

WOMEN'S ADVOCATES: GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation overviews the creation of Women's Advocates in St. Paul, Minnesota, one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States. Following the tradition of grassroots organizing and coalition building of the women's movement in the 1970s, organizers of the Women's Advocates collective overcame numerous obstacles to find allies for the creation and maintenance of the shelter. Identifying wife abuse—the term used in the 1970s—in their community, Women's Advocates helped initiate community and state policy changes to help abused women and their children. As a part of the larger social movement that raised awareness of and helped those affected by abuse, Women's Advocates' work was groundbreaking and contributed to the nationwide discussion of wife abuse. Women's Advocates' successful grassroots organizing contributes to the historiography of U.S. Women's History as well as social movement theory and potential activism.

For the Women of Women's Advocates

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CHAPTER I. PATHS TO RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

“A tiny, yellow caterpillar speaks to a cocoon on the same bare branch:
 ‘And if I decide to become a butterfly,’ said Yellow hesitantly, ‘What do I do?’
 ‘Watch me. I’m making a cocoon. It looks like I am hiding, I know, but a cocoon is no escape. It’s an in-between house where the change takes place. It’s a big step since you can never return to caterpillar life. During the change, it will seem to you or to anyone who might peek that nothing is happening—but the butterfly is already becoming. It just takes time!’”¹

Reading this poem as I examined the thousands of pages in the Women’s Advocates archival collection evoked in me an emotional response. Thinking of women’s experiences at the shelter as a period of transformation gave me a moment of peace, something I needed since most of my research revolved around the reasons why activists started one of the country’s first battered women’s shelters in St. Paul—that is, the unspeakable abuse that the shelter’s residents suffered. When I visited Women’s Advocates, a colorful mural painted in the staff office area included the cocoon poem, as if channeling energy from the original advocates and survivors of the shelter. Because of Women’s Advocates and the battered women’s shelter movement, women have a voice to talk about abuse and transform into survivors. Advocates at the shelter empowered women to take time to heal and become metaphorical butterflies. Women’s Advocates was a significant part of the women’s movement in the 1970s that brought attention to women’s issues. Wife abuse—the term used in the 1970s to describe abuse by a husband or partner inflicted on his significant other; now called domestic violence—was a recognizable problem in the Twin Cities and the women who ultimately formed Women’s Advocates identified the crisis and acted to help those affected. The history of this group of activist-minded women in St. Paul suggests that community changes can and do happen through the efforts of

¹ Quoted from Trina Paulus, “Hope for Flowers,” Newman Book, Paulist Press, New York in *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter* (St. Paul, Women’s Advocates, 1980), 3, borrowed from Bernice Sisson Personal Collection, St. Paul, Minn., 16; also appeared in “Newsletter, May 1979,” that described a poster that hung in the office space of the shelter: Microfilm, Newsletter, Women’s Advocates, Saint Paul, Minn., Minnesota Historical Society Microfilm, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

amateurs and grassroots organizers.

In 2014, Women’s Advocates celebrated its fortieth anniversary and since its opening, the agency has served over 39,000 women and children. Now a three-house operation with fifteen bedrooms, Women’s Advocates continues the tradition that started in 1972 to empower women who have experienced what is now called “domestic violence.”² Early on, however, American society did not talk about what happened in the privacy of home. This social barrier was one of the obstacles that Women’s Advocates faced and helped overturn.³ Organizing in 1972 as a collective group, Women’s Advocates was part of the larger women’s movement in the 1970s to raise awareness of women’s issues that were previously ignored by professionals or relegated to the private sphere. The atmosphere that fostered Women’s Advocates’ creation and successes was a time when women organized to pull issues and problems into the public arena for discussion—such as health information, wage inequality, rape, and abortion. Through grassroots organizing and mobilization, women’s groups like Women’s Advocates successfully raised awareness of women’s concerns and empowered women to overcome them.⁴

² <http://www.wadvocates.org/> and <http://www.startribune.com/founder-of-st-paul-women-s-shelter-killed-in-car-crash-in-cuba/297658941/>, accessed June 23, 2015.

³ Societal views and perceptions of wife abuse will be further overviewed in Chapter 2.

