

## Nancy Feldman

Her legacy as an educator and civic activist will long be remembered in the city of Tulsa.

### Chapter 1 – 1:21

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** Nancy Feldman grew up in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, graduated from the University of Chicago with an undergraduate degree and law degree, married Ray Feldman, and moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1946. Nancy became known as an activist for many causes. She took on immigration in Tulsa and lobbied for the first black student at Holland Hall. As a professor at Tulsa university she included the 1921 Race Riot in her curriculum and was told to ignore the subject, but she continued teaching it anyway.

Nancy challenged dairy companies who delivered milk to Tulsa public schools to date their milk containers, and she led the charge to expand arts education in Tulsa public schools. She founded the Tulsa Center for the Physically Limited and the International Council of Tulsa which would become Tulsa Global Alliance. A long time educator, Nancy retired from the University of Tulsa after a 37 year career teaching in the Department of Sociology.

She served nationally on many boards including the National Space Institute. Nancy Feldman was 92 when she died February, 17th 2014. But thanks to foundations and individuals who believe in our mission to preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time, you can hear Nancy tell her story on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com)

### Chapter 2 – 9:16

#### Nancy Feldman's Family

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**John Erling:** Today's date is November 20th, 2012. My name is John Erling. Nancy state your full name and your date of birth please.

**Nancy Feldman:** Nancy G. Feldman, born October 4th, 1922.

**JE:** That would make your present age?

**NF:** Ninety.

**JE:** Did you always think you'd live to be 90-years-old?

**NF:** No, my father died at 72. My mother at 80 and she'd been ill for years. No one in my family has lived like this.

**JE:** Is this a pleasant surprise?

**NF:** Well, I don't want it to go on too long. I don't want to become dependent. Oh, that scares me.

**JE:** Which at this point you obviously are not. Goodman, Nancy Goodman Feldman. Where does Goodman come from?

**NF:** My father's family came from Germany. I think among the Jewish people they were named after cities and work. He probably, or maybe his grandfather was a good man. His name was Benedict K. Goodman. I always remember the day that Benny Goodman was playing near us at Ravinia. We had a house three stories high and my sister and I slept in an outdoor porch in the summer.

**JE:** And this would have been where?

**NF:** In Highland Park, Illinois.

**JE:** Outside of Chicago.

**NF:** Outside of Chicago on the lake. Someone came to deliver something and he said is this the house of the "King of Swing?"

**JE:** Where are we recording this interview?

**NF:** At our house, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**JE:** Where were you born?

**NF:** I was born at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago; the same hospital that my mother and father were both born in and the same doctor.

**JE:** Wow, your mother's name and maiden name?

**NF:** Her name was Irene Eleanor Kesner, K-E-S-N-E-R. Kesner's a Dutch name.

**JE:** So she was of what decent then?

**NF:** There's Dutch and German decent.

**JE:** She was born in Chicago as you've said and then grew up obviously there.

**NF:** Mm-hm. Her mother was born in Leavenworth, Kansas. I've just finished a book that was written about a branch of my family that was doing the Santa Fe Trail and selling things along the Santa Fe Trail in the 1830's.

**JE:** So your heritage goes back to that time.

**NF:** Yes it goes back.

**JE:** Your mother, what was she like? Describe her personality.

**NF:** Oh there was one word always used for her; gracious. She was very pretty and very competent. She was a Montessori teacher and came from a comfortable family on the

South side of Chicago. The Kesner men, her father and his brothers all had a great sense of humor and were big jokesters and pranksters. On my parent's honeymoon they stayed at the Waldorf in New York and suddenly a trunk was delivered to their room. My Uncle Mike was in it. We were called one day and said, "Orphans the storm has a little dog for you from your Uncles." I have three bachelor uncles, but four uncles. So we went out to get this little dog and it was a Great Dane.

**JE:** Oh my. You were athletic, was she athletic?

**NF:** My mother, not as athletic as I was. Her brother was very athletic. He was a very good polo player. If you had to say something good about my uncle, you could say he was very good looking and a very good polo player and dancer.

**JE:** Your father's name, where he grew up? Where he was born?

**NF:** He was born in Chicago.

**JE:** His name?

**NF:** Benedict K. Goodman.

**JE:** So he too then grew up in Chicago and then your parents met somewhere?

**NF:** Yes, my father was a senior at the University of Chicago and my mother was a senior at University High School, which is the private lab school connected to the University. A man named Albert Pick introduced them and my mother decided she was not going to Vassar like her cousins. She was going to stay around home. She went to the National College of Education, because she didn't want to let daddy go.

**JE:** So your mother taught school while she was raising her children?

**NF:** No, not in our early life. During the Depression she started a nursery school in our home. It had a big room downstairs. She was very brave and adaptable. If you look at my activities you can see that I'm mirroring my mother; League of Women Voters, Planned Parenthood, not the Highland Park Women's Club, but very constructive things. She never thought of herself as smart, I don't think. My father was very smart.

**JE:** Let's talk about your father then. What did he do for a living?

**NF:** He came out of school and went to work for a bank and decided he was never going to get anywhere and opened his own company. I'm not quite sure how it all happened, but I've got a lot of clippings on it from the newspaper. When I was just born I think; they redid the whole Wholesale Market of Chicago, which was called the South Water Street Market. Moved it from the riverbank so that they could do the river and have that north branch of the Chicago River and my father got the idea for how to finance it. Then he did wholesale markets in New Orleans and San Francisco changing the whole thing. He thought up a steam of financing. He was given a lot of publicity. He was 25-years-old so it was a big deal.

**JE:** Chicago Board of Trade?

**NF:** He had his own seat on the Chicago Board of Trade. He did not like to be called a speculator or a gambler, but he was.

**JE:** He must have been a real outgoing kind of person.

**NF:** He was very outgoing. He had wanted to be an actor, but that wasn't good enough for my mother's parents.

**JE:** Then you were living should we say a life of luxury then.

**NF:** O yeah, particularly my early life. We had a very large house and interestingly enough, I have a brother and a sister, when each of us were married my parents gave us any house we wanted. We got to choose, with a provision that we could never mortgage it, because if they had mortgaged it they would have lost their house.

**JE:** That was good wasn't it?

**NF:** Very good.

**JE:** Life was good then in the 20's, but then in 1929 we had the Stock Market crash.

**NF:** Yeah, it didn't hit us until '31 or 2. I don't know why, my father seemed to foresee it a lot. But then it was a very serious matter, since he had invested for all my mother's family as well. We didn't lose our house. We cut down on the number of help we had. I still had a nurse, a German speaking nurse.

**JE:** How does that affect everybody then? The kind of clothes you wore and everything.

**NF:** Yes, I began wearing hand-me-downs. Our clothes used to be made in New York to order. My sister and I were dressed as twins. Then I began inheriting her clothes, which were just exactly like my clothes. Yeah, I used to dream of being able to buy stockings when I was 13 and 14, but we were quiet about it. Interesting, my mother began being very scrupulous about not leaving the lights on. When Richard, our oldest child was born and we went to visit, he said, "Is granny poor?" They still traveled and we did pretty well. It was just tighter.

**JE:** During that time then in '31 and '32 when the crash affected the family did he continue to work as a?

**NF:** Financier.

**JE:** So he still had an income coming in.

**NF:** One time he had to have his appendix out. The doctor charged him five hundred dollars. My father said that's a lot. He said well I'll just guess what your income is. My father said if you want to know what my income is you owe me money.

**JE:** But somehow was there...

**NF:** He had buoyancy; it was a very, very happy marriage. Couldn't help but be aware of the happiness in the marriage. They had very close friends. The Picks who had introduced them, Albert Pick owned a small hotel chain, maybe 15 hotels. When life was really poor we would go stay at his hotels.

**JE:** And Albert Pick, who was he?

**NF:** He was my parent's closet friend; introduced them when he and my mother were in High School together.

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### Chapter 3 – 7:22

#### Education

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**John Erling:** We come to your elementary school years. Where did you go to school?

