WILPF	
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET	Title Page
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Interviewee's surname: Baker	Title:
Interviewee's forenames: Martha Jean	Sex: F
Occupation: International Vice-President of WIII DE	Date of birth: 22 nd September 1944 in Baltimore, Maryland
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Amends by MJB in blue

Martha Jean Baker: full name. Was married before and had a different name (doesn't say the name, learn later it's Levine). Born 22nd September 1944 in Baltimore, Maryland, then moved to Chicago till Martha was 3. Then moved to Minneapolis and was there till she went to university and got married (new house and area from age 5)

Currently International Vice-President of WILPF. Have been for 5 or 6 years and term is up in April. Will not be standing for re-election.

Childhood:

Q: campaigning and activism in the home from the beginning?

MJB: yes, parents very left wing and politically active from when I was little. Chicago hard to remember as very young. But a few vivid memories.

Born at the end of WW2 and after the war particular memory: Henry Wallace had been Roosevelt's vice-president. In 1944 Roosevelt dropped Wallace so Wallace didn't become president when Roosevelt died (Truman did, having become VP Jan 1945).

File 2 (break for phone call)

MJB: Truman became president and it was he who decided on dropping the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki so he wasn't popular (with people on the left). New party formed in 1948 called the Progressive Party and Henry Wallace was the candidate. MJB's parents were active in that campaign and active in that Party.

1952: Vincent Hallinan was candidate for the Progressive Party. MJB: if I ever wrote an autobiography the title would be 'And One for Hallinan!' as when she was in 3rd grade there was a presidential election. Result in her class: 20 for Eisenhower, 10 for Stevenson and 1 for Hallinan!

Parents were always politically active. The Cold War began. The House on Un-American Activities Committee and the McCarthy era. Red Scare. Early childhood memory of MJB's mother being a member of WILPF. It was called 'WIL' then: called that from 1915, full name not always adopted, MJB doesn't know when 'WILPF' (wilf) started being used. WILPF is awkward and silly. 'WIL' is a word that expresses what they were thinking about and wanted.

WIL had regular Saturday and Sunday events: bazaar, picnics. Other children were there.

School memory: in 3rd grade MJB used the word 'communist' and told by the teacher if she heard that word again she'd wash her mouth out with soap. Terrified MJB. It wasn't until she moved to the UK (as a much older adult) that she could comfortably use that word.

[05:00] Other children were not allowed to play with MJB as their families didn't let them: 'they knew about her family' [ie being left wing]. One particular girl specifically said you can't come to my birthday party. Discrimination on political background and also as MJB was Jewish.

Original neighbourhood in Minneapolis was strongly Jewish but moved age 5 to a less Jewish area. Happy childhood till age 5. Once at new kindergarten had a teacher who didn't like her. MJB and her older sister were the only Jewish children in the new school. The teacher liked the little blond girls in short skirts; MJB had dark curly hair and wore hand-medowns. Teacher made it clear she didn't like MJB. Teacher didn't like that MJB could already read. Made to make a card for her new born baby brother instead of making butter with the other children at the end of term. Teacher taught the children to bully MJB and make her cry; she cries easily. MJB bullied throughout school. Wanted friends but it was always problematic. What were the children going to do to her?

WIL picnics and bazaars: other children there who she could play with, as they got to know each other each time over the course of a day.

Rosenberg committee: parents and me politically active. Ethel and Julius. Julius may have done something quite minor but Ethel was innocent. [10:00] In Minneapolis MJB's dining room table become the mailroom for the local Midwest Rosenberg committee. 'I proudly licked more envelopes for the Rosenbergs than any other 7 or 8 year old in the world'. (Regional committee).

MJB knew about the Rosenberg sons and she wrote to them. She didn't get an answer but felt very aware of what was going on.

Her parents had a lot of political meetings. She and her sister (three years older – 3 and a third older!) could stay and listen. Serious, sometimes humorous. Arguments: Trotskyism vs Stalinism etc. People coming for dinner and her father and parents getting into political conversations.

McCarthy era: looking for commies. People who'd been close friends of the family, who shared the house when they lived in Chicago, the man, Sidney – it became known he had 'talked' so therefore no one they knew then spoke to him.

Q: any fear in the house?