⁴ Scholarly works on these topics and others in the 1970s women’s movements include: Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*; Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991); Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century’s End* (New York: The Free Press, 2003); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancy Martin, *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Bonnie Watkins and Nina Rothchild, *In the Company of Women: Voices from the Women’s Movement* (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1996); Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow, ed., *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women’s Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998); Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women’s Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and its Relation to the Policy Process* (New York: Longman, 1975). Women’s activism to address private concerns in the public realm—like child abuse, rape, sexual harassment, wife abuse—started during the Progressive Era, see: Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880-1960* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1998); Robyn Muncy, “Gender and Professionalization in the Origins of the U.S. Welfare State: The Careers of Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, 1890-1935,” *Journal of Policy History* 2 (1990): 290-315; Ann Shola Orloff, “Gender in Early U.S. Social Policy,” *Journal of Policy History*, 3 (1991): 249-281.

I first immersed myself into the world of Women's Advocates in March 2010. My time at the Minnesota Historical Society library archives provided me with a significant primary source document base. However, I was also fortunate to have met with some of the founders of Women's Advocates. While documents are the bread and butter of the historian's craft, listening to the voices of those who participated in the beginnings of the movement to raise awareness of wife abuse enriched the research process and focused my conclusions. The following chapters will evidence the grassroots mobilizing that established the shelter in St. Paul—one of the first shelters to help battered women in the United States—but I would like to begin by describing my research process that reinforced the power of women organizing for change.

I spent the first few days of my trip to St. Paul engrossed in the Women's Advocates' archival collection and then visited the shelter. Prior to my trip, I had contacted Women's Advocates in hopes of being able to meet former and current advocates. The outreach coordinator, Elizabeth, suggested that I visit the shelter and meet with her. When I arrived at Women's Advocates, I was overwhelmed by how warm and inviting the place was, despite the phone constantly ringing and people going in and out. As I waited for Elizabeth, I noticed a flurry of women and children coming and going in the office area. In spite of the crisis situations that brought them there, all of the women exuded confidence.

The shelter includes a large kitchen area, a cooking staff, spacious areas for storage of clothing and food donations, and a colorful play area for children. Out of respect for the residents, I did not see the living quarters but I felt assured that their space, although created out of necessity and chaos, was filled with the warmth and peace I found throughout the other two houses. I admired the lively murals that covered the hallways of the corridors that connected the houses and helped create an inviting atmosphere. As an advocate working at two shelters with

histories more recent than that of Women's Advocates, I was overwhelmed by the resources and space available in the shelter. I asked countless questions and Elizabeth generously obliged me. We eventually arrived at the top floor of the house designated for offices, a spacious area with its own administrative assistant. Elizabeth introduced me to Raeone, the executive director, and several other advocates. Everyone I met eagerly asked about my research and commended me for taking on the task. In turn, I told them that I greatly admired their work. Elizabeth and I sat down in her office and she told me briefly about her job and how the shelter operates today. She showed me a huge three-ring binder that contained recent articles about the shelter and offered me the use of their photocopier. At that point, the researcher in me kicked in and I gratefully accepted the opportunity to make my own photocopies (unlike the typical archival policy of me flagging documents in folders and then someone else making the copies).

Over the next several hours I read articles, photocopied many, and looked out the top floor window onto the alley behind the houses. I thought about the neighborhood community that had supported the shelter for over forty years and how the agency had transformed over the decades.⁵ When I finished at the copy machine, I paid the minimal fee per page that we agreed upon (again, such a better experience than in the library). Next I viewed a valuable resource that Elizabeth shared with me—a documentary made in 2009 that recorded several of the founders talking about their time with Women's Advocates.⁶ As I watched the video, I tried to take notes but was in awe of the women who spoke about the experiences that I had only read about in the archival documents. Thankfully, I was able to borrow a copy of the film which allowed me to later take more detailed notes. Around 6:00 pm, the last staff personnel were leaving and that

⁵ Women's Advocates' address is public knowledge, an issue that domestic violence agencies have grappled with due to confidentiality and safety concerns. An interesting article regarding these concerns is, Linda Olsen, "Shelter Rules: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

⁶ *Founding Mothers Reminisce*, prod. and dir. Kathleen Laughlin, 48 minutes., Harbor Video, 2009, DVD.

was my cue to exit. I spent the rest of the evening trying to digest the day's work and my passion for both my academic and activist work.

