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Interview with Sally Carhart

Molly McNamara

Sally Carhart

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Researcher's Name: Molly McNamara
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Place: First Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon
Co-workers present: none

Molly McNamara: This is Molly McNamara interviewing Sally Carhart on the eighth of February, is that correct?

Sally Carhart: Ninth.

MM: Ninth of February at one o'clock. When and why did your Church decide to print a recipe book?

SC: Well, first of all, I'll say that it's a project of Presbyterian Women.

MM: Okay.

SC: And Presbyterian Women of course are members of this Church, but it's definitely a project of Presbyterian Women to earn money. It's a fundraiser to fulfill a pledge that we make each year to give so much money to the mission program of the Presbyterian Church USA.

MM: Okay. Could you explain a little more who the Presbyterian Women are as a group?

SC: Who they are. Any woman who wishes to belong to the United, to the Presbyterian Women can be so. Of course it's...we have, we've had in the past a few who are not members of our church, but for the most part it's members of the church. It's just that they want to be involved in what Presbyterian Women do. I can give, I'll give you this and I'll give you a cookbook.

MM: Okay.

SC: So you'll know where we are.

MM: [undecipherable]

SC: Presbyterian Women...[quoting the book,] "each woman who has indicated a willingness to be involved with the program of Presbyterian Women shall be a member of the local association." That's local in this Church. "You are encouraged to participate in some way. We hope that we have something to offer every woman. If you cannot be a circle member, you could make a contribution of time, talent, and money. Our goal is to help one another grow in Christian concern for God's people in performing our mission." And we do have a purpose, Presbyterian Women. Are you familiar with the Presbyterian Church at all?

MM: I'm Catholic myself. So,...

SC: Well that's good.

MM: I know a little bit, ...

SC: Okay.

MM: ...but I'm not really that familiar. Do all of the women in the church belong...

SC: No.

MM:...to Presbyterian Women then.

SC: No.

SC: Just so whoever.

SC: It's whoever wants to. Whoever wants to, to be a member of Presbyterian Women can be. And, but we do ask you to do certain things. The purpose of Presbyterian Women is here. Do you want me to read it with you, or do you just want to take it with you?

MM: Um, if it's okay, I'd like to take it with me just so...

SC: You can take that with you, but the Presbyterian Church USA covers the United States and territories.

MM: Okay.

SC: I'm pretty sure Puerto Rico is considered part of the Presbyterian Church USA.

MM: Okay.

SC: Then the Presbyterian Church USA is broken down into synods. S-Y-N-O-D-S. Then synods are broken down into presbyteries.

MM: Okay.

SC: And our church is one of the 112 Presbyterian churches in the synod, in, pardon me, in the presbytery of Sciota Valley [sp?]. Our, our...and here we are, right there in black.

MM: Okay.

SC: But we go from...we're really the middle and the southern part of Ohio. But there are 112 churches. Now all of those churches do not have Presbyterian Women's organizations.

MM: Okay.

SC: They can find somebody who does it. We find that as years go by, fewer and fewer women are at home to do things during the day. So, and this has traditionally been an organization that does have meetings during the week, Bible study, and doing different mission projects. So that we do have...of the 112 churches, I, I, I couldn't tell you how many in our presbytery have Presbyterian Women's organizations. Probably maybe 65 to 75. But our organization here has become smaller through the years. We at one time had many circles, circles being little groups within Presbyterian Women that might all have up to 15 to 20, 25 people. Well now we are down to one circle, and everybody's listed here. I, we will, we keep people on our roll. And it's, I'll be frank with you, it's become an older group, very much so an older group. But the members are listed here. What we do each year, we make a pledge. We have all these different...this hierarchy. Presbyterian Church USA, the synods, the presbyteries, and then individual churches. And the Presbyterian Women in each of the churches make a pledge to give so much money to the mission work of the Presbyterian Church USA.

MM: Okay. To the largest...

SC: To the largest body up here. And we in our church have had different fundraisers to help us make this money. It might not seem like a lot. This year our pledge is \$2400. And we do have contingency things like stamps and all that junk that we provide for the next level up. So our...we pay our pledges...the money is sent into the Presbyterian Women of the presbytery...

