RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RUTH ANNE KOENICK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Molly Graham: This is an oral history interview with Ruth Anne Koenick on September 25th, 2015 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The interviewers are Molly Graham and Jessica Friedman.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: I listened back to our last session, and we got to when you were in Florida and starting a family.

Ruth Anne Koenick: Oh, okay. Do you just want me to talk again, or do you have questions you'd like to ask me?

MG: We have questions, but if you could start talking about life there and I think you also started teaching down there, too.

RK: I taught one course. It was really nothing special. Probably the best thing that came out of the four years my husband and I spent in Florida was our son. While I was there, also my father passed away. I had a baby, and I got to spend time with him, that was really nice, for the first couple of years of his life. Joshua, who was named for my father, he was a sweet little kid and a good little baby. That's mostly what I did then.

I couldn't find a job that I liked. I couldn't find anything that was really enticing to me that paid me enough money to make it worthwhile. Then, there was a reorganization at the college my husband was at, and his job was eliminated. We spent close to a year really [with] him looking for a job and spending time with our son, which was really nice. Then, he got a job here, and we moved to New Jersey.

He moved here first, and I lived with my mother for a while. Josh and I lived with my mom in Maryland. Then, we lived actually over on Busch Campus in the Johnson Apartments, which were really a dump. I don't know if they're any better now, but, boy, were they a dump then, oh, my goodness. The only nice part about that, besides that the three of us were together, was that it was family housing during the summer, a lot of it, so there were lots of kids on the playground. It was really a dump living there. It had roaches. The floor was over the boiler room, so you couldn't step on the floor. It was just a dump, no air conditioning. It was pretty ugly, but we survived it. Then, we moved here full time, all three of us, in maybe October.

MG: Of what year?

RK: I want to say 1980, '80 or '81.

MG: Would you be too warm if we did turn the air conditioner off?

RK: Nope, not at all.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: Here we go. Now, we can hear you.

RK: Okay.

MG: Let me know if you get too warm.

RK: I turned it on for our comfort, so I don't care. I didn't have it on before you all got here. I can't remember if it was '80 or '81, one or the other. I went to work at the [Middlesex] County Rape Crisis Center [and] started there in November. Josh went to the Livingston Daycare Center on campus. We settled in. We had bought a house, a house that neither one of us loved, and really spent some time trying to look for someplace else. It took us a long time to get there. We were pretty much settled in. Paul, my husband, worked at Livingston. He used to walk Josh to daycare in a stroller, and then I picked him up. We were very settled in. I was really liking my work, at least some of my work I liked. It was like Josh got pretty connected with playing soccer. We developed some friends, one, two couples that we're still friends with now, all these years later. There's nothing exciting to tell about it there.

MG: I think we are trying to figure out the history of what became the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment. Was this an early iteration of that?

RK: Yes, and Mary was there before me. Mary was there maybe a year before me.

MG: Mary Taylor?

RK: Mary Taylor.

MG: Did you know Mary Elwood, who also was involved?

RK: I met Mary, Mary Elwood, but I did not know her. She was gone by the time I got there.

MG: What brought you to this position in the first place?

RK: Well, this had really been my passion. I probably said in the last one that Chris Courtois, Debbie Watts and I started working on this in the early '70s, and it became something that I was really interested in and thought that I was good at. I actually went to see Mary, because she was the coordinator at that point, Mary Taylor. She said, "We don't have a position available now." I said, "You should interview me anyway," and so she did. When a position became available, I was interviewed by other people and was offered the position.

MG: What was your title and your day-to-day responsibilities?

RK: I think I was a social work something; I can't remember. Mary's probably got a better memory than I do. Social worker, I think I was just like a regular social worker, which is not my background, but that's what I was called there. Then, I got some promotion; I can't remember what it was either. This is like thirty-five years ago, so I just don't remember what it was. I had a couple of different responsibilities. My primary was the rape crisis center. I also had an

inpatient unit. I had an all-male unit, and I did some outpatient work in the alcohol treatment center.

MG: Can you talk more about the all-male unit?

RK: This was a hospital for the chronically ill. I had a unit of all men who were chronically ill patients, and they were elderly, most of them. I visited them. I advocated for them for certain needs. I met with their families. I did whatever kind of social work, medical social work, that was needed. It was all new to me. I am not a social worker by training and by education, and I was kind of thrown into this. At least at that point, I was a pretty quick learner, so I could do it. Parts of it were nice. Then, when the new building was built, I moved into the new building and had the only locked unit. I had people who were wanderers, Alzheimer's, dementia.

MG: Wanderers, meaning they would wander out of their room potentially.

RK: Yeah, wandering out of the hospital, so they had to be in a locked unit.

MG: In the all-male unit, that had nothing to do with sexual assault.

RK: None of it had anything to do with sexual assault. The social work department there had three major responsibilities: the rape crisis center, the chronically ill hospital, and the outpatient alcohol treatment center.

MG: Would you go to each office?

RK: No, it was all in one office.

MG: Okay.

RK: It was in the social work building.

MG: What was the address? I was curious about where it moved to physically.

RK: It might have been where the rape crisis center is now. Whoever knew the address? It was the annex, Dr. Chung's house and then the social work department, so maybe it's where it is now. I don't remember.

MG: In Edison?

RK: Yeah, same place probably.

MG: When you said it moved buildings, did it move very far?

RK: No, it didn't move. I was just saying where the three buildings were on that side of Parsonage Road.

MG: Okay.

RK: If you came from the mall, and you went to the traffic light, where the park was down to the left, and you turned right, the first building is the annex with the hospice behind it, at least that's what it was, and then it was the medical director's house, and then it was the social service department.

MG: How long had the center been around when you came on?

