

Oral History Interview: Susan Morrison

Interviewee: Susan Morrison

Interviewer: Mark Bowman

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Mark B. This is Mark Bowman. I'm here with Susan Morrison. It's September 16, 2025. We're in Rehoboth Beach. Thank you, Susan, for doing this interview.

Susan M. Of course.

Mark B. And let's just—

Susan M. Someone wants to listen to me.

Mark B. Of course we want to listen to you. Good. So let's just start with your coming into the world. Where were you born? Tell a little bit about your family, your beginning to grow up.

Susan M. Okay. My family roots mainly are in western New York state. I was born in a town called...what is it called?

Mark B. Dunkirk.

Susan M. Dunkirk, New York, right. Thank you. Do you want to go on with my story? No? Okay.

Mark B. 1943.

Susan M. In 1943. All right, you're getting me loosened up on all this. My father was in the war. In fact, he was one of the first in the medical corps into Buchenwald. Interesting story, because he was a nurse at the time—it was in the corps he was—and they came and knocked down the door where the unit was stationed and said we only want the men, not the women. We don't want the women to see this. So the women nurses didn't go. And my father went. And his pictures are in the Holocaust Museum now, so it's an interesting kind of background story.

The strongest influence probably is my grandmother on my father's side. She came from Wales. She was the oldest of 10 children. And her father was a gentleman farmer who realized with all those kids, and only the oldest one getting the farm—and he had a cousin in the States, and said you've got to bring them over. So my grandmother, as the oldest, was to go. And there was this big boat coming over, very famous, and so they bought her a ticket on the Titanic. And then my uncle got cold feet and didn't want her to go by herself, so he talked to a cousin to go with her, and by then all the tickets were gone, so they turned their tickets in. You know, I see that movie and I think she'd have been in the lower part of the ship.

Okay, my father was in the war. Then he was finishing college and his dream was to be a professor, and he was studying at Cornell. And by then he had three kids and decided he needed to do something else, and so he joined DuPont company, and we moved to Wilmington, Delaware. But I

want to say all the moving I did when I was young—I don't think I went to the same school two years in a row—even though I'm an introvert—helped me with what happened in my life later because I learned to be more flexible and probably extravert more to feel part of it, because I had to really feel part of it for me in my personality.

Mark B. You had two siblings?

Susan M. I have a brother two and a half years younger and a sister ten years younger, okay? All right. So grew up there. Didn't go to church much. My grandma was very, very conservative, and when we were visiting her we always had to have evening prayer and read the Bible. And my brother was to read the Bible because he was going to be the preacher in the family, got it?

Mark B. [*Laughs.*] Yep.

Susan M. So, and then we moved to Wilmington, Delaware, and—

Mark B. You were around how old when you moved to Wilmington?

Susan M. I was going into junior high. I went to Newark, Delaware for two years and then we moved out to where I lived in Wilmington. And I lived in the estate area, but I lived on a house on the DuPont estate. So it was a beautiful area. It was a modest house in comparison, but out near Winterthur and Longwood Gardens.

Two things happened to me in my early childhood I would mention. One is in one place in New York state I went to a church camp, and it was a very conservative camp, and my god, I was saved one night and sanctified the next. And I think we went to Sunday School after that, but I don't have any strong feelings about it, but that sort of stayed with me, that experience.

And the second one was I began having these dreams and call that told me to be a missionary. Now this sounds corny as can be. It came out of nowhere. I'd be riding in the car. You have to understand I never met a missionary in my life. I thought they were on banana boats with long skirts. But that just stayed with me. Or I'd be reading an article and it's on a missionary. It was really strange. And I never told anyone. But when I decided to go to college I chose Drew University because I knew it was related to a church, and so I went there.

Mark B. You had no particular denominational affiliation at that time?

Susan M. Well, at that time, no. And we'll get back to what happened. And it was transformative to me because of the campus minister there, Jim Sessions. And it was the time of the '60s and everything, and so we protested the barber shops.

Mark B. Do you remember what year you started at Drew?

Susan M. The end of '61, September of '61.

Mark B. September '61, mm-hmm.

Susan M. So it was the barber shops. And something happened on a retreat which was very significant to me. We were in the retreat and we were talking about our...the student group, church group from Drew, and—

Mark B. You were part of the Methodist Student Movement?

Susan M. Yeah, that kind of thing. But we were talking about how do we get other people “in,” was the term we kept using. You know, how do we get other people in—they said “saved,” but we didn’t use that kind of language. We weren’t that strongly conservative. Jim Sessions stood up and “who do you think you are deciding some people are in and some people are out? How dare you?” And then he said something that has been a theme in my life forever. He said everybody’s in, everybody—no matter who, where, what tradition, religious background, whatever. He says the question is do they know it? Do they know it? Do they know they’re loved by God? That just opened up the whole world to me.

So my senior year, the first semester, I went to London in political science, and that began to broaden my view. When I came back it was the time of Selma, and there was a bus going to Selma, and I joined it. And we got halfway there and they said don’t go all the way, there’s too many buses and people, you go, you stop at Montgomery, Alabama and you do voter rights stuff there. And I remember that experience. We slept in a church, police outside protecting us. My walking with an Afro American person

and a car kind of driving towards us, as it was going to hit us, and then not. But that was another one of those major experiences.

So finally I got my courage up and talked to Jim Sessions about my mission call way back. It seemed so silly and frivolous and everything. And he says, well, you know, in two weeks someone's coming from the Board of Global Ministries for the US-3 program. And I said, well, I don't know. I mean, I said I never met one in my life, a missionary, and I was afraid of going all by myself. He says oh, no, but they're coming up for the first time with teams—a team to go to Brazil and a team to go to Bolivia.

And I interviewed and I was accepted. Jim Ault, Bishop Ault was the chair of the committee that interviewed me in the Board of Global Ministries. And so I was one of six young people that were to go to Brazil for four, really basically four years, because a half year would be language training, because we weren't going to the institutions that usually they sent people. We were going into the communities, so we really had to know the language. And so before we went they said we need you to go to...there's a training program at Stony Point for missionaries, but it was trained by Joe Matthews—what's the name of the...?

Mark B. Ecumenical Institute.

Susan M. Ecumenical Institute. And it transformed our lives. Joe Matthews was there. He told us about his program of prayer, study, mission, etc., and we

set up our team in Brazil with that pattern. We met every morning for worship, we developed liturgies that related to the area we were in, we did study. It literally held us together in an incredible way, and I'm very grateful for the Ecumenical Institute for that experience. And when we got to Brazil we realized we needed Brazilians, and so we recruited Brazilians. Interesting, one of those who joined our team ended up being a bishop, too, in Brazil.

Mark B. Where were you in Brazil?

