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FOUNDATION
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WOMEN in MEDICINE



The Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine

The Renaissance Woman in Medicine Oral History Project

Florence Pat Haseltine, PhD, MD

Interview Sessions 1 – 2, 9-10 April, 2016

Interview Profile

Dr. Florence Pat Haseltine (b. 17 August 1942, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) is a molecular biologist and obstetrician-gynecologist. She earned her PhD in biophysics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1970) and her MD at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine (1972). From 1985 – 2012 she served as Director of the Center for Population Research of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, at the National Institutes of Health. She retired in 2012 and was named Emerita scientist. In addition to government work, Dr. Haseltine has worked for almost forty years as an innovator in health technology and founded Haseltine Systems in 1995. Since achieving Emerita status, Dr. Haseltine has worked with scientific organizations developing databases and digital applications to disseminate their important work.

Dr. Haseltine has actively promoted the advancement of women. While working for the NIH, she took part in activities resulting in the government requirement that women be included in clinical trials and the creation of an independent Office of Women's Health. Her scholarly publications are in the area of gender difference. She was the founding editor of the *Journal for Women's Health* and, in 1990, she founded the Society for the Advancement of Women's Health Research (SWHR). She was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 1993. Dr. Haseltine served as Vice President of the Board of Trustees for the Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine from 1998-2003. The Foundation named her a winner of the Alma Dea Morani Renaissance Woman in Medicine Award in 2013.

In these interview sessions, Dr. Haseltine talks in detail about her educational experiences, her role in government, her entrepreneurship and her interest in technology and database development. She covers the wide array of contributions she has made to women's health. Throughout, she provides a portrait of challenges to women in male-dominated programs in medical school, academia, and government. She is also unusually candid about her own career mis-steps. She offers anecdotes about feminist groups and women's support groups and speaks about her own challenges managing work and household as a wife and commuting mother.

Note: Dr. Haseltine was interviewed on 8 August, 1977 for the Medical College of Pennsylvania's Oral History Project on Women in Medicine (now housed at the Drexel University Archives). At that time, she covered her family background in detail. This 2016 interview focuses on different dimensions of her early history and refers the reader to the earlier interview for additional background information. In 1977 she also published "Woman Doctor", a novel about her medical training.

Chapter Summaries

Session 1-A: 04-09-2016

Interview Identifier

Chapter 1: *Early Influences on Intellectual Interests and Leadership*

[00:01:51]+; p. 8

* Leadership: near end of chapter [00:14:30]

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine reflects on early characteristics that influenced her later development. She first talks about her childhood talks about her struggles with dyslexia (undiagnosed at the time) and hyperactivity and her strengths in mathematics and science. She recalls her discovery as a very small child that she saw the world differently than other people. She tells an anecdote about her mother's bitterness and her decision not to be like her mother.

Dr. Haseltine next focuses on her college years. She recalls a course on Major Social Problems, which helped her "learn how to be a person." She talks about the influence of a final exam question, "If you're in administration and the students are picketing, how would you manage it." She connects this question to a later experience when she was Director at the National Institutes of Health and Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, asked her to manage a situation with picketers.

Chapter 2: *A Love of Mathematics and Gadgets; Experiences in Graduate School and Medical School*

[00:20:10]-, p. 23

* Sexism [00:28:46]- [00:31:48]

* Leadership, Inspiring stories [00:32:41], L [00:36:44]

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine talks about graduate school at MIT, her decision to go Einstein College of Medicine, the atmosphere for women in these contexts, and lessons that she learned.

She begins by talking about her love of gadgetry and how it influenced her choice of dissertation topic during her graduate program at MIT. She reflects on her thinking and working styles, noting that she thinks in formulas and mathematics and uses a tactile memory for surgical processes.

Next she talks about applying to medical school and the attitudes that fellow students, faculty, and patients had about women medical students. She notes that she elected to specialize in obstetrics and gynecology because it would allow her to do genetics.

She talks about a major learning experience when she feels she made a transition from student to doctor. She explains the circumstance, which also shows that she had a tendency to assume that comments made to her were motivated by gender bias when they were not. [there may be more on this topic after the pause]

[The recorder is paused.]