RK: Not all that long. My understanding, and this is oral history, but my understanding is that Joyce Munkacsi, who was the first female prosecutor, she was in charge of sex crimes before she became a judge. They really began to look at, this was probably when Mary Elwood was around too, began to look at some of the problems with prosecution, and there were two main areas. This, again, is oral history, as far as I know. One was that survivors were reluctant to come forward and pursue this, and, two, when they did, there was not good evidence that was taken, nor were they good witnesses because they hadn't gotten any intervention. My understanding is that she went to a couple of hospitals and [said], "Will you house this unit?" and they all said no. Then, they went to the county hospital, which began to house it, and that's how the rape crisis center got started, my understand of it. I could be wrong.

MG: I want to hear about that first year working there.

RK: It was a bizarre place. [laughter] It was very old-fashioned. If it was good enough when it was a TB [tuberculosis] hospital, it was good enough then, it was good enough now. It was a very hierarchical structure. It was not always an easy place to be part of. It was a challenge sometimes to really do the kinds of work in the medical unit that you needed to do, in the outpatient unit as well as some of the rape care program stuff. It was a challenge. What we really came to do is to rely on each other. The assistant director there, she was an interesting woman, and [it was] not always pleasant because she was a challenge to be around. The director for the social work department, he was also a bit of a challenge. Mary, Susan and I were very good friends. We became very close, and we just really helped each other. There were four offices upstairs. It was mine, Mary's, Susan's, and the assistant director, so we spent a lot of time together, the three of us.

MG: Would you discuss cases and get advice and give advice, things like that?

RK: We did just about everything. We usually had lunch together. We worked together if we had to stay around later. Mary and I ran a group together. I think more than once we ran a group. Mary and I talked a lot about cases. Susan was much smarter about the other kind of social work that went on there than I was. We did fun things together. We took tap dancing lessons at Mickey Rooney's Talent Town. Susan got pregnant, and she was a pretty high-risk pregnancy, so we talked babies a lot. It was really women working with other women and really liking each other. We're still friends today. When Mary was here in July, Mary and Susan and Susan's granddaughter came over to have lunch with me, and my daughter was there, who they knew from the time she was conceived. It was just we worked together very well, but Mary and I were the primary on-call people. Our spouses were also friends, so on Friday nights, we all

played bridge together. We'd go to her house and play bridge and have pizza and put her son and my son to bed, or we'd go to my house and just reverse [it]. We spent a lot of time together.

MG: Were there patients from this time period or people you saw or counseled that stand out to you?

RK: You mean for the rape crisis center?

MG: Yes.

RK: Oh, yeah, absolutely. There are a number of patients that stand out to me and ones that just have really never left my heart. There were some that you just don't ever forget.

MG: Are there any that you can talk about anonymously or share a story about?

RK: There are probably two I could talk about. One was a woman, she's younger than I am now, but she was probably in her fifties. She was abducted and raped leaving work. Her husband used to call me and yell at me because he'd say, "If you would just stop talking to her about this, everything would be fine." She was in our group. It was pretty sad because she really struggled with this. This was so out of the range of her fault. She just really struggled. There was another woman who was abducted and kept for a longer period of time than the usual amount of time that this would happen, and she became really dehydrated. Every time we talked about it, she would need to get water. There was somebody who was raped on her way to work. There's probably a half a dozen that really stick in my mind about the trauma that they experienced. It was interesting. It was very interesting work. There's so much that we all do every day that's kind of meaningless, and watching people get better and work so hard to get better, it's a reason I got out of bed in the morning.

MG: What was being done differently than rape crisis centers today in terms of intervention and treatment and stuff like that?

RK: I don't know what's really being done differently now. I think that there's more rape crisis centers around. In those days, they were really closing their doors. I remember Mary and I went to New York to go to a conference, because there was nothing here in New Jersey. We went and we took the train and we took the subway down to wherever this was. We went to a place Paul and Jimmy's for lunch, and I remember that because my husband's name is Paul and her husband, at the time, [his] name was Jimmy, so we went there for lunch. We're sitting there and thinking, "We can do this. We can do this in New Jersey." That was really kind of the start of thinking about a coalition and trying to get funding and trying to be an advocate.

There was block grant money that became available and Mary and I deciding we could go testify about this. I don't know if this is really about intervention, but there's more people working on this to support each other and I think that builds for stronger intervention and response. I don't know clinically if there's so much that's different. The issues are the same.

MG: Was any part of your work educating the public? How would you educate the public?

RK: Well, we used to talk more about survivors than we did about perpetrators, and now we talk a lot about perpetration. I think that's really needed. I mean, they're the ones responsible for this, so we need to educate people about their behavior, that it's a sense of entitlement, that it's predatory. It's all those things and more. We didn't do that then, because we didn't have a lot of good research. There's much better, not a lot, but there's still better research out now than there was. Mary and I used to go out together and talk to high schools. We used to laugh. She went through Catholic school up through twelfth grade, and so when we'd go to a Catholic school, I got to say "the words" because I could have cared less.

We would do a lot of this together. We spent some time at the Adult Diagnostic Treatment Center, talking to people who had been found guilty of sexual violence to learn more and to kind of share with them some of the things that survivors were telling us. We didn't really have grants in those days. I think the first grant came through when I was leaving, and that was in 1990. The grants, the money that we had was minimal, and so it wasn't really a requirement. If somebody called and said, "Could you come to my school?" we went to your school. If somebody said, "Could you be in this program?" we went and did it, but we didn't really seek it out the way it's sought out now and that's a really profound difference. We didn't talk about prevention the way that we talk about it. It was more risk reduction than prevention and I don't know that that was particularly helpful, but that's what was kind of what we did in those days.