**Nancy Feldman:** I went to Elm Place School, which was an extremely well-known school.

There were two outstanding schools on the North Shore. One were the Winnetka Schools, which was one way of running schools, but I went to a JE Dewey school. Since I talked to you, I had a call from my brother who's in touch with the librarian in our hometown, who's doing a study on our principal, Jesse Lowe Smith who was quite a well-known figure. The school, we were very free to do a lot of things. We did not learn by rote. We had a store where we learned all of our math, and we got script and bought and sold things. Our desks were always movable or sometimes round tables so that we were building paper mache maps of the state or of the country, and we had an observatory and a woman who taught astronomy. Mr. Smith was the moving spirit of that school, and he died when I was in 7th grade. Our class refused to have anyone take his place because we didn't want anyone to graduate us but him. He would take us out for nature walks frequently, and he had a long pole with a mirror on it, and he'd put it over a bird's nest, and we could see the baby birds. In addition, my parents had Saturday nature classes with Mrs. Colton, and we made x-rays of leaves. We were brought up to really enjoy the outdoors. It was unique growing up, because my father belonged to a fraternity at the University of Chicago, which was the only fraternity that had mostly Gentiles and a few Jews, and a lot of the men and their wives wanted to live in Highland Park because of Elm Place School. When my sister graduated from college and went to look for a job in Washington, D.C....she hadn't gotten into a really good college. She went to Wells College. She was very boy crazy and didn't study hard. I wasn't so boy crazy. I didn't study hard, but I got it done and got into a good college, but Joann said what counted was not Wells College but Elm Place Elementary School. It was such a well-known school. Out to Highland Park moved the Murrays, the Selfridges, the Joneses, the Reesers, the Kenicotts, the Fansteels, the Lloyds. Those were my parents' good friends, and they all had little girls my age. We were raised with a covey of adults, all bright. They had a group that studied religion once a month with a university

professor. They all had an acting group, particularly during the Depression when they couldn't afford to do anything. My father was the director of the acting group, met in our basement. It was a good life.

**JE:** That was a rich background for you, wasn't it?

**NF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** On to high school from there?

**NF:** On to high school. My parents thought that Highland Park High School was not a good high school. It had a very fine vocational department, and we had a little Italian city next to ours. The high school was full of Italians, and they didn't have a very good college prep program. This was partially judged by my sister who then spent two years at Ferry Hall, which was a private school, and my brother spent two years at Lake Forest Academy. Mom and Dad sent me to Catholic school with my friend, Marguerite Green. We lived close to each other, and we would take the train. I couldn't stand it. My parents were Republicans, of course. I never knew any Democrats. We weren't concerned about sin, and I got this heavy dose of sin and wearing underpants in the bathtub, never wearing patent leather shoes. I couldn't stand it. Marguerite kept on and became a nun, and her brother, Reddy, became a priest, but it didn't suit our way of life. We had a little swimming pool. My parents would come home on summer evenings, and we'd all go into the pool skinny dipping, and I couldn't think of this as sinful.

**JE:** Religion. Was that not an important part of your upbringing? Probably more the ethics of life...

**NF:** ...the ethics.

**JE:** ...more important than the religion.

**NF:** They didn't belong to the temple.

**JE:** Then you switched to what high school?

**NF:** Mother and Dad were in Europe. They'd taken my sister to Europe for some reason. They had a good friend staying with us. When I didn't like Sacred Heart, she said, "Your parents have arranged for you to go to New Trier," which was a top high school in the country.

**JE:** New Trier.

**NF:** New Trier in Winnetka, Illinois. Show's she's of German background. Trier is an old town in Germany, and this was New Trier.

**JE:** That was spelled "T-R-I-E-R?"

**NF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). I went there. I didn't know anybody there. It was scaled classes. They put me in the retarded classes. The first time I went there, I was in these retarded classes, and in three or four days, they moved me to normal classes. Then, three or four days, they moved me to accelerated classes. Then they had me take a test and moved me to what they called "X" classes, which experimental. We really had very good, wonderful

teachers, but it was a challenge because I was not making friends, being switched all around. There were some Jewish girls that I liked, but most importantly, there was a Jewish boy I liked, and I wanted to go to Sunday School. My parents were not approving, but they let me go if I took the train and didn't have our driver take us because he washed the car on Sunday mornings. They really did not want me going there. It did give me a basic social life, and then I could expand from there.

**JE:** Is that where you had your friends, the Funny Freaks?

**NF:** Five Funny Freaks was growing up. We all went to nursery school together, all through elementary school together, and then I left my freshman year in high school but was very glad to be back with them my junior year. I went two years to New Trier, which cost more than private school for out of the district.

**JE:** What year did you graduate from high school?

**NF:** I graduated in '40 from Highland Park High School. I went to New Trier for two years, and then my parents couldn't afford it again. I think it was a very good way to grow up. You learn what's important, and money is not it.

**JE:** Was that a tough thing, then, for you to have to go to Highland Park after you'd...

**NF:** ...I was so glad to be with my friends and stop the thunder school. I got the boyfriend, though.

## Chapter 4 – 6:45

### Law School

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**John Erling:** December 7, 1941, I think you'd be 19 years old at that time?

**Nancy Feldman:** Um-hmm. (affirmative)

**JE:** What do you remember about that day?

**NF:** (Sigh) I was a freshman at Vassar. One of my close friends Maggie McGraw's grandmother was coming in town, being flown in by Henry Ford. Her father was head of the Ford Hospital and the Fords were good friends of theirs at Grosse Pointe. Maggie invited me to lunch at Alumnae House with Henry Ford. Well, Henry Ford was a huge anti-Semite and I was scared to death, but we all lived together. I couldn't say, "I'm busy." (laughs)

**JE:** Um-hmm. (affirmative)

**NF:** I had nightmares the night before and I was sure that Henry Ford was going to look across the table and say, "Jew." (laughs)

**JE:** Because you were the only Jewish girl there?

**NF:** Yeah, the only Jewish girl. I'd mostly not been with Jews and I didn't ever mention it much. It just wasn't a significant factor in my life.

**JE:** Um-hmm. (affirmative) It wasn't who you were. The Jewishness did not drive you.

**NF:** No.

**JE:** So that day then when you met Henry Ford...?

**NF:** I met Henry Ford who was delightful. (laughs) We had a good time but then we went back to our dorm and had the Philharmonic on and, boom, it was December 7th. But interestingly enough, Joan Flint...

**JE:** Of Flintco, yes?

**NF:** Joan Flint and I are very close friends. We played tennis together for 40 years. She was at Vassar that year also. One day it was December 7th and we were playing tennis and I said, "What were you doing December 7th at Vassar?" She said, "I was at Alumnae House for lunch with Bill Flint." (laughs) There we were, didn't know each other. (laughs)

**JE:** And you didn't know until you met her here in Tulsa that you were both at the same place. You graduated from high school in 1940 and then you went on to Vassar. That's where you were then in 1941. Vassar in Ploughkeepsie, New York, one of the first schools to have same-sex education, to experiment with that, I believe.

**NF:** Yes, good for you.

**JE:** So that's where you were and that's where you're talking about there in Vassar and that experience at Vassar for you, was that good?