MJB: the happy childhood changed when we moved, age 5. In kindergarten one day her parents weren't there and MJB became hysterical.

[15:00] First school was called Willard School and teacher called Miss or Mrs Howe (?). She gave MJB a plaster of Paris plaque with Little Bo Peep – last time felt cared for by a teacher.

Then went to the school (Douglas school) where teacher bullied her. Bullying then continued throughout school career. School sport: 'let's make Martha cry'.

This was before the Supreme Court decision to not have religion in schools. Huge Christmas tree in wintry Minnesota. Glass ball fell down to the ground, principal of the school ran out of her office and blamed Martha, saying she had to bring a bauble back from her tree. But MJB didn't have a tree at home... Two bits of law: if you bring the teacher flowers, she has to keep them on her desk. Principal allergic to a particular local flower that MJB would give her each year...

New Latvian girl came, not speaking much English, called Martha 'a dirty Jew'. Never told off.

Q: friends out of school, at WILPF picnics etc?

[20:00] MJB: both my parents' families were traditional, my father's father was an Orthodox rabbi. Parents keen to have a Jewish education: her father started 'The Twin Cities Jewish Sunday School'; he was the principal. All the children there were from political families. For 3 or 4 years, ceased when MJB age 9. Taught Yiddish instead of Hebrew. Songs and music, cultural issues. MJB friendly with those children. Only real friend was daughter of one of those families. Joined a synagogue when MJB was 9. But her family did a lot of things in the home (which is traditional) and MJB knew more about those things than the children who went to synagogue once they were in high school.

Junior High still not happy. When MJB was 16 she wanted to get away from Minneapolis and become someone else. Father said he'd support her if it was worthwhile. She liked science and her Physics teacher talked [25:00] about National Science Foundation Summer Institutes for high school students. MJB went through catalogue: looked for ones as far away as possible that lasted as long as possible. Found one in Arizona (Physics for 10 weeks). Alternative was to be a junior counsellor at the summer camp where her mother had been.

MJB went to the summer institute and became 'Jean' while she was there. Only five girls — 30 boys. MJB became the one who could be made fun of. Her father had given her some money and said if she could budget to get to Los Angeles to see her cousins then there'll be a ticket there to go to San Francisco and then to Denver and then to Salt Lake City and then to fly home.

In San Francisco she spent time with Ethel and John Ruymaker. Old political friends of her parents. Ethel was the secretary to George Brazillier who ran the Book Find Club. MJB's father was an avid book collector. Ethel was Jewish, asked MJB's mother for advice on marrying John. MJB still in touch with Ethel and still visits her.

[30:00] Stayed with John and Ethel and they were very supportive of MJB wanting to change and grow up. MJB's old best friend had made new friends over the summer and the school saw MJB still as the same person, but she'd changed. She wanted a social life but she thought the boys thought she had a boyfriend somewhere else, but she had no experience of anything.

Mother a member of WIL / WILPF all her life. Died when MJB was almost 29 and some money left to WIL.

Student years

MJB not yet done anything for WIL. The year she went to university (Western Reserve University, later merged with Case. In Cleveland) was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Day after of Kennedy's speech MJB commented to her peers about it and most of them didn't even know about the speech – she hated being part of apolitical group.

Merger of Case and Western Reserve: incompatible by-laws on religion. Only 5 women at Case.

[35:18] MJB complained about the lack of politics at Western Reserve so her mother suggested she 'go see Dr Spock and say you were raised by the book'. Dr Spock was at Western Reserve and was involved in Ban the Bomb. Dr Spock put MJB in touch with medical students who were active. MJB had curfew as part of a women's dorm: there was a bar called 'The Library' so when some signed out they could say they were going there.

After one year transferred to University of Minnesota. MJB's sister had dropped out of uni early: message from parents, you must finish.

MJB's best friend Cindi. MJB's sister married Cindi's brother. Cindi and MJB finished their high school requirements for university early so wanted to start university early, and do high school in the morning and uni in the afternoon. Refused so last year of high school very empty.

[39:15]: Back to University of Minnesota. Mix of classes. Always trying to find the major with the fewest requirements, so took classes from 15 departments. Became a Sociology Major. Grades from A-D Liked her advisor who suggested attending his class and doing independent study to get grades. Trying to get through uni as quickly as possible. Didn't pursue physics. Took Advanced Math but couldn't understand accent of Asian teacher. Did well in Chemistry. Class in working out different substances – chart to use, didn't realise had to memorise it, wasn't available in the exam as a reference.

