing near half.

Flori: Yeah.

Jo Ellen: I don't remember if any of the articles really talk very personally about some of the advantages of being a minority. Now you don't see much of that anywhere—there's certainly advantages of being a minority in various fields.

Flori: Well, it's just like you're saying. If a position that has traditionally been mostly white male and is now looking for diversity, being a white man is a dime a dozen. You have the majority. So if you are a candidate who's different then yes, you have a highlight on you. I did the science fair back in high school, state level, and I got this Geological Women's Award. Even back then, I wondered, “Ok, great. But is that specifically for women? Is it just because I'm a girl?” Even then, that's something I've always thought about too, being capable versus my label. What's the label on me?

Jo Ellen: And I don't know whether boys and young men think about that. Even if they do, do they think, “Well, I got this 'cause my dad's on the committee?” or “I got this 'cause they know my grandpa was a good geologist.”

Flori: Yeah, having a network helps.

Jo Ellen: I don't know whether our society builds into white men until very recently that they get everything on merit—whereas, in fact, they don't. I mean hopefully we get things on merit, but we get dismissed initially. And so we get the foot in the door because we're the minority, that there's an ethnic difference or a different race or whatever that they need for diversity. But then there's also pressure, that if you don't do it right, they're gonna blame all of you.

Flori: Prove yourself twice?

Jo Ellen: Yeah, perhaps. Even if you get in, because you got the right color, the right gender or sex or whatever. But if you make a mistake, all the other women who were going to apply after you will get judged. They'll think, well we tried that. And to be expected that every action you take represents all women and will affect the next one who applies.

Flori: Which is probably why there has been that stress since the '70s, that we need more women. Because they're not just representing all women—they're individuals. Which is funny too, because being labeled part of a group versus the majority where it's believed that merits and individualism are all that counts. But then there's this secret network: who you know—who you are related to.

Jo Ellen: The locker-room.

Flori: So I think there has been a bit of a farce behind that very individualistic merit-based belief. Is that really all it takes?

Jo Ellen: Right.

Flori: That brings me to my next question: do you know when the journal ended or under what circumstances it ended?

Jo Ellen: Well no, I don't know. I have to go back and read more of the late things. I think that was almost into the 2000s, I don't know. I think we had trouble getting—I don't know whether Molly ever did any editing for any of the of the digital ones—I'm not sure, but anyway, at some point, she didn't want to do it anymore. And we had trouble finding somebody to do it. There was a Forest Service woman over at WSU who had a PhD, a scientist, but her office was on the WSU campus for the research—Sandy Martin. Her name should eventually come up somewhere. I think she ran the digital one for several years, but it just kind of died for some of us. We didn't pass on the torch very well, or we just got too busy, and we didn't want to put pressure on younger women. Yet they probably weren't feeling as isolated, certainly not by 2000. You weren't as isolated anymore—there were women most places. I mean like, I did a sabbatical in the Forest Service in the national office in 1995, and I lived in DC for just fall semester and worked in the policy group in the Forest Service. But there were quite a few other women in the national office in DC. Our group of our policy analysis was pretty equal: men and women. It was no problem finding a woman to sit with or have lunch with or go out with.

Flori: It sounds like it progressed a lot. But with that, it almost sounds like the original group, that community, dissembled.

Jo Ellen: Yeah, well, in the original group, it began as support. Groups where they lived or worked in their field.

Flori: You know, the journal itself, on the surface-level, is a lot of technical articles about women in natural resources and their work.

Jo Ellen: Some of them wrote about their own research.

Flori: Yeah, their own research, or taking the research of others or experiences, kind of journalistic sometimes. So knowing more about the women behind it, I think you are a big part of that history. Not just in the University but also the movement itself. It's really interesting.

Jo Ellen: Yeah, there's others that played a much bigger role in that particular thing.

Flori: It sounds to me like you had a lot of the networking experience that got contributions. But it's just really great to know who is in the story behind it and humanize it. And I think that has a lot of potential with the Women's Center's history as well. Do you think that a journal such as the *WiNR* had a really big piece to play in that?

Jo Ellen: Well they reached a certain audience—I don't know if undergraduate women read it a lot. We always had copies out in the student reading room and stuff, but they had certainly had an impact on the women who had broken out of school and are now into their career, and start to see how they would like to go. See women that have done that or the women that are in those positions. We had a pretty good distribution of that journal, for it didn't ever cost very much. To do the journal was never considered in Molly's salary line. It's just like I said—I did a few things for it, but I was trying to get tenure too. I don't think she had tenure when she started it, but anyway.

Flori: Kind of a passion project for her? Part of that support network?

Jo Ellen: Well I don't even know whether that was it, you'd have to know Molly. I don't think Molly depended on it for herself personally as a support group—she's more of a loner, I mean. Some of us were friends, but she doesn't do all the people things that I do.

Flori: That's understandable—relatable.

Jo Ellen: I mean, she loved writing, and then she loved editing. She still edits her son's writing, a book on avalanches. He's published a couple books on avalanches, survival books, you know.

Flori: Those are great!

Jo Ellen: But anyway, she edited all his stuff. I think what attracted her was the getting the word out—the message—giving the articles, giving people the chance to write the articles. She also got very interested in artificial intelligence in the early days—since she did a sabbatical with Boeing in the 80s or 90s on artificial intelligence—and then she started a journal about that, published research articles on artificial intelligence. She was the editor, but she personally, I don't think, pursued friendships with very many of the people. She would interview them and write the article.

Flori: It seems like Dixie was a core part of the journal.

Jo Ellen: Early on, yeah, then once it became a more formal publication—when you see it all look more official—Dixie wasn't as much involved. I mean, she kind of grew out of it. Dixie must be close to 90 now or in her 90s.

Flori: Yeah, but she's the name I've seen the most so far. I'll reach out to her, but anyway, I really appreciate you coming out to meet and talk. You've given me a lot of context about this journal and everyone in it. I really appreciate that!

Jo Ellen: Ok, it's nice meeting you, and you've got my phone number or my email. I'm gonna be here another month till mid-July. I'm glad you're working on it, and I hope you enjoy the project.

Flori: Me too, I'm very excited!