**NF:** It was wonderful. I adored it and I would never had left but my father lost money and said, "You'll have to go to Northwestern." I left something out that I think is important. I found Highland Park such a boring school, Highland Park High School. I would come home, slam my books down and say, "I hate that school, it's so boring." One day my mother said, "Well, you're not going to be bored anymore. I've arranged for all your classes to be moved to the morning and you're going to Northwestern in the afternoon and here's the catalog. What're you going to take?" So three afternoons I went in to Northwestern and took a variety of classes. I didn't think they were so wonderful but they were better than Highland Park High School. Then I went to Northwestern in the summers so that after Vassar's two years, then I spent a semester going to Northwestern and hated it. Christmas night we were all sitting around the Christmas tree and talking about it and I said, "Oh, I hate to think of going back to Northwestern." My brother-in-law said, "You know, Nancy, I've always thought you should go to the University of Chicago. We could practice law together afterwards. It's got sociology and economics and psychology and all the things you like and you would love it." Well, the first day the vacation was over, my mommy and I went out to the University of Chicago. It was very fortunate. I found out how many credits I had from Northwestern and it turned out by going after school and the summers, I had 123 credits from Northwestern. (laughs)

**JE:** Wow.



**NF:** ...plus 60 from Vassar, so they took me into the law school. Remember it was war time. The law school was not crowded. There were not thousands of men trying to get in. I got into the law school knowing nothing about law except my father had taken a semester of law school and liked it but he was more interested in the financial. So I went there, one of five women, three of whom hardly would talk to the other woman and me. I didn't know, why were all the judges named JE Charles, the chief justice. I had no...when are they going to get to the real court instead of the trial court? I was really ignorant but I loved it and I did well. I took the second quarter of contracts, the second quarter because I entered in January, so I was taking the second quarter of these courses without the first. It was a real challenge and I loved it.

**JE:** Weren't you asked why you wanted to be in law school?

**NF:** Yes. I soon learned that if I said I would like to be a lawyer, that was a very unacceptable answer so I'd say, "There are more boys there than anywhere else and they had the longest vacations of any school," and that was totally acceptable.

**JE:** I think you were quoted as saying something else.

**NF:** And also that I wanted to sway the jury with my hips. By this time I had realized, here were these three women so masculine wearing their neckties, etc., and I thought, "I do not want to be like that," so I started playing a role of this very feminine, stupid woman. It was a very strange thing because they posted our grades and I was doing really well. It just fit me. It was so right for me. I had wonderful classes with Hutchins and Adler who would choose 20 students to study law and the nature of man. It had an enormous influence on me and I had boyfriends lined up. I mean, I'd always been okay but not a real popular kid. (laughs)

**JE:** But all of a sudden that happened to you...

**NF:** All of a sudden because I was a fake.

**JE:** So then you thought, "I can manipulate these men by being fake." You kind of lost respect for them?

**NF:** I lost respect for them totally, totally.

## Chapter 5 – 3:04

### Meeting Ray

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**John Erling:** Jewel Stradford is a name that seems to come in here.

**Nancy Feldman:** Yeah. Jewel was my best friend there. Her father was lawyer Stradford from Tulsa, Oklahoma who had left during the Race Riot and Jewel was not permitted to visit us in Tulsa. Afterwards when the down home Franklin stuff started comin' she visited then she died. But we used to meet in Claremore. Jewel was gorgeous, she was downright beautiful,

and sweet , and lovely my parents liked her very much, and she became very, very successful because she was a Republican and she was Deputy Solicitor General under Nixon.

**JE:** Is that right, Jewel Stradford?

**NF:** Her name was Jewel Stradford Rogers, her first marriage.

**JE:** And it was in law school then that you met a young man by the name of, Ray.

**NF:** Yes. He came a summer semester. He'd been in the army and was in the hospital for 9 months. Got out and went back to OU and felt that law school wasn't the same quality that it had been. He'd also had 9 months of reading all kinds of things, unable to walk, so he probably had matured a good deal.

**JE:** Unable to walk?

**NF:** His feet broke down in the army. He has flat feet, or why is he walking with a cane today? After he graduated from OCS they marched then and his whole body collapsed and he was in the hospital at Chickasha. So he came and we both lived at International House. We came to know each other and enjoyed each other but no romance, and then a friend of ours was having a picnic for her birthday and she asked him to take me and he said, "Isn't there anyone else I can take?" I said the same thing and on the way walking there he said, "You can cut that coy act with me."

**JE:** So you found somebody who knew you were putting on an act of femininism.

**NF:** And it was just wonderful and we danced and I thought, "Oh my goodness."

**JE:** So then what year were you married?

**NF:** '46.

**JE:** Raised from Tulsa, he was an Orthodox Jew, and you didn't practice the Jewish faith so your parents perhaps...

**NF:** I don't think the parents were happy with either one.

**JE:** Happy with either one. You had how many children from this marriage?

**NF:** 3.

**JE:** And they are?

**NF:** Richard Goodman Feldman. Elizabeth K. Feldman, who we call Jingle, she has died. And JE our third.

**JE:** You set up a foundation in honor of Jingle. The Jingle Feldman Individual Artist Award.

**NF:** Yes we did. Now we're doing it a little differently but we're not quite sure what we're going to do with it now.

**JE:** These children, they were adopted-

**NF:** They were adopted. That has been a very incidental part of it, you know, it was just a delivery method.

**JE:** Exactly.

**NF:** Of the children who were ours.

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**Chapter 6 – 5:26****Getting a Job**

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**John Erling:** You had come here to Tulsa, obviously then to live here. You had graduated from law school, probably had some jobs offered to you in Chicago?

**Nancy Feldman:** Oh, yes I was very lucky because I had a rank in the law school that guaranteed me an excellent job.

**JE:** When you come here, and you go to some of these law firms, and say I'm from Chicago, I've got a degree, I had a high ranking and so forth...

**NF:** How fast do you type?

**JE:** How fast did you get that job with the law firm?

**NF:** I couldn't get one.

**JE:** Why, what did you say?

**NF:** I didn't type.

**JE:** They wanted you to be a typist?

**NF:** They wanted me to type.

**JE:** This was in 1946? In 1946 they asked you to type? Were there no female attorneys?

**NF:** Yes, there were. There was Drew Russell Mann, who had been a secretary and went to night law school, Dorothy Young. See, Miriam Lashley came later. They all volunteered to teach me how to type so I would type for the Bar.

**JE:** You said, "No, I'm not going to start that way".

**NF:** Yeah.

**JE:** "I'm a lawyer". Remember how many doors you may have knocked on?

**NF:** Oh, there were a lot. I had very odd experiences because I was young [chuckles]. I had lawyers say, "Well, we could meet for dinner, and we could talk about cases". I came home, and said to Raymond and said, "What is this? How did I practice law here?" It was discouraging to say the least. Raymond was making \$225 a month. We lived in a little apartment on Ninth and Main, which I loved. I was trying to get straightened out with what was a Jewish community. I had never...It was a time of a lot of adjustments. I also had gotten an infection on our honeymoon, which is why I couldn't have children. I was sick all the time. It was not the easiest time, but I thought it was absolutely blissful.

**JE:** You kept looking for a job as an attorney. You must have said, all right, I've had it. This is not going to go anywhere?

**NF:** In August, I marched out to the university.

**JE:** The University of Tulsa?

**NF:** Yes, stopped at a drugstore and called Sandra Kovach, who was head of the sociology department. I kept wondering, should I try to teach sociology or psychology? I decided sociology. Kovach hired me on a temporary basis, but I had to first go to JE Rogers. JE Rogers was head of personnel for the board of TU. JE Rogers said, "There are two jobs you could have. One would be an assistant to a judge, but I think you'd be happier teaching".

**JE:** Rogers and I clicked in the most marvelous way. He was an unusual man. After about five minutes, he said, "Now, let's just interrupt each other and we'll get to it. You interrupt me, I'll interrupt you". We just [claps hands] clicked.

