

Interview with Andy Steiner

Interviewed by Kathryn Brewer

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at the offices of Minnesota Women's Press, Inc.
St. Paul, Minnesota**

KB: I'd like to start by asking you to describe how you've been involved with the Minnesota Women's Press over time.

AS: While I was still in college--Macalester College--I applied for an internship at the Minnesota Women's Press. It used to get delivered to the student union at Macalester. I just saw it--I hadn't seen it actually a lot, but I'd seen a little bit of it. I was interested in journalism--a journalism major--so I decided to try to get an internship. I applied for an internship there, and actually didn't hear back. I didn't get an internship. I might have heard from Mollie [Hoben; publisher and co-founder of Minnesota Women's Press, Inc.] much later - I don't remember how that worked out. By then, I had an internship somewhere else. I was working at Channel Two [KTCA, public television], doing some freelance work there.

I heard from a woman who was doing my resume'--Amy Lindgren. She had done profiles at the time for Minnesota Women's Press, and she told me that the "Women's Press" was looking for someone to write cover stories. They wanted to have a freelancer--a regular gig where you'd be writing cover stories for the Minnesota Women's Press. So I sent my resume', or I maybe called. I talked to Mollie, and I sent her my resume'. She had me in and interviewed me. I remember when I left the interview I said to my friend, "They really should hire me; I'd be perfect for it." I really liked Mollie a lot. Then she called me and asked me to do it.

KB: Why did you think you'd be perfect for it?

AS: It just sounded like it would be fun, and in talking to Mollie--though I can't tell you exactly what she said. I just remember thinking, I like to write, and it would be about topics that I would like to do at the time. I was twenty-two or twenty-one or whatever. The money seemed like it was good. In reality, it's not very good. [laughs] But I thought it was, and so that seemed kind of cool. It would be a way to be doing journalism, so I thought it would be perfect.

KB: So why don't you talk then, after you started doing that regular writing, how your job progressed.

AS: I was doing that for about a year. There would be weekly meetings--that's how it was still done when I left, but I don't think it works that way here anymore. Every week, there'd be a cover story meeting. It was in the late afternoon one day a week, and I had a part-time job so it worked out. I would go, and there was another person--Becky Sisco--who was writing cover stories as well. So Becky, Mollie, and I think Glenda [Martin; publisher and co-founder of Minnesota Women's Press, Inc.] used to come, and Fran Cottle, who was the designer at the time. We would talk about ideas and things that were going on in the news.

What Mollie was really trying to do at that time, was to take the news and interpret it from a feminist perspective. We really weren't breaking news, because it came out every two weeks. Rather than trying to do that, we were trying to look at what was going on. So we would talk about that and somehow, something would come out of it all. Usually every issue--so maybe it wasn't every week, it must have been every other week that we would meet--every issue or every other issue for sure, I would write a cover story. Becky would write the other cover story. We'd switch off. And then sometimes, I'd just write things on the inside, and then they would pay me for that.

KB: The ideas for the cover stories...where did they all come from?

AS: It was because people were reading the newspaper, watching the news...

KB: So it was interpretive?

AS: Yes. I was working at Channel Two on a program called Almanac--which was a current affairs program. It was about what was going on from a local perspective. Because I was a journalism major, I was interested in that. That was where [ideas] came from. They would come from the conversations--what people thought. Glenda didn't come to all of the meetings--I remember at the beginning, she was there a lot more--and we would meet in the office that was Mollie's, which is the conference room now.

I was writing, and I enjoyed it. I really liked Mollie a lot, and I was enjoying that. It felt like she was a mentor to me. I enjoyed Becky. Then I applied to go to graduate school. So I got into graduate school, and I left at the end of the summer. I moved to Chicago to go to Northwestern [University].

Mollie gave me a going-away party and said to keep in touch. I had a subscription to the newspaper, and we really were in contact throughout the whole time I was in graduate school, which was just a year. I actually even met with her while I was in Chicago. I came back for a vacation or something. I talked to her about different ways I could maybe work for the newspaper again, when I came back...if I was to come back. We talked about that a little bit.