Chapter Three: *An Experience with 1970s Feminism and Medical Care for Women*

[00:00:03] (Begins file #2), p. 39

* This entire chapter give an interesting portrait of the reaction to sexism

* Situation for women [00:09:05]

After talking about the problems associated with being a token woman on job interviews during the late 80s and early 90s, Dr. Haseltine discusses her connection with feminism and the Women's Movement in the 1970s and talks about an important experience working with feminists at the Boston Women's Health Collective (1973 – 1975). She worked at the Collective each week, helping set up better care for women. (She was paid \$25/week.) She talks about challenges of working with non-medical feminists. After noting that women who invent equipment were/are not taken seriously, she talks about the impact of this experience. Notably, she learned about the aims of feminism in working with medicine.

Chapter 4: *Residency, Fellowship, and Leaving the Yale University Faculty*

[00:17:23]-, p. 53

* Sexism, experiences of women: [00:17:23]+ through [00:20:46], [00:26:33]

* Leadership, advice: [00:28:51] to [00:34:28]

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine summarizes professional obstacles she encountered after medical school. She first talks about how male students in her residency program at Boston Hospital for Women (1973-1976) hazed female students and shares her strategies for dealing with this. She talks about working with surgeon Raymond Reilly, who was a role model surgeon for her. She notes that Dr. Reilly and Ken Ryan were very supportive of her during these years.

Next she discusses her fellowship period working the laboratory of Dr. Leon Rosenberg in the Department of Human Genetics at the Yale University School of Medicine (1980-1981); she was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Pediatrics at Yale (1976-1982). Dr. Haseltine critiques her behavior, noting that she did "unwise things" that she "paid for later," most importantly by being denied tenure (which led to her leaving academia for a position with the National Institutes of Health).

She tells anecdotes to demonstrate the importance of respect in the workplace and the importance of credentials to promotion and reputation in a field. She explains how she was able to get the support of men she was leading at the NIH.

Chapter Five: *The Value of Business School Experience*

[00:34:28]+, p. 67

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine summarizes the experience she gained by taking courses at the Yale School of Organization and Management (1983-1984). She first talks about jobs she applied for during her tenure process and explains how the NIH position came to her attention: Director, Center for Population Research, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health (1985-2012). This position involved managing the pool of grants available in reproductive biology.

Next she talks about the value of the course she took on group dynamics and the importance of being able to read organization charts. She talks about how she came to think intentionally about her career and notes that she went to a meeting on careers for women in the late seventies that she believes evolved into the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program.

Session 1-B: Afternoon Session, 9 April 2016

Chapter Six: *Women's Inclusion in Clinical Trials and the Office of Women's Health*

[00:00:00] (Begin File 3), p. 79

* Sexism: [00:02:58]

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine gives an example of how her position at the NIH enabled her to have an impact on women's health. She first lays out the realities of working in a government system characterized by inertia; she also notes that in the 1980s, obstetrics and gynecology was "not considered a real field," there were few ob-gyns at the NIH, and clinical trials were conducted on men. She talks about events that made it possible to secure government requirements that women be included in clinical trials and establishing an independent Office of Women's Health (including a chance meeting with Congresswoman, Pat Schroeder).

Chapter Seven: *Women Working in Government*

[00:15:54]-, p. 91

Sexism: [00:27:24]+

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine talks about the challenges of working in a very visible government position and sketches challenges for women in government.

She first talks about the difficulty of being in the crosshairs, as she was during the period when the Office of Women's Health was being established. She talks about the challenges of dealing with political infighting and obstacles that come with strict government rules of operation.

Next she notes that many women work at the NIH, but few make it up the ladder to visible positions and they make less money than their male counterparts. (She says she knew she made less than she should have.) Dr. Haseltine explains why she was a "thorn in the side" of the NIH prior to her retirement. She notes that her isolation gave her freedom to think and to take on projects that let her learn new skills.

Chapter Eight: *Founding the Society for Women's Health Research, Part I*
[00:38:02]-, p. 108

* sexism: [00:41:23]

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine focuses on an organizations she founded in 1990, The Society for Women's Health Research.

She begins by talking about her interest in sex differentiation. She also notes that she used her freedom at the NIH to build a database of all the scientists they funded so she could use the data for her own purposes. She also talks about the NIH loan repayment program she instituted –a legacy she is proud to leave.