**JE:** You started a temporary job teaching sociology.

**NF:** Yes. I went to the library [chuckles]. I'll tell you, I've never had a course in sociology, except...My life is so full of strange things. The leading urban sociologist in this country was a man at the University of Chicago. His daughter was named Nancy. She was a friend of mine. She wanted to live in the dormitory. They didn't have enough money for her to live in the dormitory, so I said, "You can invite someone to live with us". She invited me, and he had a Thursday night graduate seminar on urban sociology. I would go in [chuckles] and just absorb. It was wonderful. The night before the last class, he said, "I'm going to read your paper". I said, "You can't Mr. Gotchel." He said, "Yes, I am, and you should be there and hear the response". I was there and it wasn't a bad paper. I love research. Then, he called up a friend of his, who was Joe Ullman. He kept doing this. He'd say, "I'm going to put a little girl in your class, just sit in". I sat in on all...Harvard and Chicago were the two best schools of sociology so I just had that all there. In addition, my father had come from a poor family, and had gone to Hull House, the settlement house in Chicago, and had been greatly influenced by this Jane Adams. That's where he had learned to act, and play musical instruments and things like that. Two of the people from Hull House had written the outstanding books on social work, Ms. Grace Abbot and Ms. Helen Abbot. They came upon me one day, and said, "Nancy, what are you doing in the law school? You belong in the school of social work". I was just all over the place.

**JE:** This temporary job, how long did it last to you?

**NF:** 35 years.

**JE:** 35 years...and you had a rich, rich experience there?

**NF:** I loved it. I love teaching. I came at home one night, and said to Raymond, "Why are you practicing law? We could both make less money, and both of us teach, and it's such fun I love it". I had three months vacation off with the children. I was home in the afternoon.

**JE:** He continued his law practice?

**NF:** He loved it. He really loved it.

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**Chapter 7 – 8:04**  
**Teaching Race Riot**

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**John Erling:** You came to Tulsa and you knew something was different here about the community, and that is the struggle between blacks and whites.

**Nancy Feldman:** Yes, and I became very involved in that.

**JE:** I believe you told Ray you just could not live in a segregated community. What did he say?

**NF:** He said, “Well, marry me and desegregate it.”

**JE:** And that’s what you began to do? Isn’t there a story of when you came to Tulsa on the train?

**NF:** I came in. The train was early and blacks were asked to leave the white car when we crossed from Missouri into Oklahoma and I’d gone with the blacks. I was a member of the NAACP and CORE, I’d done sit-ins at the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago.

**JE:** So you went-

**NF:** I went to the black car and was asked to move.

**JE:** Into the colored-only waiting room?

**NF:** Then I went into the colored-only waiting room. I thought if he doesn’t find me here I’ll take the next train back to Highland Park, Chicago. He came right in there, he said, “I knew you’d be in here.”

**JE:** But it was your way of protesting?

**NF:** Yes. Luckily we came to know, Raymond belonged to a veteran’s group called Citizens First. Not to give preference to veterans but to all citizens the same. It was a mixed group, the American Legion and the AMVETS were not. We came to know Primus Wade, who was a prominent lawyer here. Primus and Derotha became very good friends of ours.

**JE:** Primus Wade?

**NF:** Primus Wade and Derotha. He was an attorney. Primus and I once decided to go to a bar association meeting on the 16th floor of the Mayo Hotel.

**JE:** The Mayo Hotel here in Tulsa?

**NF:** Yes. Primus was not allowed into the elevator so he went into the dining room, which was the Cherish room, which was very close, and got a napkin. I was wearing a green suit and a great big green pin on. He took my pin and put it up here and swept into the elevator. (laughs) We went up to the 16th floor together and then were turned down. The bar meeting was not for women or blacks.

**JE:** How did you feel about that?

**NF:** Furious. But we had such a good time. We picked up a lunch somewhere and went down to the river and ate lunch. But we became very close friends, the four of us, they were very good bridge players.

**JE:** Didn't you do, shall we say, sit-ins also in Utica Square?

**NF:** Yes.

**JE:** Tell us about that.

**NF:** We sat in at what is now the Wild Fork.

**JE:** Wild Fork.

**NF:** It was the garden. I sat in with Gladys Coots who was a beautiful black woman from Mississippi. Her husband was a doctor. We sat in there, we sat in the window, and we sat for two hours, and then suddenly they brought us some lunch.

**JE:** After two hours? They said, "Well, they're not going to leave." They gave in to you. Did you do any other, in Tulsa, what we'd call sit-ins.

**NF:** Yes. I think maybe the biggest thing was they took Colonel Young Park, which is named after a black veteran, and made it the reservoir for the city and would not allow blacks in any of the parks out by Mohawk. There was a large group of us; Primus, Amos Hall. Another black attorney, Julius Moran, I still get Christmas letters from his daughter, she was a pianist. The park department invited us to look at an alternative park. It was not a park, it was a briar patch. We walked through it without any trails and everybody was really furious but we said, okay, we'll take this as a park. Got to fix it. They did. But by that time it was beginning to break up.

**JE:** That park became what? Is there a name for that park?

**NF:** I don't think it became anything. I think they just kind of gave in.

**JE:** It was a park for blacks?

**NF:** It was a park for blacks. It wasn't really used very much, or maybe they named it Colonel Young for awhile, I forget.

**JE:** You talked about Gladys Coots and her husband was Doctor Norvell Coots. Were they murdered?

**NF:** She was murdered and their son was murdered. No one knows what happened.

**JE:** Murdered here in Tulsa?

**NF:** Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

**JE:** They were black; was that racially motivated?

**NF:** Don't know. She was from a pretty elegant family in Mississippi. The funeral, there were lovely people, educated, but you see Gladys and I had met before at Northwestern. This was so strange. I met Gladys and we looked at each other and looked at each other and she said, "Did you go to Northwestern summer school when you were a little girl?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Look at me, do you remember anything?" We were in a music class and I had called to the board to do some music and suddenly this beautiful black woman was following me very closely. I had started menstruating. I was fifteen, and she just covered me and she said, "When you get to the door you just slip out and take care of yourself."

**JE:** So that's two coincidences, Joan Flynt & Gladys Coots. How long did you live in Tulsa before you even heard of the Tulsa race riot?

**NF:** Through the League of Women Voters, I was local government chair of the League. We had a very poor county health department and a very poor city health department, neither with a doctor. The League's plan was to put the two health departments together and have a doctor. That was my job. In the course of this, I met a man at the county health department named Robert Fairchild. He had a Master's Degree in public health and he told me about the race riot.

**JE:** So that would have been about when?

**NF:** That was probably maybe '50 at the latest, and he told me about the race riot. I asked Raymond's parents about it and he remembered it. They lived on the north side. They had their maid and her family living with them. They had room for the maid and her family. I was teaching a course in social problems and I talked about it to my class. Well! This is in a number of books so we could check the date. My class just exploded: There was no race riot. I said, "Will you go home and ask your parents. They'll tell you about it."

**JE:** This is in a class at TU?

**NF:** Yes.

**JE:** You're bringing it up to you and they denied that there was any. Because they'd never heard of it.

**NF:** They had never heard of it and the parents denied it. So I asked Bob Fairchild to come and speak to my class, he was with the county health department. He was a young man and he remembers walking from North Tulsa to Turley along the railroad tracks with his brothers to get out of Tulsa.

**JE:** Because he was black.

**NF:** Uh-huh. (affirmative)

**JE:** So he spoke to the class and said, "I was there."

**NF:** The dean called me in. (laughs)

**JE:** The dean at TU and he said?

**NF:** "You will not have Robert Fairchild come to speak to your class again."

**JE:** Wow.

**NF:** But I did.

**JE:** Why did the dean not want Mr. Fairchild?

**NF:** He didn't want to create any troubles. TU was not a strong school at the time. It was a local school, really. I watched it get better and better and better.

**JE:** But you had him back anyway. Weren't you afraid of getting fired?

**NF:** I don't know what gave me this. Partly Raymond, who, I would say he never flinched at all and it could have hurt his business. But he did things that could have hurt his business that he thought were right.

**JE:** He encouraged you?

**NF:** There was no question.

## Chapter 8 – 7:55

### Integration-Holland Hall

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**John Erling:** I want you to tell me Nancy the story about you bringing the first black student to Holland Hall.

**Nancy Feldman:** Holland Hall didn't have any blacks and had our children. I did not want them going to a segregated school.