[45:00]Q: how were you filling your time at university if studying as little as possible?

MJB: lots of left-leaning organisations at the U of Minnesota. All organisations had to be independent from national organisations. A lot of the students knew MJB or knew of her because of her family. 'Rushed' by these groups. MJB 'purist': only joined two. 1. Students for Integration and 2. Student Peace Union. Anti-Vietnam.

Man with a button: CCCP = Communist, Communist, Communist Party! (she learnt later for Soviet Union / USSR in Cyrillic)

Q: what sort of activism?

Marches and demonstrations. Anti-Vietnam, integration, pro-integration. MJB's parents had gone to Cuba before the US blockade so MJB enthusiastic about Cuba. Group of students due to go but her parents wouldn't let her go, or let her go to the South to register voters in Mississippi. Too dangerous.

[50:00] Discussion of mother at same age as MJB: she got pregnant working at a camp but MJB didn't know until after her mother had died. Discovered letters that MJB and her sister read that told all.

Regular demonstrations – some from WILPF but MJB not identifying as WILPF and couldn't have a student group at U of Minneapolis.

Last year of university MJB met her first husband, a graduate student in History. Met in September, his family from New York. Got engaged in order to go to New York for Christmas vacation, get married once graduated. Parents agreed. Big party from her aunt, with gifts. Embarrassing. MJB and fiancé had not had sex. MJB's father sat her down: if you and young Herbert don't want to wait it's all right to marry sooner. Decided to get married in March. Graduated the following March (a year later) and then MJB was pregnant with first child.

[55:38] Herbert and MJB quite young – he was 20 as was she. He needed parents' permission as under 21. Had been outsiders but together suddenly had lots of friends and gave lots of parties.

First years of marriage

Last year of university: remained politically active. Wanted to get away – Herb hadn't wanted to do a Masters before doing his PhD so looked at universities where could get a better PhD. Got money from Yale and they moved to New Haven with their month old child. Herb finished PhD in record time as MJB was his manager. Second year at Yale Herb went abroad – all three of them came to the UK. Fell in love with England. Went to Germany as well.

Herb as politically active but not as much as MJB. His PhD research was to do with Nazi History. Rise of Nazism in free city of Danzig, and became a book, called 'Hitler's Free City'.

[1:00:16] Husband's family were Jewish and lived in Queens, New York, heavily Jewish. Mother's parents quite religious, father's parents more secular.

Son age 15 months or so when in Germany – first went to Washington DC, then England, then Germany. MJB stayed in DC first to be there for the 1967 March on Washington. To be there in front of the Pentagon and see people put flowers in the end of bayonets. It was an amazing scene. MJB also looking for a flat so dressed very conventionally so didn't connect with the other people on the march. MJB had a wonderful time.

Q: did you take your son on the march?

No, he was with his dad. MJB took her children on marches later. Her niece came on marches with her. Feels strongly children should be taken on marches.

1968: In Germany. A turbulent year to be there. Had to go to Danzig (part of Poland post 1945) so needed a research visa. As Americans and Jews and students the Head of the Archives was told not to let Herb in. Head of the Archives gave instructions to go to Warsaw and speak to particular Minster and 'bang hand on desk' to get the access he needed.

[1:04:55] Then went to West Berlin. Demonstrations. MJB didn't like what was going on in Poland. Bought money illegally at cheaper rate and hid it in son's nappy. Wanted to go to East Berlin.

Story of later years: lived in West Berlin and knew people in East Berlin. 1970s and 1980s. MJB went to East Berlin and brought illegal money in, until she met embassy people. Wearing a miniskirt, a dress cut low, with invisible pockets. Money in bra or deep in the pockets. One day was checked – showed her little purse and her empty pockets. Story of person complaining about the forced change of money – border guard doing dance 'Money makes the world go round'.

The year away was 67-68 so unrest and demonstrations in US as well. Prague upheaval, hearing about on radio in Germany. '68 Democratic Convention while MJB and family on boat back to the US. When got back it was a culture shock: Police cars and flags on uniforms. Only talk was about violence at Democratic Convention, not events in Czechoslovakia.