She notes that she created the Society to accomplish things she couldn't do through the NIH, telling the story of how the Society started and summarizing the RAISE project it hosts, a database of awards given to men and women scientists between 1981 and 2006. She talks about other Society activities: creating networks, providing information on how to do studies of gender differences and inequities. She explains why she pulled back from the Society in 1993.

Dr. Haseltine then discusses her work on the *Women's Health Research Primer* [Haseltine FP, Jacobson BG (eds): *Women's Health Research: A Medical and Policy Primer*. Washington, D.C./London, England: Health Press International, 1997; 364 pages].

Chapter Nine: *Contributions to Women's Health via the NIH*
[00:00:00] (Begins at File 4), p. 122

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine summarizes additional contributions she made to women's health issues through her work at the NIH. She first discusses fellowship training programs for ob-gyns designed to increase the number of practitioners experienced in molecular biology and laboratory research. She notes that these programs have trained over 90 individuals and she summarizes some of their accomplishments.

She also talks about starting a network of gynecologists studying infertility and studies of women's health centers in order to train younger physicians in women's reproductive health.

She again underscores that she pushed the focus on sex differences in women's health such that the field now had research underpinnings.

Chapter Ten: *Managing Work and a Household; Women in Washington, DC*

[00:07:58]+, p. 129

* Situation for women professionals [00:09:04]+, [00:16:46]

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine talks about how she addressed the challenges of maintaining a household and parenting in New Haven, Connecticut while commuting for fifteen years to a high-pressure administrative position on Washington, DC. She summarizes what her two daughters are now doing.

She also notes that President Bill Clinton brought many women to Washington during his presidency, and many of them commuted as she did. She talks about how she was part of a group of commuting women who would get together periodically to talk about professional challenges in DC (noting that this group was written up in the *New York Times*). As an example, she tells an anecdote about getting women into the Cosmos Club (closed to women until 1987) so they could use the facility for professional entertaining.

She notes that the Inventory of Child Well Being came out of the network of professional women who were part of the group.

Chapter Eleven: *Professional Challenges at the NIH and How the Work World has Changed for Women*

[00:24:53], p. 145

* Sexism, career lessons [00:27:36] to [00:34:05]

* Advice [00:36:03]

After summarizing her reasons for retiring from the NIH, Dr. Haseltine notes that she has never built her identity around her work: "I answer to myself internally." She then focuses on professional challenges she faced working in government and changes in the work environment.

She first evaluates her own ability to understand and operate within the formalized (male) environment of the government work world. She tells anecdotes that reveal the consequences of this. She notes today the problem of getting women educated in the sciences has been solved: medicine has moved faster in this area than other disciplines because physicians are in demand.

She offers the following advice to men and women alike: spend money to free up time. She talks about differences in the questions that men and women ask her as a mentor/boss.

[The recorder is paused for a break]

Chapter Twelve: *An Innovator's Interest in Technology and Gadgets*

[00:00:00] (Begins at File 5), p. 157

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine talks about her lifelong interest in technology and gadgets.

She begins with her earliest memory of fascination with technology: in 1957, the International Geophysical Year, she was the first person in the world to see Sputnik III, for which she received a pin –her most prized piece of jewelry.

She notes that in college, she worked in the Hertz Hall of Music (University of California, Berkeley) setting up lights and microphones. She recounts stories of her how she was fascinated with new equipment when she was in graduate school and medical school, and skilled at solving problems technically. “I should have been an engineer,” she says.

She talks about her ease with computers (she wrote a program for sperm counting) and talks about the 1980s when “we were all hackers.”

Chapter Thirteen: *Founding Haseltine Systems, Entrepreneurial Ventures, and Getting Along with IT People*

[00:14:24]-, p. 169

Dr. Haseltine begins this chapter by telling the story of Sandy Welner, whose cardiac problems and resulting disability led Dr. Haseltine to start her own company to market her design for a container that would enable airlines to safely ship customers' wheelchairs. Though her company has been manufacturing them for twenty years, she calls her company “a failure” and explains the commercial challenges of the invention.

She then tells a number of stories to show how she got started using different technologies, some of which led to inventions. She first tells about first working with databases. Next she tells how helping her daughter to choose a prom dress led her to write a program that she eventually patented, sold and that is now licensed to Microsoft. She talks about her current interest in databases and coding, and her work with databases associated with non-profits. She talks about her work on the Global Virus Network that is now tracking information on the Zika virus.