**JE:** You had how many in Holland Hall at the time?

**NF:** I had two. Our youngest child never wanted to go there, he had good friends you know Ron Gates. Ron Gates and JE Feldman were absolutely together all the time. We used to say the Gates had five children and we had four but between us we only had seven.

**JE:** Gates, bred.

**NF:** It was David Gates.

**JE:** David Gates brother.

**NF:** His brother Ron was an ophthalmologist.

**JE:** That's the family you're talking about.

**NF:** Um hm, and they lived just up the street from us. The children were best friends, still are.

**JE:** Your children were going to Holland Hall and there weren't any blacks there.

**NF:** No, moreover Borden's Restaurant was doing a catering and they wouldn't admit any blacks to Borden's Restaurant. You can't imagine what it was like here. It was extremely segregated community. I had done this before and I was comfortable doing it. I was on the board of trustees of Holland Hall. I had talked to them about it. Bert Moore said, "Find me the right person to integrate the school."

**JE:** He was head master at Holland Hall? He knew what you were going to do?

**NF:** Yeah.

**JE:** Then you had to find the right person.

**NF:** David Bernstein at that time was working for Tulsa Public Schools, asked him to help me find the right person. He's a weather man in Chicago now. He's on television all the time as a weather man.



**JE:** The person that was selected was...

**NF:** His mother was a maid...

**JE:** He was going to North Side School then.

**NF:** He was going to North Side School and he was bright and he was...our daughter had pigtails, little blonde pigtails. He would pull her pigtails. He was perfectly comfortable. Everybody liked him and he was a good athlete. Bert had said to me, "I don't need an athlete. I want a kid who gets along well and who's mother will care that he gets there." He was the first and it worked. It was one of the easiest things that I ever did. I think they were ready. The board, they knew they had to do it.

**JE:** You came along perhaps at the perfect time then.

**NF:** Yeah I think so. I don't remember any battle about it. Bert was very ready.

**JE:** That worked and he graduated then from Holland Hall. How would his tuition have been paid?

**NF:** Scholarship.

**JE:** He was scholarshiped through Holland Hall. During that four year period were there several blacks?

**NF:** There were several, Sandra Alexander was the second who's an attorney and been on a lot of boards. She came in. They were exemplary people and they made their way and they felt comfortable. Sandra's father worked for the postal service but also catered JE Alexander, did a lot of catering for private parties. A lot of people knew him and were pushing for Sandra to go.

**JE:** Sandra, that was a female then. It was the second one who came through.

**NF:** Very interesting when it came time for her to go to college, did you ever know Betty Hepstrong?

**JE:** No.

**NF:** Her husband was a doctor Paul Strong. Betty was determined that she would go to Swarthmore and I was determined she would go to Vassar and divide the scholarship. Betty won.

**JE:** In the 60's you were the chair of the Civil Rights Commission. Tell us about how you came to that and some of the issues you were dealing with then.

**NF:** That was interesting. I don't know how I came to be, I forget who was governor. I think it may have been Dewey Bartlett and we were friends. Dewey was very good on integration, very good. He's the first one who put blacks in the toll booths.

**JE:** You were named then chair but Governor Dewey Bartlett.

**NF:** I'm not sure if it was Dewey but I think so. It was a small committee, there was a black man named Henry Floyd, maybe four or five of us. At our first meeting we met in Lawton and we all made reservations, by that time the 58 had passed and we were officially integrated. When I checked into the hotel the woman said to me, "You and Mr. Floyd have adjoining

rooms I know you'll want to be together." I thought that's strange. Then when she saw he was black she moved him.

**JE:** How about that.

**NF:** We used to laugh about it.

**JE:** In 1964 the Civil Rights Act came about, were you then chair during that period of time?

**NF:** Yeah.

**JE:** That was Governor Henry Bellmon then at that time.

**NF:** Bellmon, yes.

**JE:** Was it Bellmon that named you to the commission?

**NF:** I don't remember if it was Bellmon or not.

**JE:** It was Governor Bellmon in '64.

**NF:** Yeah I think he made Raymond to the Oklahoma Civil Rights Commission.

**JE:** Do you remember any push back then during that period of time?

**NF:** No, but it was dicy. Raymond had a real big problem to deal with locally. He was head of it for I think before Bob Fortune appointed him. There was the gallery incident and someone was shot.

**JE:** The gallery incident.

**NF:** I don't remember what it was all about but our little boy JE answered the phone one night and someone said, "We're going to get your father. Tell him he'd better not go out of this house." There were threats.

**JE:** Your husband Ray had also been active in desegregation so his name was probably in the paper as long as yours was so you'd get that kind of threatening phone calls.

**NF:** Which was traumatic for JE. The first thing we did was try to integrate the army camps because they weren't integrated at all. That's why we were meeting in Lawton, Pepsi Cola wouldn't send a black driver to the army camp to unload the cokes. There were so many minor things that no one would have objected to that could be done quickly and easily.

**JE:** The army camp was all white and they didn't want to send the black in there.

**NF:** They did have a few blacks but the blacks, they all got terrible assignments and the wives of some of the black officers who had been bank tellers in their previous lives were getting jobs as maids. We attacked that and got them into the banks. It was just basic work.

**JE:** In '64 then with the Civil Rights Act then that because...

**NF:** It all changed. It became a federal issue.

**JE:** I recall Governor Bellmon because I've interviewed him. He just made sure that this was going to happen and that the state was going to follow through with this and he was very adamant about it and helped make it happen. In fact, as I recall, he sent a black into certain communities to see if they could actually be served in a restaurant or even have a...

**NF:** Yeah well that's what Raymond was doing here. Ray was doing that here.

**JE:** He was doing that here. That's how they were testing the waters.

**NF:** Borden's was the first cafeteria then to allow them in because of the pressure from Holland Hall. I so often feel if you start with the decision makers it'll go down quicker and easier. Most people in Tulsa I think knew it had to be done.

**JE:** They probably reluctantly knew it had to be done.

**NF:** Yeah reluctant but they liked the vision of Tulsa as a progressive city in those days.

## Chapter 9 – 6:20

### Arts in Public Schools

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about you and the arts. Arts in our public schools, how did that come about in your life?

**Nancy Feldman:** I was asked to chair a national conference on esthetics but be Arson Mandy's council here but it was a national council. We had a big meeting, big attendance and people from the Kennedy Center and very good speakers. I sat there and I thought, we don't have this in our public schools. Our son JE is not getting anything to do with the arts, he gets it at home but most children aren't getting anything. I drove home and called the superintendent of school who was a black man at that time, JE Thompson. We had met him at a couple of parties and he was very nice likeable man. I called for an appointment and his secretary said I could have 15 minutes of such and such a time of day and be on time. I prepared a really tight presentation on how the arts helped low income children who did not feel they had any talents at all and how it opened up schools for them so they could function better in every area of school. I started on my little speech and JE Thompson said, "I know all that Nancy, now what are we going to do about it?" I was not prepared for that. He said, "If I form an honorary arts commission will you chair it?" I said, "Yes, I will chair it if your office will do the typing." In those days there were no computers and I don't have a secretary. He said, "I'll do that." We made our agreement and we spent two hours that afternoon and my 15 minutes making a list of the people. We wrote a letter appointing them to the committee and the committee had become really powerful. We had people from professionally in the arts but people like Linda Fraser and Joan Shay and a really wide variety. The only one that he really wanted me to have was Mrs. Bartmann because Bill Bartmann at that time was very prominent and she was interested in the school. We got a real turn out from teachers, from some administrators, a lot of administrators did not like it at all. They did not see any value in the arts and yet it was at the time when it wasn't very scientific and they were talking about the Mozart

effect. If you play Mozart to your baby, well, but as we went on it became more and more precise and Carol Crawford was very interested in it. She was head of the opera. She said, "Whenever I want to get a musician a job I know I can get them a job in computing or something like that because music is such good preparation for this." People began speaking out and we had a little executive committee. We met every Monday. I worked like 45 hours a week on it. I went to see every member of the school board and all of them were interested and some not interested enough to take an active part in it but not willing to oppose it. I went to the Tribune and The World and they signed Jimmy Graham to cover it. There were editorials about it. They were very, very helpful and I heard all about who played what in the Sand Springs band from their editorial staff. Most of them had had some music or art experience.