KB: You're from the Twin Cities originally?

AS: Yes, I am. Well, I'm from Minnesota. Then I got an internship at the Pioneer Press after graduate school. I kept in touch with Mollie, and when my internship was over, I was looking for another job. Mollie called. Becky during that time had been the assistant editor, and Mollie told me that Becky was going to leave, or stop doing that. Mollie told me that she would be interested in having me do that [assistant editor job]. So that's how I started.

KB: What did an assistant editor do, at that point?

AS: It changed a lot--I don't know what Becky did exactly.

KB: What did you do? That's really what I'm interested in.

AS: From the beginning I would write, or I would try to--it feels really arcane now. The situation was that we would sit in the office in the front, which was Mollie's office. Mollie and Faye Kommedahl [early copy editor of Minnesota Women's Press and later volunteer], I, and an intern shared that conference room as an office. There were no computers, so when the stories were finished somebody had to input them. There were computers, but only a few--I didn't have a computer, Mollie didn't have a computer, none of us did. Somebody on staff would input the stories and then print it out. I'd edit on the page--cut to fit, and work on stuff like that. I'd go to the same meetings. It was basically the same job as I had before, only expanded a little bit.

KB: A full-time job at this point?

AS: No, at first it was thirty hours a week. That was for just a short period of time--that's how Becky had done it. I said to Mollie, "I think I'm doing enough to make it full-time, and I think I should be called the managing editor." So we did both of those things. I don't know how long I was assistant editor--maybe for six months or something like that. Then I was managing editor. So for most of my time at the "Women's Press", when I was a full-time employee, I was a managing editor. I was the editor for the last six months or more that I was here.

KB: So then you actually took over from Mollie as the editor.

AS: Yes. I was the first person to take over for Mollie.

KB: What was that like? That must have been quite an interesting thing to do.

AS: Yes. It was a big deal for Mollie. I was ready to do it for a long time. She did talk to me about it around the tenth anniversary--which doesn't seem like that long ago at all now, because when you say fifteen it's only five years. I remember right before the tenth

anniversary, there was going to be a big party. Mollie had a meeting with me, and said, "I'd really like you to be the editor. I think maybe around the tenth anniversary would be a good time." I remember saying to her at that time, "Well, I'm really flattered. I'll consider it, but I'm worried about if I say I'm going to be the editor, it's a big commitment. I can't be like you. I'm not going to give my whole life to this like you have, because it's not my newspaper. It's your newspaper." So we talked about that. Then it was a long time before she finally asked me to be editor. I think she hadn't been mentally prepared to do that yet.

When I became editor, my job didn't change. The only thing that changed was that Mollie wasn't there on such a day-to-day basis. I think she was still around a lot, and I really liked that. I didn't want her not to be there. It wasn't a problem to me. I wouldn't have really minded if I never had been named the editor--but I was, and that was nice too. It was a big deal for her.

I think she'll probably tell you that she took a sabbatical at one point, trying to figure out where she was going to go with her career. Whether she was going to back off a little bit to let the business grow. I'm sure she'll talk about that. I think that's what came out of her decision to name me the editor. When I left, Cynthia [Scott; present day editor] came in. From my perspective, and my talking to Cynthia, she has been much more independent. I was working really closely with Mollie, which I liked. It was more of a group process.

KB: You were the editor for how long then?

AS: I can't tell you for sure. I left in July of 1996--when I started my new job. When I left, I don't know how long I had been editor. I feel like maybe it's longer than I remember.

KB: Did you have an opportunity during the time that you were the editor, or the managing editor, to put your own person into the paper--to move the paper in a direction that you thought would be a good direction?

AS: Yes. Even when I was the managing editor. It wasn't entirely always my project. I don't think it ever, even when I was editor, was entirely my project. I think Mollie is much more hands-off now with Cynthia. It was a good symbolic clean break when I left, because I had been of the old guard.