MM: Okay.

SC: ...which would be those 110 churches. And then our synod is only 2 states: Michigan and Ohio. So then it goes up like so and gets to the Presbyterian Church USA. And our goal is to keep our pledge to the Presbyterian Church USA mission work up by doing fundraisers and individual pledges from women. And this was one of our fundraisers. Now I was surprised when I looked at this when we had board meeting the other day. It was 1987 that we did it.

MM: 1987? Okay.

SC: Now I think there was probably a cookbook done many years ago but I don't know. But that's how we came to deciding we would do a cookbook and how we did it was put out the request for favorite recipes. So this is not a cookbook of local recipes, other than the people are local, but it's their favorite recipes, be they from their great-aunt in Memphis Tennessee or where. And it was after we did get the, the recipes handed in and we had a lot of people who just gave us the recipes, one of the gentlemen from our

church who was free at the times and was good at the computer typed them for us. And then we sent it in to the company and they added, oh their few little things like...there's the company that we used. Oh they added little things like quantities, table of calories, and things like that so that...other household hints were things that they added. We checked them out...Okay, excerpts from cookbook published 1913 by the Women's Association. So we did do another cookbook in 1913. See I had even forgotten that. I wasn't here then. But there is this little... And that's it, okay?

MM: Well what was your role in doing all this? Were you involved?

SC: We all were involved in giving in recipes. Now I, I asked the other day if we had a chairman, and we don't remember if we had a chairman. We undoubtedly did, but you could put...I was not that person. But, we, we did work through a committee because everything we do, we do through committee, so there was a committee that pulled the thing together and the lady who ended up storing these in her, now I don't know I think these were always here. We also at one time did Christmas cards, a Christmas card project to earn money. Another, you know, of our fundraisers. But, I'm sorry I don't remember all of this in particular.

MM: That's okay. Do you mind if I ask you the rest of my questions?

SC: Sure. You go right ahead. If I can't answer...

MM: Yeah and if you can't, that's okay. Were there any original recipes, do you know, that like people made up or...

SC: I do not know.

MM: ones that...

SC: I do not know. All the recipes are credited to someone, and that...here's one salmon loaf they I turned in, but I didn't make that up. It's just a recipe that through the years, I had used. And you will find that that is the way most of them are here. As far as original I would say probably no.

MM: Okay. The ones that you put in yourself, like why did you choose those recipes?

SC: Just recipes that were favorites of my family.

MM: Okay. Where any of them like passed down from your parents or grandparents?

SC: Not particularly. My Texas sheet cake recipe came from a sister, but that's doesn't go back too far.

MM: Okay.

SC: Now, see there are others here that might, but for the most part it's favorites, but how far back it goes with most of the people, I have no idea.

MM: Okay. In your own life, do you cook and/or bake very often?

SC: I try not to.

MM: You try not to? [Both laugh].

SC: You must understand where I am in my life. My husband has retired, my children are grown and gone, and I am not making dozens upon dozens of cookies. I am not doing things that I used to do.

MM: Did you used to cook a lot when your children were growing up?

SC: Oh yes.

MM: And did you enjoy cooking?

SC: Yes I did enjoy it, but I got tired of it. Now I don't know if you know what I mean. You know you can, we did not eat out. It was each day, it was everyone got their own breakfast when they got old enough and actually they made their own lunch when they got old enough and were running around but we always had dinner at night. Sit down with the family at dinner and...

MM: And what do you...why do you think that was important to your family to sit down together at dinner?

SC: Oh, now that, you can say that does go back, way back because my family we always sat down and shared the day's events, talked over whatever was to be talked over. But it was very important in my family that we did sit down together. And my own family. My family with my parents was very important also with my own family"

MM: How would you choose the dishes that you would make for your family?

SC: We always did, always, not don't make that always, always, always, 'cause there were days when it was just a casserole and a salad. But typically it was meat, a starch, a vegetable, a salad and something for dessert, be it ice cream, be it cookies, be it pie, be it cake. But we always, the fact is I still do that now which I don't need all those calories...and that comes from my training too. My family always did what we considered a very balanced diet.