Dr. Haseltine notes that she often takes on projects because she wants an excuse to learn a new technological tool.

Chapter Fourteen: *Learning about the Importance of Awards; Effecting Change for Women; Hard Lessons Learned*

[00:37:54]-, p. 189

* FHWIM: [00:37:54]-

*Sexism: [00:44:54]

* Situation for women: [00:39:40]+, [00:42:15]+

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine briefly sketches her involvement in the Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine then notes her own ignorance of how important awards are for an individual's career track. She talks about how women can effect change in their fields and tells an anecdote about blocking a male colleague's entry into the Institute of Medicine. She talks about things she might have done to facilitate her own advancement in academia and government, noting male attitudes to women in leadership positions.

Interview Session 2: 10 April 2016

Interview Identifier

[00:00:00], p. 202

Chapter Fifteen: *An Early Interest in Sex Differentiation and Editing Women's Health Research*

[00:01:35]-, p. 204

* Leadership: [00:11:37]+

* Sexism: [00:10:34]

Dr. Haseltine begins this chapter with anecdotes that show the evolution of her interest in sex differences and then focuses on how she channeled this interest into activities that have had an impact on women's health research.

She recalls that she was approached to edit the journal, *Women's Health Research*, and explains how she solicited articles for the journal. She notes that the journal was very quickly listed in MedLine; she talks about the editorials she wrote to address leadership issues in promoting diversity and gender equity.

She concludes this chapter by noting that "sex differentiation is related to everything," and tells an anecdote about sex differentiation and global warming.

Chapter Sixteen: *Issues for Managers and Being a 'Lone Wolf'*

[00:22:04]+, p. 219

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine shares wisdom she gained through her years of administration and people management. To demonstrate how managers need to broaden their perspectives beyond their own fields, she tells an anecdote about selecting a new employee (from another field) because she would argue with her. She notes that managers cannot be friends with the people they manage, a situation that sometimes leads to loneliness.

Next she characterizes herself as a 'lone wolf' and notes that growing up in a household with a father who worked in government helped her understand and cope with the environment she

would eventually work in herself. She explains that her outlier status gave her freedom and she saw no reason not to enjoy it.

Chapter Seventeen: *Impact on Women's Health and Work Environments*

[00:00:00] (Begins at File 7), p. 233

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine recalls contributions she has made to women's health: spurring creation of a Reproductive Science Training Program; influencing a change in research method requiring that women be included in clinical trials; creating the NIH's loan repayment program as part of fellowships.

In response to a question about how she has had an impact on the places where she has worked, Dr. Haseltine cites the view that until women comprise thirty to forty percent of workplaces, there will be no substantive change. She notes that she was aware that she wasn't paid equally with male colleagues at the NIH, but she avoided "battles she couldn't win." She tells a story about a colleague's vanity wall, noting that she never understood why people would create such a thing.

Chapter Eighteen: *Creating the Assembly of Scientists to Sue the Government; the Global Virus Network*

[00:16:37]-, p. 246

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine tells the story of how the Global Virus Network arose from a personal request that she form an organization that could sue the government on behalf of employees of the NIH over a privacy issue. She formed the Assembly of Scientists that joined with five other groups (including the ACLU).

She then provides more detail about the formation of the Global Virus Network.

Chapter Nineteen: *Remembering Mother and Discovering New Family Connections*

[00:27:04]+, p. 254

In this chapter, Dr. Haseltine focuses on her mother, Jean Ellsberg Hazeltine, and her mother's side of the family (which she had no contact with growing up). She explains that her mother was manic-depressive and talks about the effects of her mother's suicide in 1982. She explains that she was particularly affected by thinking of "a smart person like her trapped as a housewife with a devastating illness." She also notes that her father never remarried, leaving her and her siblings in a position of caring for him when he became ill later in life.

Next she tells the story of discovering the Ellsberg side of the family after an article about her was published in *More Magazine* and a member of the family contacted her. This has been a happy outcome of her mother's death, she says.

At the end of the interview, Dr. Haseltine talks about her own parenting philosophy and the reality of “losing your friends and enemies as you get older.”