Susan M. Just outside Rio de Janeiro. If you're going to be someplace, why not? Why not? And that was an incredible position...situation. And then—

Mark B. What did you do there? What were your—

Susan M. I was the Pied Piper of kids. Several worked with literacy. I did some of that. Mary Kraus, who you know, was on that team, and she worked in nutrition, and we did vaccines, and we did literacy where we taught the Brazilians to do the teaching. That was kind of our thing. And I was the one that was with the kids, you know, and I'd go up into the favela areas and they were just following me. You know, it was like...it was a wonderful, wonderful experience.

But we realized we needed to live with Brazilians, not in a little conclave, and so several of the women on the team, one of the men on the team, I met a couple who were very poor, but had come to our literacy class to

learn how to teach it, and I went and lived with them. I was in a little room with three kids in bunkbeds, and that just was outstanding. Sunday meant to go to the patriarch's home for dinner, all those kinds of things that happen when you become part of the family life. And I'm still in touch with them, and I'm seen as a child or a sister. And one of those girls is now a well-known doctor in Rio working. And they're now active in the Methodist church when they were Catholics. It doesn't matter, but they've stayed committed in terms of their faith. So okay, now I may remember—do you have any questions out of that? No.

Mark B. No, that's okay. So that—

Susan M. Now I'm a global person. Everybody's in. What can I do? Well, the call sort of directed me. When I came back to the States...well, when I came back to the States they sent me on a trip through the University Student Movement, and I remember being with Lynn Rhodes, who was a person in New England, and I was there when they dissolved the student movement. They had a meeting, and I—which I think was a huge mistake. I'm not going to go into opinions on things, I'm just telling you the details.

Mark B. I just did an oral history interview with—I'm embarrassed, what was her name? The outstanding... I just did an interview with the woman who was heading the student movement, Charlotte Bunch.

Susan M. Oh.

Mark B. So I just did an oral history interview with her, and she talked about all that, the pain of all that and the—

Susan M. Oh, because campus...really campus ministry trained my generation of pastors and church leaders, and they went ecumenical, which sounds wonderful. But like everything else, you lose the ties of a tradition, and the understanding of that tradition. And I don't know if that's good or bad, but that's exactly what happens. So after touring the—

Mark B. So you were touring campus, speaking on college campuses about your mission experience.

Susan M. Mission experience and the 3 program or 4 program, and yeah. And it was really helpful. So then I decided to go to seminary. But now I want to say first, go back to Drew a minute. When I was at Drew and I didn't know whether I was going to go on the mission field, I applied to seminaries because that sounded in with what my call was. And I loved the high liturgy, which Drew had, the Methodist high liturgy, so I applied to the Episcopal seminaries.

And I got this letter back from General Seminary in New York saying "Dear Miss Morrison, we are so honored with your concern and wanting to join us, but we don't accept women." And at the time I said what a fool am I to not realize that they don't accept women. Now, by the time I got back from Brazil the women's movement was on, because that was getting into the '70s. If I had gotten that letter then I may have responded—I

would have responded differently. But it shows you how we become sensitized or not sensitized to the issues. And that was not at the point an issue. So I went to Boston University, which was another incredibly wonderful, wonderful experience.

Mark B. Do you remember the year you started there?

Susan M. End of '69-'70. And I never did a church. I really didn't grow up in the church because when I... So—and I'll explain that. Well, when I went...let me go back. When I applied to the Board of Global Ministries—this is going to be a little convoluted—but they said on the application do you drink or do you smoke. They never said whether you were baptized or a church member, and I never was baptized or a church member.

And I'll never forget at Drew I got this visit from—I won't say his name—from the Board of Global Ministries and said now, Susan, we'd like churches to support you. And he was going around getting information where they can get churches to support the missionary. And he says now let's start with your local church. And I said, well... local Methodist church. I said, well, I'm not a member of a Methodist church. Well, that's okay, we find churches will support. Now what church are you a member of? And I said, well, I'm not a member of any church. And he said, well, where were you baptized? I said I've never been baptized. I understand they changed that application after that, by the way. But I got a

call saying it would be nice if I was baptized and joined a church. And so I joined a Methodist church in Wilmington, Delaware, Aldersgate, where the pastor there had gone to college with my father. And they were very supportive of me. So that was an interesting little twist.

Mark B. Yes, yes.

Susan M. Okay, so I'm in seminary, and so... And Mary Kraus went there, too. So we were still there. And one summer we organized for welfare rights in Minnesota, for welfare rights. And another summer we went to Cuernavaca in Mexico because of the Latin American studies that was going on there, and to learn Spanish. And that was wonderful. Neither one of those gave me any local church experience, of course.

And then I did a chaplaincy at Mass General, which was wonderful, and I spent part of my day visiting patients. And that was when people were doing, for the first time, open heart surgery. And I would sneak up to the dome, because you could watch them doing open heart surgery. And I think I spent half my time watching them do open heart surgery. And that was another wonderful experience.

Mark B. So you were in the M.Div. program.

Susan M. Right. And while there I was president of the student body, and that's where I met Bishop James Matthews, who was the bishop there at the time. Okay, so when that seminary—and I graduated—

Mark B. Magna cum laude, very good.

Susan M. Well, whatever it was. Who knows?

Mark B. You were a good student.

Susan M. It doesn't matter.

Mark B. I mean, you were always a good student through the years, correct?

Susan M. Yes and no. I realize now how ADD I was. But in any case, by then I settled, because I had experience to connect with what my studies were. Well, when we got done both Mary and I won fellowships for another year, so we started in Argentina, and we went to the Facultad de Teologia in Buenos Aires at the time of liberation theology, and we spent six months there.

Mark B. Did you meet Pablo Sosa?

Susan M. Huh?

Mark B. Did you meet Pablo Sosa, the worship guru?

Susan M. No. Someone you might have heard the name of, I can't remember, was there at the time. And then Mary had a cousin who was the secretary general to the head of the Benedictine order in Rome, and so we went, for our second semester we went to Rome and lived in a Polish convent, we in jeans, then in outfits, and studied, you know, courses at the Gregorian and St. Anselmo. Again, keep widening the lens, keep widening the lens, keep

including them. And of course all, through all these things we traveled. I have great stories on traveling deep in the Amazon jungle and all, but I'll leave that for another time. That's not what you all are interested in.

Mark B. No.

Susan M. Then I came back and I wrote Bishop Matthews and said I really would like to come down to the Washington area if I could, it's more international. Because what happened is—and this is another interesting story—while I was in seminary and overseas and whatever, it was time for me to be ordained deacon, and I could not make that because I was someplace doing something interesting. And so Bishop Lord was the bishop at the time, and he was not in favor of women, and not in favor of clergy couples, and he made that clear. But they had to have a special ordination for me in the fall, not...