MG: You talked about doing group sessions. Do you mean group therapy sessions?

RK: Yeah, yeah. Mary and I did them together.

MG: Go ahead, Jess.

Jessica Friedman: Did you ever find it difficult to go to work every day? Because some of these are very heavy topics, did you ever find this difficult?

RK: Now or then, which are we talking [about]? Both, [do] you want to know?

JF: Yes, all right.

RK: Yes and no. When I would be on call and get called out, I would come home at three o'clock in the morning sometimes. I'd call Mary or she'd call me to talk. I would always sit on the corner of one of my children's beds and just kind of sit there, in the early days I only had one child, but just to remind myself of the innocence that's in the world. I felt less [bothered] by the trauma that I was dealing with than I did by the stupid, dumb administrative rules and the way some people behaved there. That was more troublesome to me than any of the stuff that people talked to me about. I think that I really learned really well to kind of set it aside and take care of myself and do a lot of self-care. It may not have looked like that to other people, but that's very much what I was doing. Does that answer your question?

JF: That answers my question.

RK: Yeah. I don't see clients so much anymore, but there were times where I would just close the door and just weep. It was sad, and then you pick yourself up and you move on.

MG: Were you ever asked to testify at trials?

RK: [Yes].

MG: What is that experience like?

RK: It was interesting. I don't have a fear of going to court. There's not a lot of things that really frighten me that are experiences like that. It was just interesting. The last time I went to court, we had a guy who had raped two women here. The first woman did not want to come [forward]. I knew her. I talked with her. She didn't want to come forward or pursue anything. Then, when he raped somebody else, I went back to her and said, "You're still here. He's done this to somebody else. Would you consider now?" and she said yes. This guy was found guilty of two counts. The stupid judge let him out on his own recognizance and he flew the country, so he's right now in Nigeria probably doing this to other people. The court proceeding wasn't horrible; it was what the judge did. It was okay. I didn't love it. It would not be my first choice, but it didn't make me uncomfortable. I'm not easily intimidated by people. I didn't go often but maybe half a dozen times.

MG: Do you have a relationship with the police officers in the community, working together to help with cases?

RK: Back when I was at the rape crisis center?

MG: Yes.

RK: Yeah, we had some. We had some that were really wonderful that we liked when an officer brought somebody in. Then, we had some that if I was ever raped in that township, I would crawl on my hands and knees to another one and lie about where it happened because the cops were so bad, but that was not the usual.

One of my favorite stories was we had a nurse Mrs. Ashford. She was about the size of a peanut, and she was an older African American woman. One of the police officers came in from New Brunswick, and he was a rather large guy. He was trying to bully me. Mrs. Ashford knew him from church, and, boy, his behavior changed when she lit into him. There were things like that.

Most of the police officers, except in one or two townships, really wanted to do the right thing. Occasionally, it was hard for them, because we'd have guys come in who were assigned to homicide and they weren't used to live people and so you had to really help them. Sometimes, I had to go to another hospital, like there was somebody at St. Peter's and I had to go pick up a kit and take it to St. Peter's and help the intern or the resident figure out what to do and help them with it, but it was okay. I think most of the police want to do the right thing; sometimes they don't know how to do the right thing.

I had a really good relationship with the Rutgers police. We tried, but so many people don't want to come forward. They go to the rape crisis center and that's the end of it, but there were a couple of times that people said, "You know what, I'm going to get that guy." We worked together really as a team to try to make that happen.

MG: Sometimes going to trial is just as traumatizing.

RK: It can be, yeah.

MG: Do you coach people through that experience, or do you encourage or discourage that?

RK: I don't encourage or discourage anything; I tell them what the options are. Sometimes, like for grand jury, I would go and take the person down there and meet the prosecutor, let them see what the grand jury room looked like, talk with them about the process. We had a very close relationship with the prosecutor in those days, the assistant prosecutor for sex crimes, and helped them know what was going to happen. Then, of course, [during the] grand jury [proceeding], I couldn't go in, and I would sit outside and wait for them. For court, if I wasn't testifying, I would go and I would sit so that if you were sitting up there, you could look at me and not look at anyone else. There are lots of ways to support people, and we would always find ways to do that.

MG: You mentioned earlier that a couple people who stand out to you were women that were abducted or it was a stranger that had abducted them. Was that the majority of the cases, where it was a stranger?

RK: A lot of the people who made it to the rape crisis center were stranger assaults. It was very different than what I see here and very different than I think most rapes that happen. Many of the people I saw were stranger ones.

MG: That is what I am trying to get at. Maybe you can explain or say why that is.

RK: Because stranger ones aren't going to feel as judged as somebody who knew the person, who had a relationship or had a drink with them. Most of the ones that I saw were ones where there was not a prior relationship, and so that was more of what I saw, while at the same time we did see a fair amount of people who were non-stranger rapes, but they were not particularly ones that wanted to pursue it. There was a serial rapist in Old Bridge, and I saw a lot of his victims, and finally got the guy. They were more the ones that would come to the rape crisis center or more the ones that would report it and want to pursue it. Non-stranger ones might come to the rape crisis center but not turn over the evidence.

MG: I was curious if the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s impacted your work at all.

RK: Certainly, there was fear. Instead of just worrying about pregnancy, people were now worried about contracting AIDS. I've been on the board of Hyacinth AIDS Foundation for twenty years. At the early parts of the epidemic, we didn't know a whole lot and everything that was done was done on gay men, and so transmission to women was really not something that a

lot of people knew about. When NJWAN, the New Jersey Women and AIDS Network, came into being, there certainly was more information available about HIV transmission in women, but in the early days, there was really not a lot of information. I think it impacted [my work], because we had to learn about it. We had to learn where people could get tested and what the testing protocols were, and that was very different.