**JE:** That was the beginning of it. Today in Tulsa public schools, what do we have?

**NF:** We had a rapidly changing series of superintendence. None of them reacted badly. Sawyer was especially good.

**JE:** David Sawyer.

**NF:** David Sawyer, he really pushed it and got it going and was willing to do it. There was money available and he figured out ways and I worked with the man who got grants at that time and we figured out some grants we could get on musical instruments we had a musical instrument drive, a city wide drive. Sawyer was very good. Then we got...

**JE:** Serinsky, superintendent Serinsky.

**NF:** The ego crazy guy. I took Ked Buzley with me to go meet him the first time. He talked about himself the whole time. The first thing I did after this happened, I went to Wendy Thomas who was head of the arts and manage council and I said, "Will you work with me on this?" She said, "Well of course." At one point she wasn't working very hard I said, "Wendy, I need more strength here. We really need to have the push." I worked enough on the arts and manage council and Raymond was one of the founders. I didn't hesitate and she said, "Yes do." She was very, very cooperative. Then came Ken and of course he was wonderful as he always is. It got a really good push but under Serinsky or whatever his name was, he was very smart. He did not over estimate his smartness but he said, "I can't do anything unless I get a supervisor." I said, "I will get you a supervisor." Ann Tomins was interested and she had everything. She'd been a full ride scholar but she called me up and she says, "He's turning me down because I don't have enough experience with music." I went rushing over there and said, "You know what from the music experience although Ann does have it but you are an administrator." "You're right." He hired Ann and she has been incredibly good.

**JE:** To a large measure then what you started we do have the arts.

**NF:** Yes but now with the state holding back on money and I'm absolutely convinced that this point Mary Fallin and Janet Barresi do not want the public schools to succeed.

**Chapter 10 – 3:03****Milk–Credit Cards**

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**John Erling:** There's an interesting story. You were local government chair of the League of Women Voters and you learned that the city health department was in horrible condition. Milk was not inspected properly. Tell us about that.

**Nancy Feldman:** I was shocked. The milk was not dated so I attacked Meadow Gold which was our big distributor at that time. I didn't even know about Hawk's but I was later accused that my uncle worked for Hawk's and I did this to help my uncle.

**JE:** What was Hawk's?

**NF:** Hawk's Dairy. Another minor thing, that my uncle never worked for Hawks.

**JE:** But you were accused.

**NF:** Nor was he ever in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**JE:** Oh.

**NF:** But I was very much accused of that. Meadow Gold was furious, but they started dating their milk. Then the city started inspecting more. The only way to solve it was to get the county and the city together. There was a couple here named Muriel and Charles Salinsby. They were both lawyers and friends of ours. I got them interested in it and they did that final push. The two combined got a good director who was a physician and our health department became a professional health department. It was very bad.

**JE:** And today it has a good reputation. Today in that county.

**NF:** Yeah it does.

**JE:** And it started there with you saying, "Meadow Gold you need to date your milk."

**NF:** Can you imagine that? Imagine having undated milk.

**JE:** Did you ever meet personally with the Meadow Gold people?

**NF:** Yes. It was not charming.

**JE:** It wasn't a pleasant meeting?

**NF:** No. They musta been dating it everywhere else and that's what I said. I said, "I had Meadow Gold milk as a child in Chicago and it was dated, I know it was."

**JE:** So I 'spose they didn't like you butting into their business.

**NF:** No, no.

**JE:** Didn't you have an issue with a credit card company?

**NF:** Oh yes. They wouldn't give me a credit card. I made a fuss about it.

**JE:** Why wouldn't they give you one?

**NF:** Because I was a woman.

**JE:** Oh, of course.

**NF:** So they finally got so annoyed, this was BankAmericard, they called Raymond and said, “Your wife is making such a fuss about getting a credit card that if you say it’s alright, we’ll give it to her.” And brave Raymond said, “You look at her income, her salary from TU, her assets, and you decide if you want to give her a credit card.” And they decided not to. At that point I was awarded a prize to go to England and speak for a month and I thought, “Gee, I need a credit card.” I got a Barclaycard, which was the same as BankAmericard, I could get it in Britain but not here. So I used that and got it here then.

**JE:** So was that a nationwide then that they did?

**NF:** I think it must have been. And my income wasn’t that big, but it was okay.

**JE:** About what time would that have been?

**NF:** Maybe ‘68, maybe ‘68.

## Chapter 11 – 5:12

### National Space Institute

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**John Erling:** You’ve alluded to it. You did some international lecturing.

**Nancy Feldman:** Um hmm, quite a bit.

**JE:** What you were asked to lecture about?

**NF:** One, I was on the National Space Institute Board. Well, that was an interesting experience in my life. What happened is I found I was being asked to speak before engineering societies. That had never happened and I wondered why. They were testing me to see if I would be friendly to science and at the end of that, the dean of the engineering school asked me to teach a course on the impact of technology on society. Well, I’d never heard of such a course, of course I said yes. He asked me to put together a course and teach it with Catherine Jones who is a professor of chemistry at TU, one of the few full-time female professors at TU. We had such fun working on a course together. It was to have 50 from the engineering school and 50 from the humanities. Anything not engineering was humanities. So we had this really diverse group of 100 people in Tyrrell Hall that we lectured to and I began to realize the lectures were not going over. We would hit one group or the other group and we had worked hard that summer trying to get it ready. I began experimenting and Catherine was very willing, about making up stories for them to fill out. The first one was, if you were going to send a mission to a planet, you could be able to send 20 people, here’s a list of 50 people, who would you choose and why? They got all involved in that and you could see the values beginning to work. So then I began making up little stories, but we talked about packaging and how it effects, and all kinds of

different things and everybody became really interested. It was a very popular class, so we wrote it up and it was published first in the Journal of Chemistry for Catherine. Then it was republished in the American Journal of Aeronautics. Why? I do not know. But I got a phone call from the National Space Institute. They were looking for a woman and a humanist to be on their board. They sent a man to interview me. I went on that board and it was fascinating. I knew nothing about it. I had to be very quiet.

**JE:** The Board of the National Space Institute. Was that a big board?

**NF:** Yes, it was. Hugh Downs headed it.

**JE:** Any other names that were well known?

**NF:** Oh, every other name. I showed my mother the stationery and she said, there's only one person here I've never heard of, that's you. (Laughter) James Van Allen was on the board, all kinds of big scientists.

**JE:** Do you think that board was able to accomplish anything, or was it...

**NF:** Yes, what it mainly did, it had industry on it, the head of aircraft companies, but mostly scientists. It was a good public relations board for space investment.

**JE:** We had gone to the moon by that time.

**NF:** Yeah, and I met all of them.

**JE:** All the astronauts?

**NF:** Yes, Alan Shepard, I mean they were at our meetings. We'd have dinner together. It was amazing and I just was wise enough to keep pretty quiet; but I did have a humanist viewpoint to contribute and a female viewpoint.

**JE:** So you made contributions to that board...

**NF:** Yes, I...

**JE:** ...and spoke up and were definitely an active member of it.

**NF:** Yep, and it was lots of fun. We went to the JPL, they all talked about going to the JPL.

**JE:** And what was that?

**NF:** Well, I did not know but I mean, so what's the JPL? It's the jet propulsion lab, but I said maybe it's the Jewish people. We were seated in a wonderful place to watch the take-off of the Viking and we left to go to the bathroom, when we came back, someone was sitting in our seats. We don't watch television much but my things were all underneath and I unseated JEny Carson and his wife.

**JE:** Oh really. Because they had taken your seat. They didn't know they were taken.

**NF:** No.

**JE:** So were they...

**NF:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** ...understanding about that. So the mission of the National Space Institute was to do what?