A lot of things changed with me working here. I put my mark on the way the production process was done--we made a lot of changes. It was tough for Mollie too, and I think she was really open to doing that. I led the meetings, even as managing editor. I came up with the story budget--I did all that. I was doing an editor's job with a managing editor's title. That was fine. It wasn't a change. At the same time, Mollie and I were working together. I wasn't ever on my own saying, "This is exactly how it's going to go." I guess I wanted Mollie's opinion--I would ask her. I wanted someone else's opinion. Bear in

mind, I was twenty-five, twenty-four...I was young. Cynthia is forty-something, so it's a little different story. I was really young, so I wanted that help.

KB: Talk about some of the changes that you've observed, and perhaps participated in, when you think about the content of the paper--over and beyond your involvement, now that Cynthia is doing it, too. What have you observed?

AS: In some ways, I feel like it's a different paper. I don't really know. I haven't been a student of it though over the last few years since I've been gone. I do look at it, and when I see it, I pick it up. I do see it a lot--especially now, there's a place that carries it right by where I work. I often stop in there and get it.

For one thing, though I think it's changed again, the look of the newspaper was evolving from a design standpoint. I think we had some really good photographers working for us when I was there. Fran Cottle--while she stopped working for us--but at the time she did some really nice, innovative design work. That was interesting.

There are some basic things that are still the same. There's always that Profile [front-page article profiling a woman] on the front page. That was always Mollie's big thing; she's always wanted to do that. I think it was important to Glenda as well, but the newspaper has always been Mollie's baby. I don't think it's really Glenda's baby in the same way at all. That was something that I always thought we could change the structure of, but it felt like something that we couldn't really do. When I was there, I always felt that the front page had to follow a certain formula--which was one story on the top, and the Profile on the bottom. They don't do that anymore, and that's probably because Mollie's not as involved in it anymore.

KB: Let's continue to just explore it. I'm really interested in this piece of it--the whole notion of the paper changing over time. It is an interesting area to think about.

AS: I wasn't a student of it before I started working here - I didn't know it very well. I didn't pick it up because I was in college, and was busy thinking about college things. I think I also thought it was for older women, and I think a lot of people might still feel like that. It didn't really speak to me.

I'd like to think that sort of--though I won't say totally, because I didn't have full ownership over the product, and I don't know that I was trying to do this--but I'd like to think that while I was there that we did stories that appealed to younger people. We tried to follow some things that made it interesting. I think I tried to change to make a focus on girls that maybe wouldn't have been there in the past. I was the person who came up with the idea--which has sort of floundered now, because it's hard to keep track of these girls--but we picked girls every year that we follow on our birthday. They're the same age as our newspaper. That started six or seven [years ago]--whenever I started at the "Women's Press"--trying to follow girls.

KB: Did you get any feedback from the community or readers that they liked some of these changes, or that they noticed them? Or was it kind of gut-reaction?

AS: I think it was pretty gradual, but while I was there we changed the flag to what it is now. There were some big design changes that we tried to do, but they were pretty subtle. It's not like anyone ever went through with a stroke and changed everything all at once.

KB: Well, aside from editorial content, what other changes have you noticed in the time that you've been an observer, or a friend of the Minnesota Women's Press, that you think of as fairly significant?

AS: It's hard to really know; I wouldn't know what to say about that actually.

KB: When you were involved as editor in one of your various incarnations, what were some of the biggest problems you faced?

AS: I felt frustrated a lot of the time, and it's probably important to talk about this when we're talking about a feminist business. For me, the frustration was the fact that we were woefully underpaid--I mean woefully underpaid. I was making \$7 an hour when I started here. I had a Master's Degree from one of the best graduate programs. Of course, it was my choice to go and work here, but that was a frustration. At first it was okay, but quickly it got to be not okay. We underpaid our writers; we were not getting health benefits. Those were things that frustrated me to no end.

Mollie knows this. I've talked to her about it. It was a culture of sacrifice--it felt like we were living in a nunnery. I didn't like that. We would talk about...a classic thing was a staff meeting kind of close to the end of my time here, maybe a year before I left. Somebody said, "We really need to be careful about how much toilet paper we're using." I remember thinking, "I'm so careful to do all of these different things--that's just out of control." Now it [the company] has expanded, and it expanded a lot during the time I was working there. There were no computers, and then for a long time I shared a very old computer. It took a long time to take risks.