MG: You were at the center for about ten years before you came.

RK: [Yes], here.

MG: Then, you came here to Rutgers. Talk to me about that transition.

RK: Well, the transition really happened because the hospital decided they weren't going to house the rape crisis center anymore. I was called into the assistant medical director's office one morning and told that they were not going to apply for funding from the Department of Health, which is where the funding came from then, and that they were going to close the rape crisis center as of the end of December and I was not to tell anyone and that I would always have a job there because I had seniority, it wasn't a problem. I was aghast. [laughter] I was horrified.

I walked back to my office, and there was a flyer on my desk from Rutgers. I called the person, I knew her, who was the hiring person, and I said, "Has this job been filled yet?" She said, I can remember her saying it now, "No, do you know somebody good for it?" I said, "Yes, me." A month later, I was hired, by the time they got through all of the process. Then, I started telling everyone. I was on the County Commission on the Status of Women, and I told everybody at the meetings. I couldn't get people as riled up about it as I was. I got in a lot of trouble for it. We were all unionized. I was doing out-of-title work. I was supposed to get extra money for that, and they took that away from me.

MG: This is the county.

RK: The county. I actually had to go to a lawyer. All of it amounted to five hundred dollars or seven hundred dollars. We're not talking a lot; we're talking petty cash. I did go to a lawyer to get them to direct the person to give me the money I was entitled to. It was a matter of principle. That money wasn't going to change my life, but it was the matter of principle. I was done there. I would have looked for another job had I not gotten the one here. I did not want to be there anymore, because they were so contrary to what they should be doing. I came here. I came here to work January 2nd, 1991.

MG: What happened with the center after you left?

RK: Somebody else took over. Mary had already left. Susan was around for a while longer, but she wasn't really a lot with the rape crisis center. I had minimal contact with them, except when I had to take somebody there.

MG: Talk to me about your work here at Rutgers and how it was different.

RK: My work here at Rutgers really started [with] a task force report that had made a series of recommendations of what Rutgers needed to do to both prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus, and so my job was to implement the task force report initially. My first client was a DV [domestic violence] client, and it became very clear to me very quickly that students here experience a broad range of crime and that if we were going to really address crime with students, we needed to do a lot more. I'm going on my twenty-sixth year. I've had nine supervisors. [laughter] I've reported to nine different people in different parts of the university. It's been a challenge in some ways, but I'm a student affairs person. My training is working with college students, so this was kind of like dying and going to heaven, merging my love of violence and prevention and response to college students. It's really what I wanted to do. Initially, a lot of people were really happy to see me here, some not so much.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RK: Initially, I was University-wide. It was just one of me, and I was running up to Newark to see clients. I was doing training in Camden, and it was pretty horrible. I'd had another baby by then. Molly was born in '87. She was three when I came here. It was really hard. It was hard to try to figure out ways to have a life and do my job. I think that my husband and my children really bore the brunt of the kind of work that I did and do. This kind of stuff doesn't happen on a schedule. I never had a nine-to-five job, so I missed things. We live very close, so I always, unless there was some horrible thing happening, always made it home for dinner. We always had dinner together, and then I would go back. I was double-booking programs. It was a mess.

Then, President Lawrence switched me to reporting to somebody different. [Editor's Note: Francis L. Lawrence served as the president of Rutgers University from 1990 to 2002.] I was going to leave, not because he switched me, but this person was horrible to me. She used to scream at me, and I would say, "If you continue to talk to me in that tone of voice, I'm going to leave your office." She was horrible. She's no longer here. She didn't last very long.

Then, I moved to somebody else for five years and then somebody for one year--thank God I got away from--he was also horrible. The person for five years was fabulous. Then, after I got away from him, I reported someplace that I never should have reported to. I was supposed to be there for a year while student affairs got reorganized, and transforming undergraduate education and all of that stuff happened. Instead of one year, I was with Sandy for seven years. She was really good to us. Then, I moved over to the vice president for student affairs. When he left, I moved to Karen Stubaus in Old Queens. I mean, it's been one thing after another; nine people I've reported to.

What was really good about it was that I always knew more than any of the people I've reported to, and so I was given a whole lot of flexibility and was seen as the expert. I think I got a grant for somebody; I started to get staff. In 2000, we were awarded a Department of Justice grant, and Lisa came in on that one, Lisa Smith. Right after that, we got a grant from the state to do some stuff. Laura Luciano came in on that one. What has been really nice about the University is that when those grants have gone by the wayside a long time ago, the University picked up their salaries, unlike some places that don't do that. We've been very fortunate, and we're getting another person. We have been very fortunate, and I think the University is very progressive in

the way they have addressed this for years. Students may not always know that, but this has been a really good place to have this issue. It's been a really good job for me. [Editor's Note: Ruth Anne Koenick headed the Rutgers Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance from 1991 until her retirement in 2016.]

MG: Do you mean violence prevention?

RK: Yeah. I would say eighty percent of the time it's been very supportive, maybe even more than that.

MG: The administration has been supportive of this.

RK: Starting from the top on down, from when Fran Lawrence was here. He came about the same time I did. He was so committed to this work. He did some really wonderful things for us. Every time he talked about us, he would open doors for us, close a few too, because not everybody liked him, but he would mostly open doors for us.