And there were two others that were ordained with me. One was Felton May and the other was a person who went into not Young Life, but some other kind of ecumenical ministry. I don't remember his name. I was ordained deacon, Felton was ordained an elder, which is very interesting when you think of it at the time. And Bishop Lord's sermon was all about the men in the ministry. And that was the term they used at the time, but it was really more than that, so much that my parents, who were not connected to all the issues, so to speak, got upset. You know, we are really

looking forward to the future with men in the ministry, and it went on and on.

So, you know, my naïveté, being a child of the '60s, I wrote him a letter. And my DS down here calls me up and says Susan, your letter was nice, but forthright, but the bishop received it when he was in the hospital. I always remember that. I don't ever think he responded to it. But I felt pretty good. And I was the first clergywoman ordained, now in the first order as deacon in the Peninsula. I was the first one ordained, period, in any forum, in the Peninsula Delaware Conference at that time.

So then I went...what have I forgotten? Anyways, then I was assigned to Marvin Memorial in Silver Spring, and I worked with a wonderful, wonderful pastor, Bill Faraday, who was quiet, probably not known a lot in the conference, good, gentle, helped me. Because I hadn't even probably been to a funeral in my life, and all of a sudden I'm doing them. You have to understand I had no local church experience. How I got through it all is a miracle beyond belief. And I was there for seven years, and it was a wonderful—and I did a D.Min. at Wesley while I was there.

Mark B. What was the D.Min, what was the program?

Susan M. I did it on how women preach using stories and that kind of thing. And I think I was the first woman, Methodist woman, to get a D.Min.

Mark B. D.Min. at Wesley?

Susan M. Yeah, or at least Methodist. I'm pretty sure that's... I'm not trying to be the first, but I think someone told me that later.

Yeah, right. So then I went to Beltsville United Methodist Church, and I was there just two years. And Bishop Matthews called me in and said I would like to appoint you to the district. And, you know, I'm sort of stunned by it. He was very, very influential in bringing women in.

Mark B. And you had been the first woman district superintendent in the conference, right?

Susan M. Not in the country.

Mark B. In the conference.

Susan M. Oh, in the conference, for sure. And he had ordained a...I think a local pastor up in Maine earlier to be—so there was another one in the Northeast.

Mark B. In the Northeast, mm-hmm.

Susan M. Yeah, but I was the next one. The one thing I would say is when I started out in ministry in Baltimore-Washington I got the women clergy together, all five of us in our living room, okay? And that became a tradition. And then at Christmastime I'd always get, you know, there were not as many, but what really made it grow was Susan Beehler, if you remember that name.

Mark B. Of course I remember Susan.

Susan M. And Jan Powers.

Mark B. Jan Powers, mm-hmm.

Susan M. And we developed a clergy women's group, a lot of it music that healed us with a language that spoke to us. And we would take it and we would do programs in churches, and women would come up to us—it was mainly UMW that invited us—weeping because the words hit their souls.

Mark B. Brilliant. It was brilliant.

Susan M. That they had not ever had. And we became significant in the whole church, and we did General Conference, and Jurisdictional Conference. We did retreats. And I never can understand why Nashville didn't pick up some of Susan and Jan's songs that are incredibly powerful.

Mark B. I have the songbook. I have it. I've used it.

Susan M. Zion's Songs Are Meant for Babylon.

Mark B. Mm-hmm. Beyond Our Healing

Susan M. Yes. Why, in all these new books—and partly it was a time where they were being very careful on women, I think. And I'm extremely disappointed that it was never—

Mark B. As you discovered it a bit later. [*Laughs.*] [*unintelligible*]

Susan M. Yeah, yeah.

Mark B. Do you want to talk a bit about understanding of sexuality and how that came or didn't come about?

Susan M. Didn't come about. I mean, I had—

Mark B. Just didn't come about.

Susan M. —I had dated some. I was so focused in other—I mean, that sounds crazy.

Mark B. No, it doesn't.

Susan M. In my generation it wasn't. In an earlier generation it was. And I met Jean, and Jean's my partner, and we're almost 50 years. When you think of in our system. She was going through a divorce at Marvin, and had just applied, had started seminary. Nothing—my influence was not on either one of those situations. But in the process of that, and her getting into seminary, especially, we began to become good friends, and before long we were partners. And so that was it.

Mark B. Uh-huh.

Susan M. I didn't know it was well-known until years later, when people told me, oh my god, everyone knew. And I'll tell you an example when we get to the election on how it was really obviously very well-known. But, you know, I don't know why. I knew a lot of gossip. I don't know why I didn't expect that gossip, but...

Mark B. Were there other settings in which you encountered LGBT kind of issues, concerns with other people? Or at that time it really wasn't part of where you were moving around?

Susan M. I had friends who were gay, and it was... But no. I guess behind the scenes it was well-known and talked about, and probably judged, and etc., but I... There's a way in which I was in a naïve cocoon that would never happen today and is a little embarrassing on my part, but that's just the way it was.

Mark B. So you started as a DS.

Susan M. Okay, I started as a DS. I followed Carroll Yingling. And that's the first time I understood in leadership people can like you or not, because I remember we had an Afro-American pastor who was not effective, and I had to help process him, and then all of a sudden all that community was against me. And you can't say anything. And I'm not judging them for it. I understand why they feel the way they did. But I remember all of a sudden oh, when you're in leadership, it's a different kind of ball game.

Mark B. Mm-hmm.

Susan M. And I was there with Fred Wertz. My best friend in there, and still one of my best buddies, was Tom Starnes. And he was extremely, extremely supportive. But the homosexual issue didn't come up a lot in the cabinet. I think it was don't tell, don't ask, don't tell kind of thing.

Mark B. So it was 1980 that you became a district superintendent.

Susan M. Right, right.

Mark B. I'm just making notes here. Mm-hmm. On the DS years any other reflections on that?

Susan M. I have some I thought of last night which were in mind and I can't think of right now, but yes.

Mark B. Okay. So '86 you become the council director.

Susan M. I guess I do remember one. Towards the end of my time as a superintendent there was the John Carter case. Now I don't know if you remember that. It was a sexual harassment case brought by white women. And Joe Yeakel went to the...they really went after...the Afro-American community really went after Joe and the African bishops. He tells stories of how they... And the person did do what he did.

But what we didn't understand—and it seems naïve today—is Black men have always been accused of that through the years, and it hasn't always been true. So what it stirred up was that history. And Joe, if you know how Joe was, by the book, the Discipline was important, he didn't get that. I was naïve to it. The cabinet was naïve to it. And it was a really good learning lesson. Now whether it should have been done that way or tried to get...is later. But it was an aha moment that was important.

Mark B. Yeah, good.

Susan M. Okay.

Mark B. So council director position.

Susan M. Joe said—I didn't, was not interested—but Joe said I need someone I can trust, would you be willing to? So I did that for two years. At the end of the second year, at General Conference, I was elected to the Judicial Council.