MM: And who did you learn...did you learn to cook from your mother?

SC: My mother, my mother, my grandmother.

MM: How often do you try new recipes?

SC: Right now, see, right now we're in a different thing at my house. My husband's been retired, be three years this July, and I'm not doing what I used to do. But if we saw a recipe- and we have two daughters and a son- and they would also pitch in and let's try this, but to try a new recipe if you're...now I just...maybe once a month I'll try something new.

MM: But you used to a lot?

SC: Well, more when the kids were young. Now I have grandchildren who come and they eat in a different way also, but they do very well as far as eating their balanced diet.

MM: Did your own...Did you teach your own children how to cook?

SC: They were always free to go to the kitchen, always free to watch, and gradually started doing things for themselves. Now of course they have home economics in high school, they did girl scout badges, so that they picked things up, but yes I was there and we didn't burn the house down or anything, but I think they, they...I guess I helped them. I know I helped them, but they had other sources. But just the freedom of being in the kitchen I think is part of it, to try things.

MM: I'm sorry what do you mean by the freedom? They had the freedom or you had the freedom?

SC: They had the freedom to go the kitchen and say I'm going to try something.

MM: And so would they do that a lot when they were growing up? To just try...

SC: See, growing up, I don't think in middle school they did much. Then of course everyone gets busier in high school. Coming home from college, they did a lot. And then just, "I'm going to eat at odd hours." You know, dinner was over 2 hours ago, why are you cooking now? But, no they did, they were free to do what they wanted to do.

MM: You talked about how the recipes you put in here weren't family recipes, but did you have any recipes in your family that were important and have been passed down through your family?

SC: No.

MM: Okay. I was just wondering.

SC: No. Our...we were very traditional so that meals such as thanksgiving was turkey, da da da, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce and such. So the menus were probably passed down. My mother's mother made fantastic pies, and I did learn to make pies from her. She was of German descent and did pies and strudel which were very

good, but particularly her pies. Fact is when she died I received her, her rolling pin to make pies. But no other recipes I just...smidgen if this, smidgen of that.

MM: Your talking of pies made me think: have you even entered any of the contests at the fair?

SC: No.

MM: Okay. What do you think was importance of the recipe book to your church community?

SC: We have, we often have, often, in the past we have had-see how often means, I don't know- In the past we have had potlucks here and many of the recipes that are in here are the dishes that would be prepared to bring to the Church. And that probably is, is one good thing that we do have from this as far as, you know, not the money we earn to do the other stuff. But that this is a source of the dishes that would come into the church during those potluck programs.

MM: Okay. Do you think the parishioners were enthusiastic to make this book?

SC: Yes. We had a good sale of the cookbook in the beginning. Let's see, now it's been what...

MM: Right.

SC: ...fourteen years, and we still have forty books yet to sell. Now in the beginning they really were. In fact as different people come in- Mr. Marshall has just been here six months, and he needed a cookbook and needed a cookbook to give to other people at Christmas time and so forth, so it's still a good source of information for people.

MM: Do you think people were enthusiastic to contribute to it as well.

SC: Yeah they were. Mm-hmm.

MM: And why do you think that was?

SC: We were just this big happy bunch of people. Let's all share our recipes, Molly. I think they really were very enthusiastic to share their re...share their favorite recipes. And of course you'd know someone like-one lady makes sour cream raisin pie-delicious. Well it's in here, so that we have had other things at the church such as...here again a fundraiser for our mission proje...mission money- election day luncheon. And we would have...we'd make the vegetable soup, but we'd ask for particularly pies everybody likes pies more than cakes I think. So that we would have recipes for those things that were in the book. I think people enjoyed just having a source right... Now we had checked this over and there were some errors which had been corrected in the book.

MM: What, what kind of errors?

SC: Just, just errors in typing.

MM: Okay.

SC: Which...once it was...we sent it in...I don't think we got a copy back to proofread. I think the next thing we got was the book itself. But it's quite...for as much as it is, it really is very accurate. You know, we didn't have too many things. I think there were four little errors in the book, but they've been corrected.

MM: Okay. Who were you marketing the book to? Just the parishioners or like the larger community.