I was at a meeting once, where we were dealing with the harassment policy, and I was clearly the lowest paid person in the room, and nobody was particularly friendly to me. I didn't know a lot of people then. He [President Lawrence] had brought in a consultant from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], and she was very, very smart and really knew harassment really well. When we got together, with me having the lowest title in the room, she wanted us all to introduce ourselves. When we got around to me, I said what my name was, she said, "Oh, Fran talks so highly of you. I'm so glad to meet you." She was effusive. It changed the tone of the room with the way people talked to me. It's been a place where it's a pretty pretentious place sometimes, but it's also been a place that I've thrived and I've been encouraged and supported to do the work that I do.

MG: I am about halfway through the new Jon Krakauer book about rape on college campuses. I do not know if you can talk a little bit about the culture of drinking and sports and if that plays a role here. [Editor's Note: Molly Graham is referring to Jon Krakauer's book *Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town* (2015).]

RK: Well, I think it plays a role everywhere.

MG: Right.

RK: I have not read the book. I think that alcohol is used as a facilitator, and you get to college and people think that everybody's drinking, everybody's having sex, when in fact that's not true but that there is pressure. There is also a sense of entitlement that I think in terms of being sexually aggressive, I think that's part of male culture, not all male culture but a good portion of it. I think that there are so many people out there who are rich and famous, where it's encouraged, supported and rewarded when they're sexually aggressive. I often mention Mike Tyson. He was a batterer. He was a convicted rapist. When he came out of jail, there was a parade for him. Nobody seemed to get upset about battering and raping, but when he bit off a man's ear during a boxing match, then he lost his license.

I'm thinking there's something the matter with the messages we're giving children about this and the messages we're giving men and women. I think those messages, people come to college with eighteen years of all of this stuff, and suddenly we're expected to change it over the program. Well, that's just not happening. There's a culture of it that comes to a university, whether it's ours or Montana or Notre Dame or the University of North Carolina or any of the other places that you hear about in *The Hunting Ground*. There's so many attitudes and beliefs that we have to deal with that of course it's part of the culture here. It's part of the culture outside of here as well. You just don't hear about it. You don't have the feds trying to force everybody to report it. Our issue is, "If I'm raped in my house, I don't have to tell anybody. Why should I have to report if I'm raped here? It's nobody's business if I don't want it to be." I think that we don't understand it; people don't understand it. They don't get that it is enculturated in kids from the day they're born.

If you look at things like athletics and fraternities and sororities, there certainly are some that are not behaving the way that their charter says they were chartered for, but I also believe that they get a lot of publicity. They're the ones where it's often very conducive because of the connection that people have and the protection of their "family."

Look at Kobe Bryant. They spent eleven million dollars on his defense, eleven million dollars. Every time that woman moved, they found her and harassed her. Look at the amount of violence that's occurring in sports as role models, it's only just recently, only somewhat recently, that people are being held accountable. Probably the worst one that's being held accountable is Ray Rice, and they're people who do what he did and worse that aren't being held accountable. I think that there's that kind of support for it. I don't know if these are answering your questions, and if not, tell me. [Editor's Note: In 2003, a nineteen-year-old woman accused professional basketball player Kobe Bryant of sexual assault. Criminal charges were later dropped, and a civil suit was settled out of court. In 2014, former Rutgers football player Ray Rice was charged with felony assault after video footage went public that showed him punching Janay Palmer, who then was his fiancé and now is his wife. The charges were dropped because Palmer refused to testify.]

MG: No, they are.

RK: Okay.

JF: There are now movies coming out like *The Hunting Ground* and movements like the red X.

RK: Yeah.

JF: How do you feel about those?

RK: Well, *The Hunting Ground*, which we're showing next week, which I happen to have a copy of in my office right now, *The Hunting Ground* I have some issues with. I think that it is a fabulous example of student activism, and when Annie Clark and Andrea Pino are here next week, it will be really exciting, more so for students than for me.

On the other hand, the whole movie is about what places do wrong. I don't know if you saw it last year, there was a small showing of it, and Amy Ziering, who is the producer for it, was there. I said, at the end of it, "I'm wondering why, at the end in the credits, you didn't have a thing that says that there are a number of schools around the country that are working very hard to do the right thing." Her answer to me was, "Because I don't know of any. Do you?" I said, "Yes, you're at one right now." I don't like things that are just so one sided, particularly when it's my issue, because there are schools around the country that are working very hard. I don't like that about the movie, but that's what they want to do. They only want to show one side, and what they show is really well done. I just think that they miss an opportunity.

I'm the handler. I'm the person who's staying by the side of the women when they come next week. One of the reasons I've scheduled time for them to come meet with my staff is that I want them to walk away from here and know what Rutgers has been doing for the last twenty-five years. I don't necessarily love that kind of movie, but if you want to entice people to be activists, it's the place to do it. Are you talking about "End SeXual Violence Now" with the X in it?

JF: Yes.

RK: That came out of here. [laughter] We came up with the [slogan], I didn't, Laura and Brady [Root] came up with "The Revolution Starts Here." That was their idea, and so the marketing group for the Student Affairs Division came up with the design for it. I love it. I love the X crossing it out, "[End] SeXual Violence Now." I don't love *The Hunting Ground* as much as some people do, and I've seen it a half a dozen times.

MG: Can you tell me what it is? I am not familiar actually.

RK: *The Hunting Ground* is a movie about ending sexual violence on campus, and it's about how some campuses address the issue. It's going to be shown next Thursday night at eight o'clock, you should get there early, in the College Avenue Gym, and it's also going to be in the afternoon at one-thirty at the MPR [Multi-Purpose Room] over at Livingston as well. It's about an hour-and-forty-minute film that's a documentary about sexual violence on college campuses. Do you know who Jameis Winston is? Jameis Winston was the number one draft pick this year for football. The Tampa Bay Bucs took him and all of his baggage. In the movie, he's accused of rape twice that we know of, there's probably more, and Florida State, the town, the college, the football team, everything, protected this commodity. [At] Notre Dame, there was a football player accused of rape, and Notre Dame said they couldn't find him. Well, there were like ninety thousand people in the stands, as he played football each week. What do you mean you can't find him? He's out there on the football field. They show that in the movie. Then, they talk about how it impacted survivors and the things survivors were told. It kind of follows some things of one woman who killed herself. It's a heart-wrenching film. It's very, very one-sided, but what they do, they do really well.