[1:11:42] The academic climate had changed. Herb finishing PhD and graduates being recommended for jobs. That year no one got jobs from those recommendations. MJB pregnant with second child. Herb got one year appointment at University of Buffalo, New

York State. Rented awful house with overgrown garden. Room with synthetic grass, sticky from dogs

Moon landings on her son's third birthday (21st July 1969)

[1:15:08] Moved house again. Dark house and bought piece of art still has over the mantelpiece.

While at the University of Buffalo MJB joined WILPF in her own right, for herself. Husband's colleague was a member, they became active together. She was on a one year contract at the university?

Late spring 1969: Kent State. Uni of Buffalo had a lot of demonstrations on campus that MJB / WILPF involved in. Campus locked down. Faculty decided to still hold meetings on campus as had keys to building. All about Vietnam: clearly and heavily. Faculty in the building on a Sunday and the police came. Police were using rubber bullets and found later did use some live ammunition too. Kent State came 'this close' to happening at Buffalo. 45 faculty members were arrested. MJB and others drove around town with cheque guarantee cards to get \$50 per card (cashing cheques at supermarkets) to raise bail money. Bail money eventually not needed. 'Haye's Hall 45'.

1:20:04: made a record about the Haye's Hall 45: 'Haye's Hall 45 Blues'.

MJB's mother came to visit and complained about her housekeeping: 'I'm really happy to see you and I want you to be here but if you all want to do is complain about my housekeeping you can leave now.' She shut up.

Q: what drew you back to WILPF?

MJB: I was aware of WILPF and I regret I didn't get involved with it in Germany, either time I was there. Two colleagues or colleagues' wives were members at Buffalo and that reminded me. Probably important it was a women's organisation. Didn't consciously think about that – I grew up able to participate, speak etc, so didn't have sense of oppression some women have. Though when I was 13 my father didn't believe in Bat Mitzvahs, the other girls at school had them, my brother had his Bar Mitzvah. At 16 put on a performance with the class at synagogue but not Bat Mitzvah, called 'confirmation'.

After Buffalo, Herb went to DePauw university, Indiana. US VP candidate went there. Moved to small town in Indiana (pop 8000 when students there): 'small Christian college for small Christians'. Only relatively radical political organisation was the NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Herb and MJB became active in that.

1:25:35 There was no WILPF in State of Indiana, didn't consider setting up a section there.

Only Jewish family in Putnam County. As a joke had a sign on front door: 'Jewish Community Center of Greater Greencastle, Head Office'. Led to no Jehovah's Witnesses and such knocking on the door.

Young for faculty (age 26), friends were students. Beards, long hair, left wing. Students would babysit. Smoking pot with students – one of few faculty who smoked pot openly. Students supplied them, but right wing neighbour thought MJB and husband supplied the

students. People didn't like Herb: he'd gone to a major university, had finished his PhD, had been published – all meant they thought he would leave, so he did.

Vague time to MJB: if we stay any length of time I'll go crazy. Maybe I did. MJB became faculty adviser to the Lilith group started by women students.

It was a time when women were starting to go back to university to get law degrees / degrees, women changing their names to get rid of their fathers' names. MJB gave her daughter just one name and then gave her a middle name so she had an alternative last name if she wanted one when she grew up.

1: 31: 00 Rumour mill at the university: MJB had to keep things close, or feed the rumour mill. People weren't their friends. There for 3 years. In the second year it was time for raises (pay rise): Herb got smaller than usual raise, so exercised right to meet with the Dean to discuss the raise. MJB had a dream about the meeting and bizarrely her dream 'knew' that the university VP was at the meeting too. Most of that following year protesting about lack of raise and being pushed out.

1:34:45 After 3 years in Greencastle Indiana Herb got a grant to go to Columbia for a semester. Also applied to the Humboldt-Stiftung for a grant to go to Germany. MJB and Herb went to New York. Moved into a flat for the semester – almost immediately heard her mother was dying. Flew back to Minneapolis with her sister and got there just as her mother had died. Mother had been ill but was unexpected she died. Herb therefore had to settle the kids in school and start the new semester alone and he got off kilter academically and MJB believes never 'got back on'.