KB: Do you think that that was completely due to a lack of resources, or do you think that there were some underlying values that prompted that kind of environment?

AS: I think that it was--and I think this is the case with most small businesses--the personality. The small business reflects the people who own and run it, and who started it. I work at a small business now, and I could talk for years about that circumstance, too.

There have been some really wise decisions. They don't have debt to speak of here at the "Women's Press"; they're slowly building their business, but there weren't any risks being

taken. The biggest risk was just to start the newspaper. After that, it didn't go any further. It seemed to me that making too much money always seemed sort of like a dirty word, or a bad idea.

KB: That was true throughout the time you were there?

AS: It was a struggle. It was struggle for me. This is the classic [truth]: if you'd worked in publications, the advertising staff always makes a lot more money than the editorial staff. At the "Women's Press", the advertising staff was making at least twice as much as I was, and that was really frustrating to me. That was because they were on commission.

KB: Well, let's just move into values - I think that makes sense. If you were to describe what some of the important values of the Minnesota Women's Press are as you've observed--not as you've heard them--what do you think they are?

AS: Now that I've started on this riff about complaining about the money, I should say it's not a complaint--more an ongoing issue, as I think it is in any organization that is trying to do good.

That said, it's important to say that the values of the Minnesota Women's Press are values that have shaped the way I think a work environment should be. It's because it was my formative work environment. The fact that I have had jobs, including working at the University of Minnesota where I have done something that I didn't care about--feel like there was a core of caring--that's been really hard and frustrating for me.

The values of the "Women's Press" are about celebrating women's words, ideas, and values. The conflict is that this is the place where we're going to talk about women and we're going to talk about feminist ideas--at least when I was the editor, and I think it continues to do it this way today. If it were my newspaper now, I would still try to push it even more, so that it does it without a lot of fear. You don't worry about what people think necessarily--that includes advertisers, too. [laughs] That's the ideal world scenario.

KB: How do you think those values have made the Minnesota Women's Press different from other businesses, or other publications?

AS: Another value included in that too is that if you want to make your presence known in the world, you make a point of being a for-profit company when everybody thinks you're going to be a non-profit company. Those are really important values. Mollie really established those, and Glenda really established those. You try to make it a good working environment for the people who work there. Could you restate your question?

KB: How do the values shape what the organization ends up looking like?

AS: I think it's continued to evolve. I've heard that there is a lot of open communication

about the business and what is going on financially. We tried to have staff--now I think they call it feminist forum--but we used to have a staff book group. You're working together under this idea that you're trying to do something to say women deserve to be equally represented, and you can celebrate what women are doing. If that informs what you're doing, I think it trickles down.

KB: So there's a definite impact on the way they communicate with employees and interact with them?

AS: I think that in an ideal situation, that's how it works.

KB: How about making decisions and dealing with problems? Do you think that there's something in their values that makes that process different than other companies, or other places you've worked?

AS: Right now I work at Utne Reader. It's another 15 year-old local..well, this is a national publication--but the same kind of thing. It's also something that has some idealistic goals. I wonder sometimes, because I get frustrated at the job I work at now with the way things are communicated and the way things are done.

I think that the communication trickled down into a lot of what was going on at the "Women's Press", and I think it informed everything that we did. I have to say that I think it's important as feminists, or just as people with goals and ideals, that we don't portray organizations built on feminist principles or progressive principles as full of super-human people who never do anything wrong. While it was a really great place to work, and it was weird for me to start working with men and to adjust to that kind of thing, there was plenty of...people will be humans. What I'm trying to say is that it worked very well, and was a great place to work, but it's refreshing to realize that there are still a lot of the same kind of human problems that you'd have anywhere else.

KB: What is your definition of a feminist business?

AS: I haven't really thought about that, but I wonder if any business can be a feminist business. I don't think that it has to just be a magazine or a newspaper that's for women; it's more about the concept of how you communicate with your employees. I feel like I'm sounding really negative, because I don't want to do that. I really do feel like communication was very open, and there's a lot of really idealistic, wonderful things about the way stuff works here--the way you communicate with your employees, whether you work in collaboration.