The following day I returned to the library and the boxes of papers with a renewed sense of inspiration. My research time at the Minnesota Historical Society library was amazing, albeit daunting. Over that week I examined several boxes in the Women's Advocates' collection and requested hundreds of photocopies to which the staff promptly assisted me. Not only was the staff helpful, they also provided me with some human interaction throughout the formal research process. During that time, I collected countless pages of documents and gained more leads for contacting some of the founders of Women's Advocates. Later that fall, I spent another week in St. Paul and finished studying the archival collection. While I examined the final five boxes of documents, I again balanced my library work with oral history research. I had the honor of interviewing five women who were instrumental in founding and sustaining Women's Advocates in the early 1970s. These were all women whose names I had read in the newsletters and seen their handwritten notes from meetings. I respected their work but after spending time with them, I was inspired and further understood the importance of grassroots organizing.

My conversations with early advocates—Sharon Rice Vaughan, Betsy Raasch-Gilman, Monica Erler, Bernice Sisson, and Lois Severson—were informative and useful. Each discussion yielded excellent research material but more valuable than that, the women energized me. By hearing their voices and seeing their expressions, I absorbed priceless information about how they became involved with Women's Advocates' grassroots organizing and how their dedication to the shelter impacted their lives.

My first interview was with Sharon Rice Vaughan. Sharon invited me to her house that had been one of the early locations of Women's Advocates. When I arrived at Sharon's, she

gave me a tour of the Victorian house, the upstairs where she and her cats live and where she made us tea, and the downstairs where renters had just vacated. Thanks to this serendipitous timing, I was able to walk through the halls and rooms of the house where much of the collective planning and advocacy first took place. It was a surreal experience; I could not believe that I walked through the space where the women had lived and worked. There was a feeling of peace and I felt very welcome. After the tour, we took our tea onto the front porch and sat on a wicker couch. It was a beautiful fall day and we comfortably talked. I had sent her the official questions required by my university's research department and Sharon took those into consideration as she recalled how she and Sue Ryan first became VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America—workers in a St. Paul legal aid office.⁷ She told me how their efforts evolved from answering questions about divorce and name change processes into helping women and children. They inspired the formation of a women's collective to help abused women by housing them at the volunteers' homes. I heard joy and pain in her voice as she told me about the Women's Advocates collective and their work, which will be brought to light in the subsequent chapters.

My day with Sharon helped me put some of the archival material into greater perspective and prepare for my next interview. A couple of days later I met Betsy Raasch-Gilman. It was a rainy evening and I found her and her partner's house, an older, large home with a garden in the front. Betsy and I sat next to each other in the living room on a couch. The space was relaxing, filled with books and their friendly cat wandered between us, sometimes purring loud enough to be recorded on my tape recorder. As the rain fell on the tapestry-covered windows, Betsy told me how she learned about Women's Advocates and about the work she did there. She had fond memories of Monica Erler, one of the women I planned to interview a few days later, as well as

⁷ Unfortunately, Susan Ryan was not available for interview. The other interviewees spoke fondly of her but mentioned how she became disillusioned with the organization and left after the first couple of years. She was recorded in the documentary but I could not reach her for this project.

her overnight shifts at the shelter. We talked about the collective organization of Women's Advocates and her work after the shelter in other co-ops in the Twin Cities area. Similar to Sharon's path, Betsy is also passionate about social justice issues and continues to lead a life of activism. She has combined her activism with her academic work and she was interested to know more about my research, teaching, and activism. The evening with Betsy further confirmed my passion for this project and offered me a human context for the archived documents. My mind was overwhelmed with stories of organizing and advocating but I was thrilled that the interviews reaffirmed the groundbreaking grassroots activism of Women's Advocates.