Letter from Humboldt-Stiftung had gone to DePauw and not been forwarded. Humboldt-Stiftung: a foundation in Germany that supports academics from other countries doing research in Germany.

Moved to Germany

Herb had got a grant: they had to pack up and make plans with 3 children (aged 7 to 2). Arrived in Munich and had 15 pieces of luggage and boxes. Middle child: first word in German was 'arschloch'. MJB could speak some German but not understand, Herb could speak but needed to be perfect. MJB would have to go to the store and use sign language for what she needed. 'Mottenpapier!' (moth paper, moth balls)

1: 41: Older son enrolled in international school paid for by MJB's father. Younger son in a Jewish nursery school. Daughter young enough to be at home. Younger son went to international school following year and the boys took the tram together on their own.

Politically, didn't do much. A couple of demonstrations. Second year Herb got another grant, to go to Israel to do some research for his second book. So all went to Israel for 2 months. Herb did research and MJB went sightseeing with the children in Jerusalem. Each weekend went to a different location, advised by travel guide cousin. Israel felt very American to them after Germany.

1:44:36 went back to Munich. Otto Suhr Institute at the Free University of Berlin (Freie Universität) had opening for someone who specialised in Nazism. Herb Levine recommended by Yale to Otto Suhr Institute so MJB and family moved to Berlin in 1976.

Happy to stay in Germany, had no other place to go. Considered opening a business in Munich. And it was Berlin!

Hotel then ultimately bought a house in Berlin. School called the Kennedy School: bilingual public school (ie state not private) for Americans and Germans. First time had some stability in our lives. MJB and husband started doing different things. MJB coached Herb through his 'Habilitation' (extra / super PhD in Germany). Herb burnt out academically and personally. Had a premature middle age life crisis. Herb wasn't paying bills, people coming to take things away (bailiffs): major crisis in relationship. MJB gave him an ultimatum, if you finish some work you can visit the UK. MJB discovered bank account had been frozen when he left. MJB got enough money. She started to do things she liked doing and realised she was better off without him. He agreed too and they agreed separation. Sold house and MJB moved to a flat in Berlin with the children. Joke: 'we can never separate as we'd argue over the children: you take them, no you take them!' Aged 15, 12 and 10.

Separation

1:52: 00 Older son becoming impossible and MJB made mistake of letting him become the 'man of the house'. Herb's job finished, became unemployed, didn't register on time for benefits. MJB was 'minimally' working. Writing articles for a magazine for the American community – food articles in Munich. In Berlin wrote about cultural issues and tried to get the English speaking population interested in cultural events that weren't language bound. Got to go to film festival each year with press pass, learning decent German. Tried to create job for herself in Berlin: serious interviewing of people in arts world, not quite getting in.

London the first time

1: 55: 13 applied to Masters programs in US for writing and one in UK: Diploma Course in Arts Management funded by the Arts Council. Didn't really want to go back to the US. Came to the London with the two younger children. Older son went to university in US. Her father paid for the children to go to American school in London. Here in London for two and half years. Made some contact with WILPF but didn't really join at that point.

Long and painful story: we had to leave the UK. Won't go into it now. MJB didn't want to go to somewhere where she'd lived before, felt like a defeat. Wanted to go a new foreign country. Previous year been on an exploratory trip to the US and had been to Seattle as recommended by particular friends. Younger son had one term left at high school in UK, got the school to agree to let him stay till the end of term, got his high school diploma once in US and then on to university. After demonstrating that he'd worked during what would have been his last term of secondary school.

Seattle and Chicago

MJB and her daughter went to Seattle, enrolled her in school, MJB looked for a job. While in London had got divorced as Herb had met someone else. MJB had had no need for a divorce. She offered to go to Berlin for the divorce hearing but Herb said no but meant couldn't get divorced in Berlin. MJB did a 'do it yourself' one in UK. Conditions to Herb: pay her a certain amount and make no demands on the children.

2:00:56 Arrived in Seattle as a single parent. Stayed as Levine for a while as the children wanted her too, then became Martha Baker Levine and then Martha Baker again. Introduced

to Malcolm (her current partner) and he moved in with her. WILPF stand at a street fair. Went to a WILPF meeting and met Caroline Canafax who had been an international VP of WILPF. She'd been at school with Malcolm's mother. Caroline insisted MJB join WILPF then and there and MJB became a very active member of the Seattle branch in 1987.