Mark B. Was that your intention? Did you seek that position?

Susan M. No, no.

Mark B. How did that come about?

Susan M. Joe... I guess in the college they nominate people.

Mark B. They nominate people, the bishops.

Susan M. And now people can be nominated from the floor of General Conference, too.

Mark B. Right. But the bishops nominated you.

Susan M. Bishops nominate them. And, you know, I'd even forgotten about it. And I wasn't there. And I get a call from Joe saying get yourself to St. Louis or Indianapolis, or wherever it was.

Mark B. Yeah, '88 it was in St. Louis.

Susan M. Wherever it was.

Mark B. St. Louis. It was in St. Louis.

Susan M. St. Louis, because you need to be introduced. And what I remember about it—so I was the first, again, first clergywoman ever elected to the Judicial Council. And I get to there, and greeted by my colleagues on the Judicial Council, and they usher me into their meeting, their first meeting. And as I go in, one of the people—I'm not naming names, just to be—now this is who we're voting for for president of the Judicial Council. I mean, it's, you know, hello? You know, I'm a '60s person, remember? Not that I would have known anyone, but I always remember that.

Well, then they went ahead and they printed the stationery. So when I was... So all four years my name was on the stationery of the Judicial Council, even though I was—at the next General Conference, annual Jurisdictional Conference—

Mark B. Jurisdictional Conference.

Susan M. —I was elected bishop.

Mark B. Just a couple months later, right.

Susan M. I was elected bishop. But by then the stationery I guess had been done, so it was really pretty funny. So, and I have a plaque where it has it on, even. Okay.

Mark B. So you were a delegate to jurisdictional conference, correct? You were there?

Susan M. No. Because when you're elected to Judicial Council you have no role.

Mark B. Okay.

Susan M. So I'm down here at Rehoboth.

Mark B. You're in Rehoboth.

Susan M. I'm in Rehoboth in my sandals and whatever, and I get a call from Judy—no, Andrew Lady or something like that, secretary for years of the Jurisdictional Conference.

Mark B. Secretary of the Jurisdictional Conference, mm-hmm.

Susan M. Thank you. I'm kind of tired... And he said Susan, you're the only one in the Northeast who's on the Judicial, it would be very nice if you would come. All right, I'll come for a few days. So in sandals and casual clothes, because it's all I had there at the beach, I drove to West Virginia. And I was up on stage because they always had the Judicial Council person up on stage. Diedra Kriewald was running for bishop as the woman, and I was supporting her. And even though I'm not supposed to be political, I

am kind of political. I was helping behind the scenes, suggesting things, etc., etc.

Mark B. Strategies, yeah.

Susan M. And so the election, you know, so the votes started. And you've probably heard some of this in some of the tapes. And on the third ballot I get one vote. And I'm har-har-har, and I'm saying I don't vote, I'm Judicial Council, I don't vote.

Mark B. It wasn't me.

Susan M. It wasn't me. And then Andy Lady told me later that the shocking thing is after two or three ballots someone stands up to the microphone and says I vote we don't read the names of anyone with under 10 votes. But no one did. No one did. So...and I think that was the one night before... Okay, so we all har-harred about it, laughed, and went to bed, and got up in the morning, and they had taken a vote the night before. I'm just sitting back there har-har-har again, and they did another vote, they announced another vote. And I forgot what the vote was, but I went uh-uh.

Mark B. You had more votes.

Susan M. Yes. I used to know the number. And I said this won't do. I've got to talk to Diedra Kriewald. I was not running, for a lot of obvious reasons, and she was, and I was supporting her. And she's the one who stuck her neck out and tried to do it. At that time her votes were diminishing, they were

going down. And we met at a break, and I said Deirdra, I did not plan this, I am not running, I'm supporting you, what do you feel? I said I will leave my name in—not because I thought I would be elected, because they need to know there are other women in the jurisdiction. And she agreed. And she said I'm going to withdraw because clearly my votes are going down. And so I got off—and then I also got off the stage. But again, no feeling level as if I was going to get it at all.

And I remember going out, and Jean was in the delegation, and I remember going out and talking to her, what should I do? And then Joe Yeakel reaches out and says, Susan, it will be okay—Susan, it really will be okay! Susan, it will really be okay. And I said Joe, you know I need to talk. [*Phone rings.*] And so I just stuck my name in there. It was Jean's birthday. And...well, at the end of the day I was elected. And I remember one of the first persons went who's the spirit running through the conference, this force? Who is she? Could she stand up, at least?

Mark B. But you really hadn't been introduced. You hadn't given a speech.

Susan M. No, I had nothing. Now I was known because I was one of the few, and I was in jurisdictional things.

Mark B. Right, yeah, mm-hmm.

Susan M. And I remember several things. One is that day earlier they had breaks, and people wanted to be introduced to me. So they'd say what books have

you read? I couldn't think of a book I read. I mean, I was absolutely... in shock...there's such things as books? And I also remember a leader in another, let's say in another conference, whose brother was a leader in the Baltimore-Washington Conference said to me do you have any special women friends? And I said—I looked at him. I said I have a lot of women friends. But it was, you know, hello, hello, hello.

Mark B. Exactly. They're making you aware of that.

Susan M. Yeah, yeah. And...well, long story short, then I was elected. And the thing I want to say is one of the Black pastors on the delegation—I don't know whether to give names or not, and I'm not going to—turned around when I was elected, the moment I was elected, and took Jean's hand and held it. And it was a grace-filled moment, really a grace-filled moment.

Mark B. How did the...but how were you feeling? How did that feel for you?

Susan M. I was still in shock. I mean, I can't even tell you. And then Fred and Joe came racing down to get me, and yeah, I was pretty...I was really... And, you know, then—

Mark B. They do the consecration service there, right?

Susan M. Yeah.

Mark B. You're consecrated at the end.

Susan M. Oh, I had to go find a robe from a local pastor. I was wearing sandals. I remember walking down in procession, and Barbara Lavery saying she's got sandals on. You know, I mean, hello. That's what I came with. There's a lot of other interesting stories around it that are—can I tell them?

Mark B. Sure. Do whatever you want. Go for it.

Susan M. I told you when—my parents were in Chautauqua, and Jean called them and said prepare yourselves, Susan has just been elected bishop. Well, they couldn't get to West Virginia in time for consecration, but there was a Methodist house, so they said oh, we'll go over—maybe, you know, dreaming that it would be broadcast there for some reason, even on the radio. And there was a man rocking in the front porch of it, and my mother just kind of bebops up there and she says, hi, I understand there was an election for bishop in the area. And he said yeah, it's a woman. And she goes, yes, it was my daughter.