**NF:** It was really to acquaint the public with the importance of space as investment for us and as a peaceful promoter. For example all of miniaturization came from space. That's why we got small computers, not computers that fill a room.

**JE:** Microtechnology.

**NF:** Um hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Yeah. But what an honor for you.

**NF:** Oh, it was a thrill.

**JE:** Out of Tulsa, Oklahoma, to mix and mingle...

**NF:** All because this article had been reproduced.

**JE:** It is but you could go further back than that. What was the impetus of it at the very beginning, you and your friend there at TU wanted to teach this course.

**NF:** Yeah, and we wanted to teach it right.

**JE:** That's where it all started.

**NF:** Well, the dean started it.

**JE:** And you took up the gauntlet on that.

## Chapter 12 – 6:08

### Center for Physically Limited

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**John Erling:** You've started a few nonprofits in Tulsa, the Tulsa Center for the Physically Limited.

**Nancy Feldman:** Yes, that was the first one.

**JE:** How did that come about?

**NF:** As I told you, I'd never done anything with Jewish people and they asked me to be President of the Council of Jewish Women. The council's mission was really the same as the Junior Leagues, to find an unmet need and fulfill it and I thought I ought to do this. Once I started teaching at TU, our friends became TU people and I didn't have to cope with a lot of people I didn't have much in common with and I wasn't a Zionist. That was terrible, so I said yes. They were in real trouble. They didn't have any leadership coming up and I wanted to start a project. Dorothy Whitebook was a member of the Council Board. She was going to San Francisco. I said see if there's anything there that we should be copying here. She found this Center for Physically Limited and said this is the project. Well, it was so welcomed. Cerebral palsy, polio. Hillcrest gave us space. For years, Council had done volunteer to the mental health areas of Hillcrest, so they were willing to give us space and we opened it in the Hillcrest basement. I had never been very good with handicapped people, because I was taught to just look away and the opening night I was



standing there and someone came tottering down the ramp and fell in my arms and I got over it. It was a man named Sam Stewart and I'll never forget what he said. We were talking later, bad cerebral palsy, and he said, "We all have handicaps. It's just that on some of us they show.

**JE:** Where did you find the funding for the center?

**NF:** Council.

**JE:** The committee?

**NF:** We didn't have to pay Hillcrest any rent and Council paid for the staff, Council of Jewish Women. It was a very interesting project, because we had to get people to come and most people were hiding. I got a list of where there were people. No, we don't have anyone like that.

**JE:** Physically limited you mean? Yes and so you had to look for them and bring them out?

**NF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative) and that was interesting in and of itself. I used some of my students at TU for that.

**JE:** I wonder how you would find people like that?

**NF:** I had the list from Cerebral Palsy and they knew who, but the families were not admitting it and what it did was it released the families so much.

**JE:** So they had some place to take them to during the day.

**NF:** It opened at night, too.

**JE:** They didn't stay there? I mean, they came from their homes.

**NF:** Yes. Our first employee was a very well trained physical therapist, but she had no feeling for the people. It was physical therapy for her. With the help of my board, I let her go and a group of us interviewed and found Allie Murdock who had gone to school with Raymond and who was a Cub Scout leader and a warm, delightful, totally capable woman. She just made it warm and a place where everybody wanted to go.

**JE:** And that center is open today.

**NF:** Yes and Laurie Canton, who is running it is terrific.

**JE:** You were also involved with the Tulsa Global Alliance.

**NF:** Yes. That came through a close friend of mine, one of my five funny freaks, who was living in Manhattan, Kansas. Her husband was teaching at Kansas State and Bonnie called me up and said that she belonged to this organization and would we accept foreign guests to visit us? We had our three room apartment. I called it the three room deficiency. We had a bed in one corner and a couch and we began having guests. We were the generation, ordinarily I would have gone overseas sometime during college, but it was wartime, so we didn't have that experience and it was fascinating to talk with people and have them stay with us and exchange ideas. The organization we were with had us talk about peace for at least an hour at every visit.

**JE:** They'd come from other countries here. They would just come and live...

**NF:** I got it where the camp counselors from other countries would come and we'd have a busload and I would arrange for their stays in Tulsa. I'd call 30 friends and say we've got all these people coming.

**JE:** And they'd stay in their homes?

**NF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** So that was the function of the Global Alliance.

**NF:** That was the first function and that was tremendously successful. People really loved it. The kids loved it. I remember one time someone stayed at the Tandy's. The Tandy's used to like having them. They said, "We're staying at real American Millionaire's." I told Mary Lou and she said, "Tell them yes, we're..."

**JE:** It's a cultural exchange?

**NF:** It's a cultural exchange and we had many adventures with it. The nicest one I ever remember was we had a pool at our other house and we had tumble tubs that you had to try to sit in and you were always falling out of them. This Polish man, a very stiff Communist guy, kept falling out and drinking more and falling out and he said, "To hell with Communism. Up with Capitalism."

**JE:** So funny. It was worth it to hear that, wasn't it?

**NF:** It was. The one that wasn't so worth it was to walk into our son's room with a Swedish girl on his bed and he was about to peel.

**JE:** What was her intent there?

**NF:** Well, it seemed pretty clear.

**JE:** I see. So he ran out?

**NF:** I stayed in there.

## Chapter 13 – 9:21

### Travelers

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**John Erling:** But you and Ray have become known for your traveling.

**Nancy Feldman:** Yeah.

**JE:** I'm sure you have no idea how many countries you have visited.

**NF:** We've never counted it, because people count it in such repulsive ways, gosh. If they were in the airport, they would count that a country.

**JE:** How did that get started for you?

**NF:** It's a funny story. A couple of our children were pretty well grown up. 'Psychology Today' had a list of values in an issue and we separately filled out our values. Our first three were the same and our bottom three were the same.

**JE:** You and Ray, you mean?

**NF:** Uh huh. To our surprise, our first one was adventure. Both of us. Our bottom one was cleanliness and obedience. We thought, "We're ready to do more adventure". That summer, we took all our kids and went down the Grand Canyon in rafts. An 8-day raft trip. We just adored it. I can't tell you what it was like. It was so exciting for us. For our children as well. We came back and, "Where should we go?" At one point, TU had what they called a Jan Plan which was January off. We were going to have the Jan Plan. I was going to be off. We decided to go "one, two, three" and say the country we wanted to go to most. We both said "One, two, three, India!" So, we went to India. I did a speaking tour there and it worked out very well that we could do that.

**JE:** Speaking on what?

**NF:** Let's see. That first trip to India, what did I speak on? I did two speeches that I did internationally quite a bit. One was a communication speech which I made up. I believe in games a lot and I used to use them in teaching a lot. This was a set of kindergarten blocks. There were 11 blocks. I would seat people back-to-back. Each had a table in front of him. I would say, "Now, you're the leader. You tell me what to do, but I won't look." The audience could see me take the big flat block and put it down end-to-end. Stand it this way or this way. They would see what a mess-up it was. You couldn't talk. All you could do is go (knocks) and say, "I don't understand." Then the person would say, "Take the long block and put it end - " You could see the annoyance and no elucidation at all. The second time they did it, they did ask a question and get an answer - yes or no. The third time, they could have complete communication and you could see how it made a difference in the product. It was a really good sociological game. I started it on the Junior League here and they went all over the country doing it on Junior Leagues everywhere. Then I did it in Peru. I did it in England. I did it in lots of countries.

**JE:** You would basically work and explore all in the same trip?

**NF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Then in some of these countries, you wouldn't visit for a day or a week, you would have extended stays. 25 days or a month?

**NF:** Yeah, 30. We really stayed in a country.

**JE:** You really got to feel and understand the culture?

**NF:** Yeah. I felt it greatly enriched my teaching.

**JE:** Was TU paying for some of this because you were representing...?

**NF:** No, I first did that in England, the communications game. I did it at the University of Birmingham and an Indian man who was studying there came up to me and he said, "What could I do to get you to go to my country and do it?" I said, "I would love to." I gave him my name and address. Then, at the University of Manchester the same thing happened.