MG: I will have to check that out.

RK: Yes. When you leave, I'll send you the flyer for it.

MG: Did you maintain a partnership or relationship with the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment?

RK: Well, we use them. They're our rape crisis center and our students use them, so we had some relationship. I kind of dropped out of the [Sexual Violence Prevention] Coalition. When Laura [Luciano] got here, Laura started to go to the coalition, and so she really met the other rape care programs in the state. Many of the people I had worked with were then leaving the rape care programs. I didn't really have a close relationship with them. Laura has a closer relationship than I do.

MG: Before we talk about other organizations you were involved with or certain accomplishments, is there more you wanted to say about the center, its history and the people who were involved?

RK: They called me and asked me what I thought of the name, and I said I thought it was the dumbest name I'd ever heard of. [laughter]

MG: It is a mouthful.

RK: It's not even that it's a mouthful. It doesn't say what they do. If I want to call a rape crisis center, why would I look for the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment? I would never look at that. That's what I think is dumb. I don't mind the name of it. To me, it's like "Displaced Homemakers," or it's not a name that reflects [what they do]. We're Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, it's what we do. I thought that they should have a name that reflects what they do. Yes, they're trying to empower people. I think that it started for the right reasons, and I think that it's there for the right reasons.

I think the rape care providers for this state do a lot of really good work for not much credit and less money than they deserve. It's just that that's the way it is. Nobody cares about this issue until they need you. I could never go back to working for the county. In my opinion, they're much too controlling of things, although I hear things have gotten better. We no longer have to sneak money into them when we earn money for them, so it's gotten better. I probably shouldn't say that, but I don't really care.

MG: Are there other people we should talk to that would be able to help shed light on the history of the center there?

RK: Well, Joyce Munkacsi, but I don't know where Joyce is living these days. Her daughter, who I know, works at the University of North Carolina. She was really the start of it, and Joyce, she retired a while ago from being a judge, so I'm not sure. I'd be happy to email her daughter and see if we can track her down and see if her mother was still able to do something like this. Other than that, I can't think of anyone that you should really talk to. There's certainly other people who might have an opinion, but you shouldn't talk to them. [laughter]

MG: You have a long list of task forces and committees and things you are involved in or were involved in. You do not have to go through this long list, but if you could discuss some roles that have stood out to you or that you are particularly proud of or want to remark on.

RK: I haven't looked at that in a long time.

MG: Do you want to look?

RK: Sure, let me look and see what's on here. I would probably say the two things that I'm most proud of here would be the ACPA Presidential Task Force. That was really interesting. Out of it came a number of things, but this [*Beyond Compliance*:] *Addressing Sexual Violence in Higher Education*, it's a monograph that came [out of it]. This is my two professional organizations. Even more so than that, the second one is the creation of the Sexual and Relationship Violence [Standards]. All student affairs offices, whether it's student centers or residence life or whatever, have a set of standards developed by the Council [for the Advancement of] Standards in Higher Education, it's the CAS standards. I had been trying to get that done since the '90s, and I actually still have the emails. When they finally decided to do that, it was like a capstone for me to have input in developing the first ever standards and that was really exciting for me. My graduate intern did a lot of the research and work on it, Holly Ennis, and to see that, that's really one of the things I'm most proud of. That would be first, and then the ACPA thing would be second.

The rest of it's like, "Ah," things that were more related to my job. I did the Campus Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights. Senator Wynona Lipman, who I knew pretty well, was the sponsor of it. I was there, and I worked with people to get the University to support it. I like the legislative stuff that I get to do, that's really fun for me, and I get to do a lot of that. Two summers ago, not this past summer, but the summer before, I got to go to D.C. and meet with people from our senators' offices, so meet with people from Cory Booker's office and [Bob] Menendez's office, and then get to meet with staff from Claire McCaskill. She was one of the primary people behind some of the pretty bad legislation that she initially put out. I can't remember her name right now. I got to go on the hill and do a little bit of that. That was really interesting and fun.

This year, I got to testify at the State Higher Education Committee before them and then got to really try to cultivate the state senator who was so far off base in the legislation he was introducing, and he finally saw the light. I spent a lot of time with him, and I was on a panel with him for the County Democratic Women, something I got invited to. He and I had a really lovely conversation. Being able to do that is so interesting to me. The rest of the stuff, the Governor's Advisory Counsel, waste of my time. [laughter] I don't remember what else is there, but nothing else struck me as the top two ones.

MG: I wanted to ask earlier, how do students find out about you?

RK: Well, we do orientation for all of the incoming students, so we had about 6,500 students and my theater group does the orientation for them. Word of mouth, website, program, teaching a class, all sort of ways. Unfortunately, and this came out from the climate survey, only about eight percent of survivors actually access us, so that's not so good. I don't know what we would

do if a hundred percent accessed us, because we are swamped right now. They find out, they look us up if they need us, in addition to going to a program or hearing us speak at a class.

MG: What is the theater group?

RK: I'm sorry.

MG: What is the theater group?

RK: SCREAM Theater is our peer education improv[isation] theater group. I created it almost twenty-five years ago. SCREAM Athletes is comprised of SCREAM students but that are athletes. They perform, they're at Ramapo right now, our SCREAM Theater. They were in Florida last week. They perform all over the country at conferences. They do orientation for about six or seven New Jersey colleges. I'll get you a brochure about them when we walk out. By the way, it was mentioned in White House report as well.