My brother is in...was working at the University of Rochester in the center, student center. He's reading the paper. Knows nothing. And there's a headline says "local girl from Dunkirk, New York elected bishop." He looks at it and goes, holy shit, and he throws it, and the coffee goes everywhere, and he's running down the aisle, you know, of this office area saying, you won't believe this, you won't believe. It was that kind of thing.

And Kathy Black was telling the story about how she was wherever she was in California, and she was calling someone, and they said oh, was there finally an election? And they said yes, and Kathy thought it was Deirdra, and she said no, it's Susan someone. And Kathy says oh, my god, and she hung up. She's a good friend.

Mark B. Right.

Susan M. Called the other clergywomen. She couldn't get through. This was like 11:30 at night. The lines were all busy. She says I knew it had to be true.

Mark B. [Laughs.]

Susan M. The lines were busy.

Mark B. Mm-hmm.

Susan M. And then, you know, the clergywomen came, drove all...drove early morning and came and stood outside the John Wesley chapter singing Susan Beehler's songs as I came in for the consecration. It was very... And they had decorated it with pink, pink confetti and, you know, stuff like that. And I remember Jim Ault was the preacher that day and he says, now Susan, he says, I hope I won't embarrass you with what I said, but this is something more personal. And I'm going oh my god, what's that, you know. He was saying he's finally found someone who's shorter than him. That was...it was such a sweet, kind of a sweet comment.

And I remember in the consecration I—oh, I should say something more. 3:00 that night before the consecration I called Joe and I said Joe, I can't do this. I'm not prepared. This is out the blue. And he said Susan, you come downstairs, we need to talk. So at 3:00 in the morning we went downstairs and I said Joe—and Joe said Susan, the bulletins have been printed, half the delegates have left, you've been called, and you can always count on me to be supportive. And I went...the delegates have gone home and the bulletins have been...? He said yes. So I went back.

And the interesting thing is the next morning my phone rang at 6:00 in the morning, and it was Ruth Daugherty from Eastern PA, and she says, Bishop, welcome to the Philadelphia area. And there was a peace in me. It wasn't shocked, it wasn't upset, it wasn't panicked. It was like yes, Lord, yes. That was a very interesting thing. And I had that same feeling when I was consecrated because all the bishops go and put their hands on, and no one's supposed to say anything. Of course Jim Matthews had to. He was my mentor. So he's whispering away. But when I finished and walked over and stood with him, there was another sense of calm and peace that I wasn't even thinking about that said yes, you're in the right place, yeah.

Mark B. Yay. Yay.

Susan M. So that's the main election....story

Mark B. That's the story.

Susan M. Yeah.

Mark B. Amazing.

Susan M. Yeah. Okay.

Mark B. So you pack up and move to Philadelphia, huh?

Susan M. I move to Philadelphia. My treasurer's wife was best friend of my cousins in New York state. I mean, just the little connections. The Daughertys, Ruth Daugherty—and I don't know if you knew her.

Mark B. Yeah, mm-hmm.

Susan M. Is a saint. And she and Bob, who was the council director, were incredibly important in my journey. Now remember, I'm a child of the '60s. I come from Washington. I go to Philadelphia. Certainly I can use inclusive language, I can, you know, dada-tada-tada. And the result being there were a lot of people who were upset there was a woman. Then I got letters saying women shouldn't be, but that's, you know, I mean, I wasn't a...it didn't crush me. I understand now that I was followed because in the gay community I was gay, especially, and I think in other communities. And people followed me around. You know, was there someone in the house with her and—

Mark B. To see where you went and—

Susan M. Yeah, yeah.

Mark B. —whom you were with, mm-hmm.

Susan M. Yeah, yeah. So there was a bit of that happened. And then came Re-imagining.

Mark B. Actually, maybe before that, you chaired the committee for the Book of Worship.

Susan M. Oh, Book of Worship.

Mark B. But that was sort of leading into this. So did you request that, to be on there?

Susan M. No.

Mark B. Again you were nominated?

Susan M. I was assigned on it.

Mark B. You were assigned.

Susan M. I was assigned by probably the chair of... What was the Discipleship? It wasn't the...what was it?

Mark B. The General Board of Discipleship.

Susan M. I didn't know I was on the General Board of Discipleship. I don't remember, but I was, yes, I was on that committee, and I had the leadership, Andy Langford and I can't think of the person.

Mark B. Hoyt Hickman?

Susan M. Huh?

Mark B. Hoyt Hickman, was he involved?

Susan M. Yes. Oh, yeah. What a real saint, too.

Mark B. Yeah.

Susan M. Asked me to chair it. So I chaired it. And I thought it was a good experience—

Mark B. It was a lot of work. That was a lot of work, wasn't it?

Susan M. It was a lot of work, and there was controversy. And I told you—Ole Borgen was on it from Sweden, and a very nice person, but deeply conservative, and we were pushing the boundaries of trying to open up some of the inclusive language. And we had one, it was Baker Woman, and that was just too much for him, and he brought a charge on that not to be accepted. And the irony of that is I was automatically off the Judicial Council when I was elected bishop, but as head of the Book of Worship committee I went before that group in their first meeting of the new quadrennium, not as their member, but bringing the defense of Baker Woman. And that's—I mean, there's all these little twists and turns and stuff, yeah.

Mark B. Yes. God was at work in many ways there.

Susan M. Oh my god, yeah.

Mark B. Yeah. Yeah.

Susan M. Okay now—

Mark B. So you're still in...so you're doing the episcopacy and you're in the Philadelphia area.

Susan M. And first tell me about this...it was the Year of the Woman in the UN, the Year of the Woman. It was years, all kinds of celebrations.

Mark B. Yeah, the Decade of Women, mm-hmm.

Susan M. And so there's going to be this Re-imagining Conference in maybe Chicago. I can't remember.

Mark B. Minneapolis.

Susan M. Thank you.

Mark B. That's okay. Minneapolis.

Susan M. Do you correct me or is that taken out of the script and that just comes out Minneapolis?

Mark B. It was in November of 1993.

Susan M. Oh my god, you've got really good...okay. Yeah. And I just assumed other women bishops would be going, you know. So I get to—it was Council of Bishops time, and it was Epworth by the Sea, as I recall.

Mark B. It's in Georgia, yeah.

Susan M. And so I was asking, you know, some of the—there were a few of us. And I was are you going, you going? No, I'm not going. Well, I'd already gotten my ticket and everything, so... In the middle of it—and I think that was in one of the quotes in the thing—I'm pulling my suitcase right by their meeting, not realizing I had to to get to where I was going, to get the van that was taking me to the airport. So I went to it, and it was the most empowering experience of worship and liturgy that I had ever been in—

Mark B. 2,000 women there. There were 2,000 women there, yeah.

Susan M. —bar none. And it was exhilarating. And I thought it was exhilarating, and that was it. And that became the focal point to put clergywomen in their place as they were beginning to emerge—and it worked, by the way—by the right wing of the church, and I think the Koch brothers. And all hell broke loose. And I was the only bishop there, and so I took a lot of it, as well as the head of the UMW at the time.