I finally met Bernice Sisson, Lois Severson and Monica and Art Eler on a sunny Saturday. When I arrived at Monica and Art's apartment, the two of them and Lois welcomed me. Monica and Lois were already energetically recalling stories of their days at Women's Advocates. I interjected only to ask if I could record our conversation and they encouraged me to do so and then continued to reminisce. When Bernice arrived, she joined their storytelling and the three of them brilliantly communicated with each other and told stories of their high spirited, albeit arduous, advocate work. Having been friends for so long, Bernice and Monica get together fairly regularly. Monica is just as sharp mentally as Bernice is active with domestic violence issues, particularly elder abuse concerns. And I should mention that both Bernice and Monica are in their late eighties. Lois, a few years younger, is a novelist and works with the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in St. Paul and Ramsey County.⁸

⁸ The Intervention Project is an organization that formed in 1985 to serve battered women and their children. Lois connected the author with Rebecca, an advocate for the agency. Rebecca explained that the Intervention Project has a constructive and positive relationship with the local law enforcement that helps police "build bridges with the police and the victims that may not trust the cops." Many advocates at this agency are bilingual in order to communicate with the large Spanish, Hmong, and Somali speaking residents. The Intervention Project also organizes support groups for repeat abusers. Rebecca, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Sept. 30, 2010.

As we ate lunch at the kitchen table, their conversations ebbed and flowed with recollections about Women's Advocates to contemporary issues and updates on acquaintances. Several times Bernice reined the conversation back to the questions I had emailed to them but I reassured her that those were only a framework for the interview and that the dialogue between the women, with my intermittent follow up questions, was providing me with rich information for my project. Several hours later, we were all exhausted and departed the Erler home. Having spent hours with Monica, Bernice, Lois, Betsy, and Sharon and hearing about their experiences in their own words substantially enhanced my project's archival research and reiterated the importance of grassroots organizing.

Almost all of the women I spoke with mentioned Sergeant Carolen Bailey, who I had the chance to meet with in the summer of 2011. Carolen and her partner welcomed me into their home located in a wooded suburb of The Cities. We spent the afternoon talking and I heard about Carolen's long-tenure in the St. Paul Police Department, particularly her efforts to create community based programs to address, at first, child abuse and then wife abuse. That work led her to meet Sharon Vaughan and from then on, Carolen became a close ally with Women's Advocates. Having the opportunity to hear about the issue of wife abuse from the perspective of law enforcement significantly supplemented my findings in the archives. Although Women's Advocates struggled at times to win the support of law enforcement, having allies like Carolen Bailey and the groundwork of community based teams helped the collective forge coalitions to address wife abuse.⁹

⁹ Bernice Johnson Reagon's 1981 speech, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," included illuminating information about building bridges in social movements. One notable description from her speech describes coalition work: "I feel as if I'm gonna keel over any minute and die [because of the altitude of where the festival was held where she was speaking]. That is often what it feels like if you're really doing coalition work. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing." Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," West Coast Women's Music Festival, 1981.

My work as a researcher is rooted in the skills of a historian—critical analysis and interpretation of primary sources—and oral histories are a significant part of my research. As scholars have argued, oral histories are most useful when they thoughtfully complement other historical sources.¹⁰ Oral histories are memories put into words and since the 1970s, historians have increasingly used these sources to evaluate the past. Some historians are not willing to accept oral histories as "valid" sources for historical scholarship; however, the spoken word offers historical insight that the written word cannot. Sociologist Nancy Naples described the effectiveness of oral narratives in scholarly research and argued that researchers should 'read' and listen to stories.¹¹ Scholars Kathleen Blee and Verta Taylor staunchly support the gathering of interviews as “one of the primary ways researchers actively involve their respondents in the construction of data about their lives. But unlike most conversations, the purpose of an interview is to elicit specific kinds of information” such as how the person understands the context of their activism and the larger significance of the movement and how the movement sustained itself.¹² Historians have heavily relied on written documents for sources, but those too have their limitations. Oral histories offer a unique perspective of history, although not without shortcomings, such as memory deficiencies and philosophical biases. Although these concerns are important to acknowledge, the usefulness of oral history outweighs its omission in historical works.