I gave them each other's name, and they put together a tour where they took care of all my expenses, and Raymond's too. We stayed often with faculty members, which was fun. I think that was a 4-week tour.

**JE:** You'd take a lot of walking tours of countries?

**NF:** A lot of walking. We both loved walking. We got to be really good walkers. On our first Nepalese trip, we were totally unprepared for this kind of walking. That was right after our rafting trip. We'd both been pretty athletic, but this lovely man, he was the man in charge of all the logistics of the trip, not the leader of the trip. He came up to me and he said, "I tell you how to walk." He began to spend time telling me how to place my feet, how to breathe, how to get that mountain lope going, how to pace myself. It had made all the difference. This was crazy to take a 23-day mountain trek with never had done it. We also had the first Sherpa leader. Usually the leaders were English, but Pertemba was our leader, and the Sherpa who taught me was named Mims. Mima Sherpa. On our next trip, a young Sherpa said to me, "Nancy, you really walk well." I said, "It's all due to Mima Sherpa." He said, "Mima Sherpa, old man?" I said, "Yes." He said, "My uncle." They're all related.

**JE:** You say "Sherpa". What's Sherpa?

**NF:** A Sherpa is a tribe in Nepal, and they are the climbers. They are the leaders and the guides now for the Everest tour. They lived up high. Pertemba, who was our leader, his uncle was the leader for Hillary. We became very close to Pertemba. He was amazing. At the end of the trip, he had us all seated and he said, "What was wrong with this trip?" There was something wrong with it. Two of the people on the trip were really difficult. One had had a heart attack before, and had gone on the trip anyway. He had a heart attack four days out. It was really difficult. Two Sherpas attached to him the whole time. The other one was the Kraft heiress. Kraft Cheese heiress, and she drank, but we all said the trip was perfect and he said, "It wasn't perfect. There no were salty crackers for dinner." He was a wonderful leader. We all admired him.

**JE:** Did you stay in 5-star hotels?

**NF:** 5-star tents.

**JE:** In other words, no-star hotels?

**NF:** No-star hotels.

**JE:** You've actually stayed in African huts?

**NF:** We've actually stayed in African huts.

**JE:** You've stayed in South American tree-houses?

**NF:** Yeah, that was only in South America and in Africa. We stayed in tree-houses in Africa quite a bit.

**JE:** How about in Egypt?

**NF:** No. In Egypt, it's so dirty. That's where we learned to not stay in 3-star hotels in backward countries.

**JE:** Did you stay in the desert?

**NF:** Yes. We had a wonderful time in the desert. There was a huge aquifer under a lot of Egypt, under the Western Desert. It sustained cities and they have lovely hotels. Not 5-star, but really nice, resort-y hotels. But we've not hesitated to stay in anything. Some really grubby.

**JE:** I'll bet you stayed in some awful places.

**NF:** Yes.

**JE:** Simply because that's the only choice you had.

**NF:** One of was in Egypt, we had a reservation at this hotel. We drove in and Raymond said, "I better go in and look and see what it's like." He came out and said, "It's terrible but there's no place else to stay." There were orange peels and cigarettes on the floor, dirt everywhere. We got our room and it was awful. We just weren't going to undress. Someone came in from the next room. He was a Sudanese man and he was a banker heading the bank there. He said, "You can't stay here." He had clean sheets and mattresses brought in for us. We went to dinner with him and used the bank bathroom.

**JE:** Did you ever lecture about your travels?

**NF:** A lot. Very regularly, at Boston Avenue Methodist.

**JE:** I don't suppose there is a favorite place that you visited in the world.

**NF:** Nepal has been very, very important to us and we realized how very important when Jimul died, we were having a really hard time. People were coming over a lot, and we decided we had to get to Nepal. Get things in perspective. We called Wilderness Travel and said, "When is your next trip to Nepal?" We went to the Annapurna Sanctuary and told everywhere we were not going to be socializing. We were going to walk by ourselves. We got a feeling of the size of the world.

**JE:** Yeah.

## Chapter 14 – 4:30

### Lucky in Life

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**John Erling:** What would you say is a key highlight in your life?

**Nancy Feldman:** Marrying Raymond, no question. I never had any expectation of such a life. When I got this cancer thing, I said I cannot complain. I've had 90 years of the best life of anyone I've ever known.

**JE:** We can point out here on November 20, 2012, you learned a month ago...

**NF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ...about cancer and you've had your first chemo experience. Here you are.

**NF:** I'm doing pretty well.

**JE:** Advice to young women?

**NF:** I had a lot of lectures and they were always planning. I'm going to do this, then I'm going to do this and then I'm going to do this and I say don't get yourself in lockstep. Keep open to all the opportunities that come by and grab them, even if they hadn't been on your list. I never thought I'd marry and live in Tulsa.

**JE:** No. All these things that you've done, you could never have planned for.

**NF:** Serendipity, it rules our lives and we've had such good luck.

**JE:** You've been so public. Were you ever asked to run or did you consider running for public office?

**NF:** Yes. I can't do it. I don't belong to a church. We give to the Unitarian Church, but that doesn't count as a church and I'm too controversial.

**JE:** You'd have to mind some P's and Q's that you couldn't mind, perhaps. There's a piano sitting here in your living room and you did play the piano as a young girl.

**NF:** Yes.

**JE:** Do you play today?

**NF:** Not at all. It's really bad. In fact, we're going out with the Langenkamps tonight and Sandra said, "You remember when we had a Christmas party and you were the only one that could play the piano at all?" I said I was so terrible. When I was in college, middle of my sophomore year at Vassar, I realized I did not have the great talent that my parents thought I had, but it didn't matter to me, because I was more interested in sociology, economics, political science, English Lit and that I better get out of music. It just was smooth. No regrets and very clear.

**JE:** As we look back on your life, how would you like to be remembered?

**NF:** Hmm. Maybe she did the best she could. I hope as a happy person who lived a very, very fulfilling life, full of nature, which is terrible important to us, to us both and wonderful children.

**JE:** If your children were here and I asked them, just a sentence or so about your parents, what do you think any of them would say?

**NF:** I have no idea. I think they love us a lot.

**JE:** Well, that's important.

**NF:** I think it was serendipity for them.

**JE:** They were indeed fortunate to have you and Ray.

**NF:** We were so fortunate and Richard, our first one, looks like Raymond, talks like Raymond. JE, our third, is just an incredible person.

- JE:** Which one of them is the music producer?
- NF:** Richard. He's got a Grammy and he's got 41 platinum records. Now for a woman who couldn't make it in music, isn't it good to have a son like that?
- JE:** I better let you go here to Pilates. I admire you at 90. Is there anything else that I should have brought up or we could touch on?
- NF:** I think I've been just enormously lucky in my life, just incredibly.
- JE:** But here you are, a woman who has accomplished so much and you have this positive attitude. Did you ever have a fight with depression?
- NF:** No.
- JE:** You've just been naturally an optimistic type of person?
- NF:** I think both my parents were. Raymond is. His mother wasn't. It was difficult for me to cope with. His father was a big optimist.
- JE:** I want to thank you for this time we've spent.
- NF:** I've enjoyed it thoroughly.
- JE:** You're just a busy lady. We might point out that we had to break the interview so that you could go to a luncheon at Mark Twain Elementary and you were very impressed with that school and what they're doing. Then, we reconvened two hours later to finish this and now she's off to Pilates. That's not bad for a 90-year-old woman.
- NF:** No, it isn't. It's just lucky. It's just plain lucky.
- JE:** Thank you, Nancy Feldman.
- NF:** Thank you. I thoroughly enjoyed, John Erling.
- JE:** I did, too.
- NF:** I really have.

## Chapter 15 – 0:33

### Conclusion

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**Announcer:** (music) This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).