If you're working in an informed way from a feminist perspective, that's going to create a feminist business--if you pay attention to making sure that women are in equal positions of power, that women's voices are heard, that the topics that you cover reflect their experiences of women and men, that you don't work on the concept that man's experience

is the base experience, and everything else is some sort of anomaly or aberration. So I think that you can have a feminist business and it doesn't necessarily have to be a women's thing--it just has to be equal representation.

KB: As you know, there are a lot of different kinds of feminisms. I'm wondering if you see the Minnesota Women's Press as representing a particular type of feminism, or whether there's diversity of feminist thought, as you've seen it in the Minnesota Women's Press?

AS: While I was here, I think that there was diversity of feminist thought represented. Maybe there were some kinds of feminist thought that weren't, but it wasn't because they were excluded. The perspective or the impression that people might have gotten from the newspaper when it started was that it was a certain kind of feminism--kind of a clean scrubbed, not incredibly radical... Well no, that's not true because a lot of people found it very radical.

KB: Well, perhaps feminism was radical to those people.

AS: Yes. I don't think it seemed like a lesbian publication. When I heard about it, my impression of a woman who read the "Women's Press" might be a professional woman. I think that that has expanded to include more definitions. I don't think it was really necessarily featuring stories about baby dykes, or lesbian avengers, or young women who were radical, pro-choice activists.

The staff did represent a wide variety of views in some ways. When I first started there were a lot of people whose feminism was a lot more timid--I'm not talking about Mollie or Glenda, but there were other people on the staff.

Restricted Section

I remember an example. I won't use a specific name, but it was somebody who was working here when I first started. It was a person who was selling ads, who I like a lot, and who was really upset when an advertiser decided to pull their ads because they decided there was a lot of lesbian stuff in the magazine. They didn't want to be associated with lesbians.

This person wasn't mad about the fact that someone would be so biased or bigoted, but was rather really mad that anyone would think that anyone who worked at the "Women's Press" was a lesbian. She sent a letter highlighting the fact that there had been some reader survey that said, "60% of our readers are married." She typed that out, highlighted it, signed it, "Mrs. Whatever Whatever". I was just like...I can't believe... That was one perspective. There were other people there who weren't like that.

End of restricted section

It was a mix, and it was kind of fun. It was nice. We would have interesting discussions, and you'd watch people, including that person, develop in their feminist views throughout. In our staff book group, we read Transforming a Rape Culture [1993, Emilie Buchwald, Ed.]. We did a thing on that, and the discussions would be much more illuminating. It was interesting to see that happen.

KB: You've talked about early on how involvement with the Minnesota Women's Press has affected your life personally. You suggested it shaped the way you think about work or the way you think about your work environment. Can you talk about what the impact of it has been, and specifically focus on that?

AS: Yes. I think it's very invigorating and satisfying to work for a place where you feel like there is a mission, or a reason. When I try to deconstruct what the mission is, beyond recognizing women's existence, it starts to get a little tenuous. There's a mission and a cause, and you feel like you're all on the same page, for lack of a better cliché, with the other people you work with. You're all thinking feminist thoughts and, "Yeeah! Pro-women!".

So that's really an invigorating feeling. You feel like you're making the sacrifices--you're fighting the good fight, you're counting the squares of toilet paper that you use, and you're thinking it's all because at some point, things are getting better. You have a reason for existing. You feel like you [can] hold your head up. You don't feel, "Well, I'd better do some volunteer work, because when I go to work everyday, I write press releases for the bomb company or something like that." You can feel good about it. You can also make an assumption that people are going to be accepting and understanding of what you're thinking.

When you go somewhere else, for instance when I went to the University--which is surprising--it wasn't like that at all. You are hyper-aware of everything. I was really hyper-aware. I had a hard time. I started working in university relations, which was a very male-dominated environment. I didn't realize it was going to be. I was so aware. I had a co-worker who had a Victoria's Secret Catalogue that he kept on his desk--he would take to the bathroom. That was accepted behavior.