¹⁰Cecilia Gowdy-Wygant made a compelling case for the use of oral histories in her work about women and victory gardens. Stating that interviews help find parallels between individual experiences and the activism of international groups. Gowdy-Wygant, *Cultivating Victory: The Women's Land Army and the Victory Garden Movement* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003).

¹¹ Nancy Naples, *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Also, the collection of oral histories in *Foot Soldiers for Democracy: The Men, Women, and Children of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009) validates my work, The collection of essays exemplifies the trauma of racial oppression but also “express the hope inherent in the ability of ordinary people to organize in defense of their common humanity,” vii.

¹² Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg, ed., *Methods of Social Movement Research* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 92, 94-96.

Initially, oral history scholarship included very little about how the researchers may or may not impact interviews or how the narrators may impact the interviewer. In the 1980s, this began to change partly because feminists made the case that "intuition, empathy, and passion" "are present in scientific knowing but devalued because they are associated with femaleness."¹³ Drawing from work in psychology and communication, Valerie Yow argued that it is important for researchers to acknowledge self-schema, the "thoughts and feelings about the self in certain domains and influences the individual's perception of others in those domains."¹⁴ Preconceived ideas of "what a person or situation should be" are called schemata and these are learned "in the subculture we grew up in or live in as an adult."¹⁵ It is important for researchers to acknowledge their self-schemata in order to honestly approach their research. In an effort to offer my readers full-disclosure, I want to describe how I came to this research and how my experiences have influenced my work. My historical research has been influenced by my personal experiences as a victims' advocate. I believe that it is important for me to recognize how my activist and feminist biases inspire my academic work on Women's Advocates. Through my reading of women's history and feminist literature, many of the authors provided details about their paths to academia and activism, and I believe it is important for me to follow in this tradition and position myself in the battered women's shelter movement.

My interest in studying domestic violence evolved from studying women's history as a master's degree student at The University of Toledo and hearing about murders of women by their intimate partners. I became aware of the problem in 2005 when I lived in Toledo and was introduced to a women's group that held vigils for the murdered women by a professor, Dr.

¹³ Valerie Yow, "'Do I Like Them Too Much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa," in *The Oral History Reader*, 62.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 63-64.

Diane Britton. The group, officially a chapter of the National Organization for Women, fostered my commitment to raise awareness of violence against women. Meeting at the feminist bookstore, People Called Women, the women not only arranged vigils, but also coordinated protests and commemorations to raise awareness of women's rights in the Toledo community. The most notable event is Take Back the Night, held each April.¹⁶ The women of the group exposed me to diverse issues and concerns for women and provided me with a nurturing atmosphere as I worked through graduate school. I mention this group because they have continued to be important women in my life as I strike a balance between activism and academia. These women helped me strengthen my voice as both an activist and researcher. I was empowered by working with the People Called Women group because of the confidence they instilled in me to pursue other activist endeavors, such as volunteering as an advocate for a rape crisis and domestic violence hotline and working as an advocate at domestic violence shelters.

My experiences as a researcher and an activist provided me with a unique opportunity to uncover the history of the broader movement of which I was a part of in the twenty-first century. I mention my activism to allow my readers insight into my perspective. Although an activist in the movement, I do not hesitate to critically evaluate the current movement but I am filled with pride knowing the larger history of the movement to help end violence against women. Other scholars have also balanced activism with their academic work and I look to them as examples of how one can still be successful while dedicated to both arenas and combining them when possible. Sara Evans, one of the women's historians I admire for offering a broader context of the women's movement of which Women's Advocates is a part, revealed her social movement activism in her book, *Personal Politics* in 1979 and more recently in 2003 with *Tidal Wave*. As a member of organizations of both the new left and women's liberation, Evans recorded her

¹⁶ Take Back the Night is a product of the women's movement.

experiences with social movement activism in the 1960s and 1970s. In 2003 she admitted that “One of the motives behind the writing of this book is my own awareness that the loss of historical memory would have far-reaching consequences.” Without that memory, Evans feared that “It would force future generations to invent feminism as if they had no shoulders on which to stand, repeating the unfortunate experience of many in the 1960s.”¹⁷ As a historian-activist, I too encourage our modern world to learn from the past.