MG: Oh, good. The SCREAM Theater?

RK: Yes.

MG: Neat. What was said about it?

RK: It was [a] minor mention, but it was mentioned as one of the groups that uses theater to address bystander intervention, one of three places in the country that they noted.

MG: Right. That is something you have written quite a bit about or you have been published about bystander intervention. Can you just describe what that is?

RK: Well, most of that is through the Center on Violence Against Women and Children. Sarah McMahon, who's the associate director and tends to be the PI [principal investigator] on any of the big research that involves us, used to be the assistant director here, so we have a very close relationship. Sarah had a research project that was funded by the CDC that was a longitudinal study of our SCREAMing to Prevent Violence, which is our primary prevention program, using SCREAM Theater of course. She did some research on it. We collected data for about eighteen months, and then the research results just came out last year. The research from the CDC, the "#iSpeak," the climate survey, I'm on the advisory board and so did a lot of work with that, if you look at those, you will see that I'm always the last author. I don't do data analysis. I'm not a PI. I'm not looking for tenure. I just do a little bit of editing and a small amount of writing, so that's what I do.

MG: How have you adjusted to cyber violence and different platforms for perpetration?

RK: I want to go back to the writing, because most of that comes out of here, but Sarah has really become a national expert on this kind of research. I've actually written two proposals for programs for next year for my professional organizations to talk about the climate survey. I'm

doing it in conjunction with my colleague Holly Rider-Milkovich at the University of Michigan, because they did a climate survey very different than ours.

One of the things about cyberstalking, cyber-violence, cyber-whatever is that people see something, and they tend to delete it very quickly. We have to really teach people to hold on to it. I'm working with someone now who has kept a whole bunch of the texts that were sent to her, and she has saved them. Nothing is lost forever. It certainly is easier for someone to send me a copy of them than to have to go [to] Verizon or Sprint to give it to us. We see that as people really having access to the person they want to harass, rape, stalk twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You can really watch the escalation of some of the behavior. We spend some time on it. Most of what we spend time on is really the direct contact that students have with each other here.

Years ago, I was asked to do a training program for the health center on social networking, and so I had to get a Facebook page then. I didn't have one. This was—I don't even know how long ago it was—easily ten years ago. I figured if I was going to talk about it, I should have one. I created a Facebook page, and then I didn't have any friends. I went to my daughter, and I said, "Can I be your friend?" and she said I can be her friend if I promise never to comment on anything that's on her page. I have only commented once. [laughter] That was, "Molly, you're starting to look for a job. You need to make sure of what's on your page and what shouldn't be on your page," and that was my only real comment. That's really what we do. We focus a lot more on the direct interaction.

MG: I am getting to the end of my questions, but I did not know if there are things I am leaving out or other things you wanted to talk to us about in terms of your career.

RK: In this office, I am so blessed to work with a really wonderful group of dedicated, phenomenal women. We are here twenty-four/seven and work on weekends. I was here at the [Homecoming Charity] Bed Races last night. People are here doing training. If it's not this weekend, it'll be next weekend. We're here all the time. I think that it's a real privilege to work with them, but I really think it's a privilege to work with the students. It's why I get out of bed in the morning.

The other thing I would really say is that I've been at a fortunate place. I was at the right place at the right time. Gloria Steinem on her eightieth birthday said something about, "There's a difference between being responsible for something and being somebody who's there to see it through." I don't feel responsible for this; I feel just really privileged to have been part of it. I was there at a time where nobody knew anything, so I quickly became an expert because I knew a tunch more then somebody else. I think that's just timing.

I also think that I'm married to a phenomenal person, I've been married forty-two years, who is a true partner in supporting my work and taking care of our children as much as I took care of our children. Also, most of my time here at Rutgers has allowed me a lot of flexibility, not just in the work but in my time. For a year, my daughter was afraid to come home by herself. Her brother did her afterschool care for a while, and then we hired a student who had time in the afternoon and was always there when Molly got off the bus. We lived two miles from here.

Then, when Josh went to college and this student had the nerve to graduate, Molly was left coming home by herself, and she was a little afraid. Every day, I timed myself out, I x'd in my calendar, from a certain time until her bus got home, and then I'd let her in, reset the alarm for her and then leave. I was able to do that until the following year, [when] she felt comfortable enough to come home by herself. The times that I couldn't do it, my husband did.

I had a lot of flexibility here. There's rarely been somebody watching what I do. They just know that I do it. Off and on, the chancellor, Dick Edwards, when he was dean of the School of Social Work, called me in to do some stuff. I've really been very lucky.

MG: I want to ask about retiring next year and how that is going to go. [laughter] Some of the things you have said reminded me of how I approach my work. I do interviews Saturday and Sunday. I do not want to miss anybody, and so it is seven days a week. How are you going to retire?

RK: Laura says I suffer from FOMO, fear of missing out. [laughter] I don't know. I will miss terribly seeing the people that I work with. I have known Laura for twenty-one years. I've known Lisa for fifteen, Brady for ten. There're people that I see all the time. I was at a retirement party for Leslie Fehrenbach yesterday at Winants [Hall], and I ran into Barbara Lee, who was the senior academic officer for the University. Barbara says, "How are you going to leave? You're an institution." I said, "No, there's nobody an institution around here, Barbara." Because I started this, this has been seen as mine, and it is mine.

I always say, "When I leave, you can do what you want. While I'm here, this is what we're doing." I'm not sure. I will not miss the day-to-day stuff. I will absolutely not miss the administrative garbage. I will miss the students, but I will teach. I will continue to teach in [the School of] Social Work and in the Graduate School of Education, as long as they'll have me or as long as I can stand it.