I realized that what it had done [my experience at the Minnesota Women's Press] was make me hyper-aware of all that kind of thing. Now I've been away from the "Women's Press", not quite as long as I was connected to the "Women's Press". I can deal with it in a different way, but I also am not in such a sick office environment as I was briefly at the University. [laughs] I think that's part of what it is.

Another thing is learning about the concept of having something that you're working for. It's informed me to feel like the owners, and the people who run the company that you work for, have the same ideas. You can trust them, more or less. I've always felt like I

could trust Mollie, and could trust Glenda. I always felt like they weren't out to make a buck, and slip it over on you. Even when I was working for very little money, that had to do with the fact that Mollie did not need very much money--really could live on very little food. [laughter] She's the sort of person who's very austere. That was reflected in the entire culture.

KB: Continuing to talk about impact, what kind of an impact do you think the Minnesota Women's Press has had on women in this community? I know that there's stuff out there, surveys etc., but I'm interested in your thoughts.

AS: It's interesting, because I was just telling somebody at my office today--before I came over here--that I was coming here to do this Oral History. I said that the paper had been around for 15 years. She said, "That's all?"

It was interesting to think that somebody would think that the paper had been around a lot longer. I was actually quite surprised. I thought people would be surprised to know it had been around as long as it had--maybe because it seems to me that it was just a little while ago that it was ten years [old].

I don't know about the impact. I think as a community, a lot of people feel really proud to realize that we're a community that supports one of the few feminist newspapers in the nation--a really ongoing, strong, healthy feminist newspaper--probably one of the few in the world. That's a big deal, and I think people are proud of that.

KB: Do you think most everyone knows it's a feminist newspaper, as opposed to a newspaper for women?

AS: I don't know. I think they probably do, if they read it. I think you can tell. But maybe I'm informed in a different way, because that's what I do for a living. I study publications. I know how they work. I feel like you can tell quickly, even from glancing at the top cover. There are women's publications from other parts of the country that are really about...they're just newsprint versions of RedBook [a traditional woman's magazine]--not even quite RedBook--with crappier fashion. Not, "How to please your man" but, "How to please your man when you're wearing a power suit". I think that it's pretty clear in the kinds of stories that are being covered [by the "Women's Press"], and the images of people.

KB: How do you think that the external journalist community has reacted to the Minnesota Women's Press in general? I'm talking about the local community, or regional to the extent that it's relevant.

AS: There has been a response from local women journalists. I know that we've built good alliances. Mollie has been good about building alliances with certain people who work in different publications.

For a while the Association of Women Journalists Chapter met here. I don't know if they still do that; I don't think so. I think the chapter doesn't exist anymore, actually. We used to do, and I think they still do occasionally, the survey of the 'women in the news' every year [an annual survey noting the number of women's bylines and the number of times women are mentioned in the daily newspapers]. We'd get attention from that. People would respond, and we'd do interviews.

When we had our tenth anniversary, Glenda and I did a radio interview on Minnesota Public Radio. People know what the newspaper is, but I think that a lot of daily journalists think that there's nothing besides the dailies. Generally, people think it exists.

KB: Do you think it has influenced journalism in this area?

AS: Maybe. It would be nice to think it has. That [woman's news] survey kept people paying attention. It's true, at the beginning, you'd get these really snotty responses from some of the guys. They stopped that.

KB: Are you suggesting that there's perhaps less hostility?

AS: I have no idea. I don't know if I want to build such a big hypothesis. People know it exists and for a lot of people, especially for a lot of women readers, it's important to them. I think that a lot of people, frankly, see it as a great place to look at want ads, because there's a really good classified section. People look at that, or if they are looking for certain kinds of things--if they're looking for the calendar. There are certain things people pick it up for.

KB: Have you had some of the things that you've written for the Minnesota Women's Press not accepted, in a very loose sense, because they've been edgier than the press would want?

AS: No. Mollie was always very encouraging and wanted me to try different things. She really was. Actually, that's not necessarily true. I remember a classic example. I don't know how it would go over in this current administration. There was a summer where there was going to be a lot of anti-abortion people coming to Minnesota. I can't remember who it was, but there was a concerted focus on a lot of the abortion clinics in Minnesota. We spent a lot of time trying to focus on those things, and do different things.