Currently, there are a variety of agencies that assist women who are victims of violence against women and my advocate work began outside of shelters. Shelters may have been the original sites where women sought support and services; however, today there are agencies that serve victims of domestic violence who do not seek shelter. Victims Services, established in 1989, is an agency that serves Wood County, Ohio and provides women and men with emotional support, safety planning, and resource referrals. The advocates at Victims Services refer women to local battered women’s shelters, but much of their time is spent providing legal advocacy and support for women who did not flee their homes. As a volunteer advocate for Victims Services for two and a half years, I realize the significance of such agencies that provide round-the-clock support for women and men who leave their homes to stay with friends or family, who obtain their own homes, or who remain in their homes. Although my advocacy training in the movement to end violence against women began at Victims Services, the focus of my research is on one of the first battered women’s shelter in the United States. I strongly believe that the

¹⁷ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 5. Influential scholars Kathleen Blee and Verta Taylor also make recommendations for a researcher’s awareness of their participation or influence in a movement. Taylor’s previous work with historian Leila Rupp on lesbian feminist activism noted that “not that insider status gave them [Taylor and Rupp] a privileged vantage point from which they could write a more authentic account of the community, but rather they had knowledge of ephemeral developments that might not appear in any written sources or oral histories.” Their experience within the movement also facilitated relationships with other participants who may have not shared their experiences with any other researcher; therefore, “outsider” status may be limited. Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg, ed., *Methods of Social Movement Research* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 94-96.

formation of Women's Advocates facilitated the creation of agencies such as Victims Services that meet the various needs of abused women and men.

My time at Victims Services brought me into a network of women and men that led to long-lasting friendships and sparked other activist opportunities. A close friend from Victims Services was also a social worker at Open Arms, an agency in Findlay, Ohio that also has programs for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Open Arms' shelter opened in 1979 and I started working overnights at the shelter which allowed me to use my advocate training in a new way. The position as a night monitor let me get acquainted with the women at the shelter in a more informal setting, usually after the day staff had left and the residents' children had gone to sleep. My experiences working with the residents gave me a real sense of how important the shelter movement is for women and their children.¹⁸

Another example of the success of the shelter movement is The Cocoon shelter in Bowling Green, Ohio that opened in 2005. With funding from federal stimulus money, The Cocoon hired After Hours Advocates to supplement their existing advocacy team and I joined them in the summer of 2009. My work at Open Arms helped prepare me for shelter work, but having the experience of working for two different agencies, I recognized how shelters function in different ways depending on the needs and means of the community and agency. The Cocoon and Open Arms differ in their structure and function, but their overall mission is the same—to help women, men, and children who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and bring awareness to these important issues. These shelters and Victims Services gave me outlets for my activist nature and supplemented my research-based knowledge of the battered women's shelter movement.

¹⁸ Although men are not housed at the Open Arms shelter, abused men are provided with safe space in nearby locations.

I employ the feminist movement's slogan, "The Personal is Political," as a way for me to describe how the personal issue of violence against women—personal meaning a seemingly private concern—and my experience working not only in the literal political system, but also inciting awareness of the issue of violence against women.¹⁹ My experiences naturally created some biases as my research progressed, but I believe that my passion accentuates the real need for programs such as Women's Advocates. My time as an advocate has not only provided me with experience in the trenches of the battered women's shelter movement, but also inspired me to uncover the rich history of the movement that started with Women's Advocates. After working as an advocate at three different Ohio agencies, I identified clear similarities to advocate procedures. Subsequently, as I learned how Women's Advocates created an advocacy program in the mid-1970s and I realized that they laid the foundation for present day advocates. The connections I made between the grassroots origins of the battered women's shelter movement and the modern day domestic violence programs further solidified the magnitude of my research. Not only does my study of Women's Advocates contribute to the genre of Women's History, it also provides a larger perspective for current advocates. It should instill pride in modern advocates that they are continuing a tradition of helping women, children, and men break free from their abusers. Women's Advocates' grassroots organizing should also inspire other activists—and potential activists—to take on issues in their communities to help make the world a more just place to live.