Mark B. There was a lot of backlash in the Presbyterian Church also, so yeah.

Susan M. Yeah. Yeah.

Mark B. But you...yeah, you got—

Susan M. But vicious, nasty, just godawful things. And I'm sure it was also tied to the women's movement and homosexuality, there was a tie there. And they also had sexuality and all this. So you can't limit, you know, how they were going after me, for instance, from what they thought. And it was a really, really bad time. And I remember at a council meeting I had to speak—well, anyways, let me go on. So it was very bad.

Mark B. How did you deal with it?

Susan M. Okay.

Mark B. How did you handle all that? What was it like for you?

Susan M. Well, I ended up getting cancer. In any case, I called Jeanne Audrey Powers, and she talked to the people in the Women's Division, and we decided to have a news conference. And I don't know if you have that in there.

Mark B. Mm-hmm.

Susan M. And I got some of the women to sign a statement who didn't go to it, but which signed it, some of the bishop women from us. And we held it in New York, and we responded to—the critique was so bad we responded to it. And I remember Phil...Forrest Stith came and supported us, took the train, which was really, really powerful.

Mark B. He was bishop then, correct?

Susan M. Right.

Mark B. He was bishop then, yeah, mm-hmm.

Susan M. Yeah, okay. See, I had all these things I remembered last night and I don't remember today. It was an awful time. And then in the middle of that two of the pastors in the area wrote a book called "Sophia," and that just doubled it. And then it really became an attack on me, and they wanted me to do something about it. And one of them had been at Drew, and did a worship service, and used the word Sophia, so what's his name, Oden, Tom Oden there started going after Heather Elkins, so we became very bonded in this experience. And they...someone from the conference brought charges against Susan Cady and...

Mark B. Hal Taussig.

Susan M. Hal Taussig. And I called a meeting with Mark to meet with them and he refused to meet with them. When e refused to meet them said I'm not passing it, bye-bye. If you can't, as colleagues, sit down and talk first. It was a gift to me because I wouldn't have... I'm, again, I think I would have passed it on anyways. So then the focus became me, and so charges were brought against me. And my colleagues unfortunately sent it on, so I had to go through the Committee on Investigation and everything that I wasn't doing my duty.

And I don't feel they should have because they said well, it's better to get it out in the open, and I'm saying it's another way it gets affirmed. The more it goes along, it gets, you know, it gets affirmed. Western—this is another thing I think I said to you the other day, the Pennsylvania conference, Western Pennsylvania, voted to condemn me, censor me or something. I don't think ever a conference anywhere in the history of this church has censored another bishop.

Mark B. Another bishop in another conference.

Susan M. And I don't know why—George Bashore is a wonderful person—why he didn't say it's out of order. You know, it got press there, and it didn't get enormous press, but I was stunned, you know, stunned that they did it. And I remember one council of bishops meeting I was asked to speak about Sophia, and Dick Looney was asked to speak against Sophia. It wasn't a long conversation, but we were asked to say something. And I remember that's how the council dealt with it. But it—

Mark B. Did you have some support from folks in the council—

Susan M. Women.

Mark B. —or that was not so much?

Susan M. Not.

Mark B. The other women, mm-hmm.

Susan M. And not a lot. And the interesting thing is some of the other women bishops would talk to me about it after Denver. And we haven't gotten to Denver 15 yet.

Mark B. We'll get there.

Susan M. Oh, we all have things coming at us right now, get used to it. And that's true, but not at the level of some of the nastiness. In fact, the person in Nashville, the communication person, called me and said watch your back. He was monitoring the right wing. This was the right wing way back then. And he was monitoring the rhetoric and he said, Bishop, you've got to watch yourself.

One of the established pastors in Eastern Pennsylvania who had been DS and council director and was now in a church at the end of his career called me and said Bishop, watch your back. I don't know what that meant, and nothing happened. But that was the level of feeling.

The other thing I would say—and this speaks more to the sexuality issue—I can't tell you what it's like to sit in front of a whole annual conference, your face is big up there on the screen, and listen to the rhetoric on homosexuality, most of them knowing who I was, waiting for a twist of the lips, or a curl of the lips, or a blink of the eye, and having to be steady. I can't tell you what a hell that was like going through. And that's one of my memories on that. Because you can't blink. You have to be fair.

And it's not even as if they thought you were just the bishop. But most of them knew. And it was hell.

And during that time, and that was going, I began to absorb things, because I'm an introvert. And I started gaining weight. And just before I left that area I had breast cancer. And it's interesting to know that something like four of the first six women bishops have had breast cancer, maybe...I think the number's maybe...but it's a lot.

Mark B. It's a lot of them, yes.

Susan M. And I...there's no...now I may have eventually had a vulnerability for it, but I don't think it would have happened.

Mark B. Yeah, the huge stress you were under. The huge, huge...

Susan M. It was a huge, huge...

Mark B. mm-hmm.

Susan M. And I wanted to say, which I said to you yesterday, it wasn't just the homosexual issue and who I am, it was also I was a woman, and I was the first woman in the jurisdiction. And thirdly, I was a whole different cultural level. I was the child of the '60s in a '40s job, at that time. The culture around the bishops, the way they did things—I mean, I remember going to their first meeting, the meeting at the end of the first quadrennium, and we were collecting new president of the council stuff,

and they whispered who I was to vote for. It was like the Judicial Council all over again. Well, it was because one of the jurisdictions was supposed to be at this time. I didn't know all that. I was just whispered who to vote for. It's that kind of culture.

Mark B. And also it was like you're not supposed to talk if you're a new bishop. You're not allowed to talk in the council?

Susan M. They prefer you don't talk for a while.

Mark B. For a while, and to be silent in the...

Susan M. Yeah, yeah, uh-huh. But there were all these subtle things that I knew nothing about because they weren't part of my style or what I would...my culture or my community. And it was learning it. And then we had two things—the big thing that happened that really blew that, and I think that really affected how people saw me in the Council, was, you know, I said something to you about that yesterday. I get a call from Barbara Troxell and Jeanne Audrey Powers—Susan, when are the bishops going to speak up on, support the issue of homosexuality? I want to say before that I was a delegate at the '52 conference when the language came in.

Mark B. '72.

Susan M. '72, excuse me, '72 when it came in. Last minute. I remember going to the restroom and seeing weeping people, leadership people, is all I'm going to say. And never in my mind would I say it would take 50 years. Never,

ever, ever. To have been there at that moment. I would also say that I believe it became the issue around the movement, because at that time they had begun to make rules that there had to be more women and people of color on boards and agencies of the church and in leadership positions, and we got what we have now in our culture, a white backlash.

Mark B. Backlash, mm-hmm.