My husband and I bought a place at Bethany Beach, Delaware, which is the place that makes me happy. We're going to sell our house and buy something smaller around here, because my friends are here, kind of my village of women are here. I don't know. I have no idea. There's a piece of me [that will always be here]. My son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren live in Florida. Molly, broke my heart, moved to Seattle. I tell her husband, who I like very much, he used to be my favorite son-in-law. I don't know how it's going to be. My husband is partially retired. We'll see. We are going away immediately after my last day here. I'm working on a very different kind of vacation for us. We're going to take a Mediterranean cruise, because if I don't go away, I'm going to be incredibly sad.

I'll probably be happy for a few minutes, but I'm going to be incredibly sad. Right after graduation is my hope to leave. It's going to take me a month of Sundays to get all my garbage out of here, and I don't know what I'm going to do with it. [laughter] I don't know. I don't know how. This is so much a part of what defines who I am, as much as being a woman and a wife and a mother and a bubbe. It's what defines who I am, and so I'm not sure how it's going to feel to not be there. Everybody says, "We'll see you. You can come in," but it's different. I know it's different. You can arrange for lunch, but everybody's working and I won't be.

MG: We will have to check back in with you and see how you are doing with everything.

RK: Yeah. [laughter] I'm trying to get my best friend, who's one of my village, there's five of them and me, and I'm trying to get my best friend to also retire, she's a year or two older than I am, get her to retire next spring as well. I said, "You'll retire. We'll go to the beach together. You'll come and help me clean out my house, so I can sell it." We'll see; we'll see what happens. The women that are my close friends are the women who took care of me when I was really sick two years ago, when I was using a wheelchair. I didn't talk about this.

About two months before [my daughter's wedding], I started having all these problems, and we didn't know what it was. I was having a fever, I was tired, I had eye infections, yeast infections, and my gynecologist said, "Ruth Anne, it seems like Lyme's disease." I had a rash on my leg that I thought was poison ivy that cleared up. We got a Lyme test and it came back negative, so I just forgot about that. I was on massive doses of steroids and everything else to try to keep me healthy for her wedding. About three or four days after her wedding, I started having trouble walking. I think I was off all of the medication, and that was the end of June, beginning of July. In the middle of August, when they couldn't figure out what the problem was, the neurologist, who I always say I will never go back to, told me he had to have blood work done. I gave him a list of things I wanted tested for and one of them was Lyme, and it came back in flying colors. By that point, I was in a wheelchair.

I saw an infectious disease doctor, who started me on infusions every day. I had a line in my arm, and every day for twenty-eight days, I had to go to this place in Hillsborough and get medication in through the line. Then, I went to physical therapy three times a week for nine months, and I'm still recovering. The neurologist that I see now, who is fabulous, says, "Give it a thousand days," and I've got probably three hundred more days to see if the nerve damage repairs itself completely. It has repaired itself mostly but not all.

One of my friends, Phyllis, moved in with me for four days and took care of me when my husband had to go out of town, and Gale stayed overnight a couple of nights. When my husband came home and he had surgery too, she and her husband moved in with us so that they could take care of both us. Bobbi came over with food for me, and Stacey came to visit me every other day or whenever she could. My friend Allison texted me every single morning for a year to see how I was doing and took over, she and I are co-presidents of something, she totally took over because I was so sick. I was very, very sick, sick enough that sometimes I would say, "We'll have the meeting at my house, so I can come." Everybody would come. I would go downstairs. I'd sit down, and I'd say, "I need to go back to bed." I was so sick, but look at me now. [laughter] These are my women. These are my friends. They're the women that I love and that love me, and I don't want to move away from them. I will stay around here but spend a lot of time at the beach. I'll get to spend more time with them.

MG: Good. You have been so generous with your time.

RK: Oh, my goodness, this has been really fun. [laughter]

MG: Is there anything I have neglected to ask you, or if, Jess, you have questions?

JF: No, I am good right now.

RK: I look forward to, assuming I'm getting permission to do this, but [I am] going to see my grandchildren next month. One of my supervisors, the one I was with for seven years, when my daughter-in-law was pregnant the first time, said, "Ruth Anne, here's two pieces of advice. Go see your grandchildren every three or four months." I've been blessed to do that here. Even when I should have stayed around because there was something going on, my supervisors have all said, "Go. Go see your grandchildren." The second thing she said to me is, "Learn when to keep your mouth shut," and I'm not really good at that.

It's been good. I think the rape crisis center really helped fine tune my skills for the clinical work, not necessarily the presentation work. That's just something, the training stuff, I really like to do, and I don't have a fear of speaking in public. The other thing that the rape crisis center really did for me was to help me understand what happens there and what the exam entails, even though it's changed. This is before SANE [sexual assault nurse examiner]. Even though it's changed, I learned a lot there, and it really helped me understand some of the things that I needed to do here.

MG: Good.

RK: This has been a great place, and I love it here. I love it at Rutgers. If I wasn't sixty-six, well, I'm not sixty-six for another month or two, if I wasn't that old, I would stay around, because it's been a good run.

MG: Well, thank you so much for meeting with us and talking to us.

RK: Thank you. This is so nice. [laughter]

MG: It is nice for us, too.

RK: Well, thank you. I've never had people interested in what I do. I gave you the article that Robert Jensen wrote about me called "Still Riding the Second Wave: Reflections on Feminist Struggles."

MG: It is not in my file here.

RK: I'm going to print it out for you. Let me just print this out quickly for you.

MG: All right, I will turn this off.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Transcribed by Jessica Friedman 12/7/2016
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