SC: Anybody who would give us five dollars for it. I'm quite...yeah we started at five. It's, it's...five dollars is what we charged for it. Oh we'd sell it anybody and everybody, Molly.

MM: So did you try, I mean, did you try to sell it other places or...[undecipherable]

SC: We did not take it any place to sell it. If we would have something happening here in the church, Election Day dinner, we would have it out. When a lot of people not members of our church would be here. We used to have...we still do have rummage sales and we'd try to sell it at rummage sales, but we didn't have a booth anywhere to sell the cookbook.

MM: Okay. I didn't know if it was at like the bookstores or anything.

SC: No we didn't.

MM: Do you...and...I'm sorry you already said what the money was used for. It was for...went to the...

SC: Mission of the Presbyterian Church USA.

MM: Okay.

SC: Presbyterian Church United States of America-you got it.

And so now if someone wants to buy the recipe book they would just buy it here at the office?

SC: Right here at the office.

MM: Okay. And you said it costs five dollars?

SC: MM-hmm. We're giving you one.

MM: Well I can return it. [I start laughing].

SC: No, no, no. If you...don't you cook, Molly?

MM: I do. But I don't have my money right now.

SC: Well we're not asking you for it.

MM: Oh. Well thank you so much.

SC: We're giving this to you because you're such a nice person.

MM: Well thank you. I appreciate it.

SC: And I'll give you this so you know what we are.

MM: That would be great. Could you share with us, what is your favorite recipe?

SC: Oh dear. This has changed through the years. I got to the point that I disliked chocolate chip cookies so much that I couldn't even look at one.

MM: Oh no.

SC: [Undecipherable] That's what I cooked all the time.

MM: Yeah.

SC: I put half chocolate chips and half butterscotch chips in mine. But a favorite, I don't know if I really have a favorite, see now this whole thing has changed so I...a recipe I used a lot which is in the book is a chicken casserole. But right now, I'm not sure I'd go through all of that for just my husband and I.

MM: Mm-hmm. But you used to like to make that?

SC: Yeah, well it was one of those things you made a big one and you had enough to at least do two meals. I'm not the greatest cook in the world. Maybe somebody else at the board meeting-"Oh you do it Sally," but I'm not the greatest cook in the world.

MM: I'm not either. [I laugh.]

SC: Okay.

MM: We're collecting recipes to print as part of our series. But we were trying to figure out because we're trying to collect them from everyone we talk to, how that's going to work with copyrights because we're not really sure if they're like printed in books and such...

SC: Well all these were given by the person who's name is here.

MM: Right.

SC: And I'm quite sure they have it on a little three by five card someplace at home. So that I don't know how if we go...we have something called the Presbyterian coffeecake. That's always a big hit around here. But...I don't know if you really could...you want to credit each person that from who you get a recipe?

MM: Yeah.

SC: Yeah. What do you intend to do with...

MM: With our research?

SC: Yeah, with your research.

MM: I'm doing one part of a thirteen part series, and it's going to be published in the Mount Vernon News starting in May. It's gonna be part of-you know how they have the food page?- And they're going to make it a two-sheet spread instead so our is going to be like the other half of it. And everybody's doing a different aspect of food and foodways in the community. Like there's one on dollars and cents of food and another on food and healing and another on gardening and another on...I can't even remember them all, but just...everybody has a different part that they're doing and mine is recipes and cooking.

SC: Well Hospice just put together a cookbook. Did you know that?

MM: I didn't.

SC: I think they were gathering recipes last year to do a Hospice cookbook.

MM: Okay. Do you know who runs Hospice by chance?

SC: Melanie Richardson.

MM: Melanie Richardson?

SC: Uh-huh.

MM: Okay. And you wouldn't by chance know how I would get a hold of her?

SC: Well she's in the phone book. She belongs to this church.

MM: Oh really?

SC: We can look up her ph...number downstairs.

MM: That would be great. Well those are all the questions I had. Did you have anything you wanted to add?

SC: No not particularly. I hope this is, this is what you're looking for.

MM: It is.

SC: Is it? Okay.

MM: So, thank you so much. I'll go ahead and stop this thing.

[End of tape]