Susan M. And that's really important to know. And it started there. Okay, now I go back to—

Mark B. So Jeanne Audrey and Barbara reach you—

Susan M. So I said—

Mark B. Leading up to the 1996 General Conference. It was before that. Was it the fall before? Do you remember when it was they reached out to you?

Susan M. Uh...

Mark B. Was it just shortly before the General Conference?

Susan M. Just shortly before.

Mark B. Shortly before the General Conference, okay. So May of '96.

Susan M. So I'm thinking about it, so I draft one with Jean. She's a very good writer. So she helps me draft one.

Mark B. And the intent of the statement was to say?

Susan M. Say we all don't agree on the issue, and is it time to look differently at—I can't remember. I have a copy of it, but—

Mark B. But that's the gist of it, yeah.

Susan M. That's the gist of it. And I thought, well, I'll send it to Phil Wogaman and see if it passes muster for that sort of thing. He sent back and he said good for you, or something like that. And so I called Fritz Mutti because he has two sons who died of AIDS, and I knew where he was on the issue, and said can you corral people you feel comfortable asking, and I'll do the same? And we ended up with 15.

Mark B. There were 11 active bishops and four retired bishops.

Susan M. Could be.

Mark B. Yeah, yeah.

Susan M. You're more detailed. Remember, I'm 82.

Mark B. I'm just helping.

Susan M. So the next day we alerted the press and we did the statement, and... Maybe we did it the night before, I don't know. All I know is I got up on stage the next day where I sit next to people I normally sit next to, and one of them is a well-known, gentle bishop who...in any case, they were so furious that he turned his back on me the whole rest of the session, and so did a lot of others. And we had a special—they called a special meeting of

the Council, and we were really raked over the coals. I mean, I can't even begin to tell you, it was so awful.

And I don't think any of us—now maybe some of the older ones that signed it—understood that we had broken a major protocol. And again, I go back to my culture of the '60s. Why can't we? And then I heard about Mel Wheatley, and how they treated him when he refused to sign the Episcopal address. But you marched in line, and you always look like, you supported each other. Now, behind the scenes you might do things or whatever, but you don't break that. And I know one bishop, a younger one, said, you know, you set it back years in the Council and everything, and I think it's just the opposite. It opened it up to say they have different opinions. And it's so important for the gay community to know.

Mark B. Yeah, it was huge. It was a huge...

Susan M. I thought so.

Mark B. Yes.

Susan M. But boy, there was a... And then I told you the story where the rumor is it never happens until you're there, but the story was that Herb was interested—he was the bishop at the time in New England, and I was going to go there, and I talked to some people. And Herb, in the beginning of the General Conference before this, came out and showed me the house I was going to be living in and all this other, and that threw everything out,

because New England refused to take me. And the woman on the episcopacy committee was with the other person. I don't want to give any names—but the other person was very close to the bishop. She said I tried so hard, Susan, but he wouldn't budge. And so...

And I thought at the time oh my, I'm going to the Albany Area. I was kind of excited about New England. I went to seminary in Boston. And it was a gift beyond measure that God provides where you need to go.

Mark B. Say more about that. Why was it a gift to go to Albany?

Susan M. Oh, well, the area was liberal. It was welcoming. Yes, there were conservatives. I can function with conservative areas. But it was welcoming, and it healed me. And I went just before I was to move and I found out I had breast cancer, and I had surgery. And I remember having to pack, show Bishop Weaver, who followed me, the house and everything, and I was still recovering from breast cancer. And they helped heal me and let me be me, and it was just a glorious, glorious experience.

Mark B. Yeah, good.

[INSERT ADDENDUM]

Mark B. So we're going to talk about the General Conference in 2000 with Soulforce.

Susan M. Just something brief, just to get in the middle where it goes.

Mark B. Yeah, go for it.

Susan M. Oh, just that the next session was in Cleveland.

Mark B. 2000, mm-hmm.

Susan M. And again, the movement, the strength of the gay movement within the church was getting stronger and stronger.

Mark B. Mel White was there with Soulforce.

Susan M. And that, oh my gosh, I remember that. And the protest at that church and all that going on. And we got word that there was going to be a protest on the floor of the session when it opened up. And just to say when I heard about it, I said I can't not be there. And so when it came, they called the police in. I'm doing a short version of it.

I got up and as I got up I saw Joe Sprague got up, and we both walked down and stood there with them, and then we were arrested also and were in prison for a little bit. So that's really all, just to say I remember the reaction of the conference when I got back. It was either my god, thank god you did it, or oh my god, it's another thing you did. And I think that's enough to say on that.

Mark B. Good, good.

[BACK TO ORIGINAL RECORDING]

Mark B. Any other highlights of the time there in Albany as bishop?

Susan M. At one time. I can't remember it now.

Mark B. That's okay. That's fine.

Susan M. You don't want to stir it up for me anyway. There were some other things I wanted to reflect on, but I can't think of them right now. Anyways.

Mark B. Yeah, so you decided to—go ahead.

Susan M. So towards the end of that time several things had happened. One was that Jean, who was serving the church in Gaithersburg at that time, she had been a District Superintendent. In fact I think there was a time when we might have been one of the first clergy couples in a cabinet in the church. There may have been another somewhere, but I don't remember it. Now after that there has been, and right after that, but I think we were the first clergy couple. We were one of the first. Tee-hee-hee.

She got a virus that was misdiagnosed, and the result being it affected her brain and her balance and her brain works on reserve all the time, and she had to go on disability. So I've got a partner who's—in some ways that was a gift because she had to go on disability and she was free to be more involved with me. But she was also having more trouble, some seizures and stuff for a while, until she got on medicine, so there was that factor. My mother had died and my father was diagnosed with cancer. But thirdly, I was burned out.

Mark B. You were exhausted.

Susan M. I can't even tell you. And, you know, at that time no one used the word burned out. They used it after Simone Biles' gymnastic thing, and then it became a big thing, you know, everyone's talking about being burned out. You have to remember that I was burned out. I kept getting sick.

And I will never forget one middle of the night I was in Binghamton, New York in a hotel for an event down there, and I literally just sat up in bed and said get out. You have permission to get out. I don't know where it came from. I wasn't dreaming it. I hadn't thought about it in that way. It just said get out. And so—

Mark B. You took early retirement.

Susan M. Well, I had...no, I didn't take early retirement. I had to retire for health reasons.

Mark B. Oh, okay.

Susan M. So I went to see my doctor and talked to him. I was concerned about who was going to follow me, so I called Susan Hassinger, which is un-protocol, and said Susan, I know it was difficult for you to retire and you were... She's a good friend. She was on the staff in Pennsylvania before. I said would you be interested? And she said I think so.