We did this thing, I think it was called "Pro-choice Diary," that was an idea I came up with. We found people who worked in the different clinics, and for that summer got them to keep a journal. We printed their different journal entries, and talked about what it was like to feel under siege. We did a variety of things, and we would try to cover protests.

There was one [protest] where there was going to be a 'kiss-off' in a park. It was weird, because you'd think it was about homophobia, but the protest was really supposed to be about the pro-choice movement. It was same-sex couples [who] were going to go kiss in this park--or maybe it was anybody. I don't know if it had to be same-sex couples. One of our photographers, Cher Stoneman, took a really nice picture, I think. Cher's now, last I heard, at New York Daily News. She took this really cool picture of two women kissing. Mollie didn't want to run it. I was mad because I thought it was a really good photo. We didn't run it, so that's an example.

Otherwise, I really never felt discouraged about doing things, and I felt in fact that people were really encouraging. People would give me a lot of pats on the back for things that I did. So I liked that.

KB: Well, I'm through my official list of questions. Is there anything that you think I should have asked you that would be important to reflect your involvement with the Minnesota Women's Press? Or [about] the history of the Minnesota Women' Press that you can tell me, that I might not get elsewhere?

AS: I'd be interested when you're talking about feminist business to try to get at the issue of money. There might be something in future conversations with Mollie, or maybe it's not just Mollie but other people who have worked here--to see how that played a role in their being here. I think it's an interesting thing--what is it about feminist businesses and women and money?

KB: ...the lack of resources, or the willingness to work for less money in a feminist business? What do you mean in terms of the money issue?

AS: It's a variety of things. Just a little while ago, we did the fifteenth anniversary of the Utne Reader. Now that's a national magazine--it's really big, not necessarily by national magazine standards. It took off. It was incredibly successful. You can deconstruct that...it has a lot to do with the fact that it's for men and women--at first it was mostly for men--but that probably has a lot to do with why. It was also meant to be a national magazine.

Nonetheless, it's a magazine that started out small--it was a newsletter. I know what people used to make 15 years ago when it started, and it might have felt like nothing, but there wasn't a fear of making or spending money. I think it had something to do with the personality of the owners, and the financial situation of the owners. It hasn't always been a great situation.

This newspaper has always plugged along, and has never gone out of business. It's done fine, but at the same time there haven't been a lot of extravagant risks taken with financial situations. Does the fact that people still don't make a lot of money here, have to do with

the fact that feminist newspapers don't make any money? Or does the fact that feminist newspapers don't make any money, have to do with the fact that feminist newspapers don't take the risks they need to take? It's part of that victim mentality, and that's interesting. That's a whole other thing.

Another interesting question maybe to ask people who worked here and then don't work here anymore, "How has your sense of feminism progressed?" I started to talk about that a little bit. After you've worked in a feminist organization, and then you go into the great beyond, how do you start reconciling that? [What] if you work with men? How you do these kinds of things? I remember when I left here to go to graduate school, my essay was: "I don't want to preach to the choir anymore. I want to bring feminism into a bigger, wider world." Then what did I do but go right to the Women's Press when I got out of graduate school. [laughs] It's interesting to think about that...

KB: Did you notice those changes when you went into graduate school as well? Did you notice that climate issue?

AS: It wasn't so much, because I wasn't working full-time at the "Women's Press". I think I got myself really immersed in this. I do use this nun perspective, but it is sort of like that in a sense. You come here--I don't know what it's like now, but when I was here--you don't play loud music; you don't swear, very much; and you have a good heart because you felt like you were doing good things. I respect nuns, so I don't mean this in a bad way.

You felt clean and pure that you did this, and you could say, "I'm upstanding." Then you'd go out and it was this shock feeling. It takes a while to settle into that. I feel like that's been the case for a lot of people, because I'm still in contact with a lot of the people who worked for me at the "Women's Press" when I was here. I think it's been the case for a lot of them, too.

KB: Thank you.