MJB became the spokesperson on human rights and other things. Hiroshima Day. Seattle Coalition for Peace in the Middle East during the first Gulf War. Also time of Oslo Accords (between PLO and Israel) and MJB worked with a Muslim man who owned a Middle Eastern restaurant set up a Jewish Muslim Peace party. He supplied food, MJB spoke there, there was lots of press.

Slightly connected or through WILPF became involved in the Jewish Peace Fellowship (JWP). JWP interested in working with Black and African-American communities. Had been fallings out since civil rights movement. MJB went to an Haiti event and approached a charismatic African-American minister who wanted to do the same so they set up 'The African-American Jewish Coalition for Justice'. Set up a pairing project for individuals and families to go to each other's events.

2:06:17 Malcolm trying to convince MJB to go to law school. Unsure of her undergraduate record from years ago. Secretly took the exam to get into law school. Didn't do stellar-ly, started to get letters from law schools. Waiting list for University of Washington (in Seattle) and Hastings in San Francisco but didn't get in. Accepted into a law school in Chicago, Chicago Kent College of Law. Malcom was in Seattle so they visited each other once a month. Got married by Chicago and Malcolm moved there after a year. Second term of MJB's second year she came to London to do a term at the London Law Consortium. Joined Chicago WILPF. In London for that semester got in touch with London WILPF and went to some meetings. Malcolm suggested finally they move properly to London (NB: she says Chicago but she means London). Malcolm did exploratory trips and looked into all the Home Office requirements.

London for the second time: most active WILPF years

2:10:12 MJB did the bar exams in Illinois and then arrived in London on the day Tony Blair was elected Prime Minister in 1997. Found a flat, MJB registered to do an LLM (Human Rights in Public International Law) at UCL. Malcolm found plenty of work and hasn't turned back since. November 1999 moved into this flat – lived here as long as the house I moved into when I was 5. Joined WILPF almost immediately in 1997 – branch called 'London Lunch'. Active member and participant in London section executive since 1997. WILPF congress in Sweden – first international congress she attended – appointed as the convenor of the constitution committee. Never actually practised as a lawyer. The year before she started her law studies she went to Geneva to meet Edith Ballantyne who is the history personified of WILPF. Ran the office for 26 years and been president for 6 years. Went to discuss if it would be helpful for MJB to become a lawyer.

At the Congress in Sweden MJB became convenor of the constitution committee so has been active since then. (need to check date). Year when the international board meeting was in Ahmedabad in India there was a vacancy for a VP so MJB got a colleague to nominate her, in India they assumed it was from the UK section and no one else was nominated. MJB was elected and re-elected at the Congress in Costa Rica and is still VP. Annalisa Ebbe

didn't do anything from the executive so MJB is also co-convenor of the constitution committee.

2:16:00 Done a lot of things here in UK, most WILPF related. For 13 years attended the European Women's Lobby (EWL), 6 years of that on board of the EWL, last 2 of those years (recently), VP of the EWL.

Malcom is a lawyer (and member of WILPF). US allows men to be members, so MJB's father remained a member after his wife died. UK section allows men to be members if they are married to the woman member (check if married or partner)

Q: what are you most proud of in the last 15 years?

MJB: That's a really hard question to answer. Proud of persevering, proud of representing WILPF, Women's National Commission, represented WILPF there. WILPF first organisation to have special recognition status with UN. Proud of raising the profile of WILPF outside of WILPF and UK. Work with EWL meant there was a good policy paper on Women, Peace and Security. She's became someone bothered about procedure, it's about a framework and made enemies some in WILPF some in EWP about the new statutes and new constitution.

Q: what do you most enjoy about it or value?

I enjoy the issues. I enjoy the friends I've made and the people I've got to know. There's so many things. I don't know what I'm going to do after April.

Q: what would you like to see WILPF carrying on doing or doing generally?

I'd like to see WILPF grow. WILPF international be more attentive to the membership. WILPF make an impact on the issues that are import: the root causes of conflict, identifying them, dealing with them, getting women involved. My favourite WILPF slogan is 'listen to women, for a change'.