So I went to the next Jurisdictional bishop's meeting and said I need to announce I'm going to retire for health reasons. I keep getting sick. I'm not...I just have no energy. I said I... And then I used my father. I could

never use Jean as a reason. And I also have someone to replace me. And you don't do that, you know. The College chooses. And they were so stunned they accepted it.

Mark B. *[Laughs.]*

Susan M. And she was there, too, in the room. Let me just say something more about the College. The older people in the College, the Matthews and the Aults and Roy Nichols, there was a style about them, and a caring about them, and a welcoming about them that was really wonderful and nurtured me, who was the young kid in the block. And I'm very grateful. And Joe Yeakel, of course. And then the later groups that came in were far more, they've been far more in a corporate mode or style. And the result being less interested in the retired, more into whatever the new process is and all that.

And I'm not saying this is all bad or some of it isn't needed, but retired people were not needed. They always had meetings, learning sessions before we came. And I, you know, I said one time, and Forrest agreed, says, you know, we like to learn and, you know, we have some wisdom. But no, they need to because, you know, they're real active in there right now. And of course, you know, they do business over that time, too, you know. And so the culture changed.

And as the issue of homosexuality came up, I'm not talking more—I probably need to talk more about that issue than I have, and you let me

know. They wouldn't deal with it. And there were several times that I just was devastated when a resolution came in from the jurisdiction to support people and they wouldn't approve it to go on. And even though they knew it probably would be turned down, their excuse was well, the Judicial Council won't accept it. But instead of making a statement—

Mark B. Right, right, mm-hmm.

Susan M. They wouldn't do it. And I was just...I just was sick. They couldn't even do that. And maybe more than I should say is they had made it clear at the last jurisdictions they would not consecrate a gay bishop and a gay bishop was running, whether it got or not. Even though they said we are praying, and discerning in who gets elected, we know it's by God, they wouldn't. And that was just like the final thing—

Mark B. That was the final straw.

Susan M. —for me. But then when it got passed, my god, they're just out there saying all kinds of wonderful things. And I'm not... I like them as people, and they're good leaders. Hear me. But, you know. And then I see what was helping them out West, you know, and Karen being there, and then two more being there, and the next one, and I thought it would have been safe for them, quote/unquote, whatever was worrying them. It just...it so upset me. And that's...

Mark B. You said in your retirement you've been getting active in the local community. You had not been able to do that a lot. So you've been putting a lot of energy here into coastal Delaware, right?

Susan M. Yes. I decided when I retired, first of all, I'd be here for Jean. And we needed some... You know, again, 50 years we survived in the system, and we were both exhausted. And I want to say I was angry about some of those things. But since I've been disappointed in the church, but not angry. The church has given me everything. All my experiences, all my opportunities, helped me to be who I am. And I didn't retire early because I was angry or anything. Disappointed, yes. But too much good. And it's always a journey.

So I retired down here. I said this is my chance to get involved in community and get to know people. Well, I went overboard and I became active in the Democratic district down here, and helped with elections, and monitored voting and voting times and all that. I was assigned to a committee that did crisis helping in an ecumenical way down here, and we developed the Community Resource Center, and I was a day manager of that. And the baby pantry, I worked with that. I became on the board on the farmers market and was coordinating the green tent, which was an environmental group. And several other things. I'll just say I just got very involved, and got to know the community. Taught classes at church, preached occasionally.

Mark B. And that was fulfilling for you, that was gratifying, right?

Susan M. Yeah, but there was another thing. It was freeing. This community is welcoming. People knew we were gay. They were gay. It was just... You don't know what it is like if your whole life has been lived in a bubble, in a sense. Well, you may know in terms of things you had in the church.

Mark B. Things I've heard, mm-hmm.

Susan M. But oh my god, all of a sudden, you know, we're who we are. You didn't have to announce it, but you could just be who you were. And I did not realize the level of how much that made a difference. And so that's...

Mark B. So even with all the health issues you're still, you've chugged along.

Susan M. Oh, yeah.

Mark B. Still going.

Susan M. Yeah, so...

Mark B. Yay.

Susan M. I think I would say... I don't know what else I would say. But anyways, that's pretty much...

Mark B. Yeah, so do you want to summarize? How would you like to be remembered? If you were going to look back on the story and, you know, when you think of the things people should take from your life, remember.

Susan M. I think I broke barriers. I think I was quiet about it in some ways. In other ways I wasn't. So that, you know, there's not a...I don't know if there's a lot of people that know much about it. And that was not my reason. It's a different time. I'm grateful for what's happened. I'm disappointed when I was in it that I knew, especially the younger people, were angry that I never came out. And they never understood I could come out and be gone and there wouldn't be any presence, or there might be some presence, but they wouldn't have my presence.

Mark B. Yeah, your presence.

Susan M. And because of health issues for Jean it was important. So I think I was disappointed a little in that. But since I retired I've stepped back from the general church. Now I'm on their Zoom all the time, and I call... So several of us bishops who call and retired and have our opinion. So it's not that I don't know what's going on. But I stopped going to the meetings. And a lot of us did when we retired because we weren't really a part of it, and it's a different culture now, and a different leadership group. And I'm proud of what they're doing in a tough time. I'm not going to negate anything.

I think people wondered whether we'd marry. And I think I said to you if it had been 10, 15 years ago, when we both had the—Jean right now is not in very good health, and I maintain--at this point, after the pandemic, I basically do caregiving, with a lot of help. Her children are helpful, and

we have help through the program we're in, but it exhausts me. It really does exhaust me, so I'm not in...

Mark B. Good.

Susan M. But I think integrally that I helped people, especially gay people, survive in the system. And I did. Didn't make a big deal about it, but I made sure they had good appointments, I made sure their story didn't get told, a whole lot of things. Appointed people.

Mark B. I knew I could always call you on the phone and you would respond, Susan.

Susan M. Yes, yeah.

Mark B. Whatever the situation was, you provided counsel and advice numerous times. I greatly appreciated that, Susan.

Susan M. Yeah. I don't know, the other thing that was really a blessing was the women bishops. We were small. And I'm a party person. I was the social one. So I had an annual Biswitch party at the council meetings for just the women bishops, and we'd dress up and we'd go off campus. And I always send Halloween cards to them every year, and... I mean, there's all kinds of stories around it. But we used to... That has really been a treat. Now some of them have died, or are very sick, or not part of anything—a lot of them are not part of anything anymore. But that was a special thing. I'm kind of wandering now.

Mark B. That's okay. Good. So is there anything else you want to say? This has been a great interview. Thank you so much for your time, Susan. This is an important historical record.

Susan M. Yeah. I think that's it.

Mark B. Okay.

Susan M. I'd better write a whole bunch of things, and I think I will remember better and write about it. You've got enough on me. There's other people to talk to now.

Mark B. We've got a good... That's excellent. Thank you.

Susan M. No, that's okay. I'll leave it.

[End of recording.]