The grassroots beginnings of Women's Advocates are important to me as a historian as well as an activist. The story of Women's Advocates, one of the first shelters for battered

¹⁹ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Linda Gordon and Wini Breines, "New Scholarship on Family Violence," *Signs*, 8 Spring 1983, 490-531 overviews early scholarship on child abuse, woman battering, and incest and argues for family violence scholars to incorporate a feminist perspective into their work because these issues exists "within a gendered society in which male power dominates," 493.

women in the United States, provides a larger narrative for the scholarship of women's grassroots activism and a legacy of the battered women's shelter movement. Women's Advocates offers a model of advocacy that provided the foundation for programs across the United States. Scholars can find this information useful in understanding how women's organizations carved out niches in their communities that led to policy changes at the local, state, and national levels. Growing awareness of domestic violence, called wife abuse at the time, exemplifies grassroots mobilization that evolved into national laws and policies.²⁰

The activism surrounding the creation of Women's Advocates is considered part of the larger women's movement of the 1970s.²¹ Women's historians, who gained their momentum in the 1960s, labeled this segment of the women's movement as the "second wave." Historians considered the "first wave" as a period of activism largely initiated by the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, motivated by the suffrage movement and climaxing with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. The wave metaphor served as a convenient framework in which to label successes of women. However, in 1987, historian Leila Rupp and sociologist Verta Taylor investigated the "doldrums" period, in between the waves, and uncovered activism in the period in which feminism was claimed to be dead by some observers.²² The wave metaphor served a specific purpose for historians who sought to legitimize the field of women's history; however,

²⁰ Grassroots histories of the battered women's movement, also include: Phyllis C. Brashler, "Flirting with Feminism: The State and the Battered Women's Movement in Massachusetts," Ph.D. diss., Northeastern University, 2007 and Elizabeth B.A. Miller, "Moving to the Head of the River: The Early Years of the U.S. Battered Women's Movement," Ph.D., diss, University of Kansas, 2010 both overview state policy changes that resulted from grassroots activism. Miller's dissertation sheds light on other groups organized around the same time as Women's Advocates, 96. Other works related to the topic of community activism include: Bruce A. Glasrud and Merline Pitre, ed., *Southern Black Women in the Modern Civil Rights Movement* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2013); Susan Youngblood Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, 1964-1972* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2008).

²¹ Jo Freeman's article, "On the Origins of Social Movements," provided framework and an overview of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, from Jo Freeman and Johnson, ed., *Waves of Protest: Social Movements since the 60s*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 7-24.

²² Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

over time, the symbolism evoked a definition of the women's movement as a singular movement that activism that waxes and wanes with the tides. Recent works have challenged the necessity of the wave metaphor because of evidence proving that activism around issues from the 1970s have carried into the twenty first century, while some comprehensive works from Ruth Rosen and Sara Evans still utilize the wave metaphor.²³ I acknowledge the past usefulness of the term but I make an effort to refrain from using the term "second wave" in my description of the activism at Women's Advocates. Especially because the activism that lead to the shelter's foundation continues into the twenty-first century, particularly as a broader movement to end violence against women.

Terminology and language are important details of my study. As a historian, I utilize words and phrases that were part of the parlance of the time period under evaluation. As part of the social activism of the 1970s, Women's Advocates is part of what is often called the battered women's shelter movement. Chapter Two will detail the atmosphere in St. Paul in 1972 that was ripe for the organization of Women's Advocates and how the shelter sustained its momentum through 1979. This climate was similar across the United States; therefore, I do not call Women's Advocates "the first battered women's shelter," but rather *one of* the first shelters for battered women in the U.S.²⁴ "Battered women" is another term that I employ to describe

²³ A collaboration of women's historians reviewed the wave metaphor in Kathleen A. Laughlin et al., "Is it Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor," *Feminist Foundations* (Vol. 22) Spring 2010. For overviews of the women's movement that address the wave metaphor, see: Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), Evans, "Beyond Declension: Feminist Radicalism in the 1970s and 1980s," in *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2006). Works expanding the wave metaphor or challenge its necessity include: Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine, *Breaking the Wave: Women, Their Organizations and Feminism, 1945-1985* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Jo Reger, ed., *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women's Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

²⁴ In some Women's History scholarship, Women's Advocates is called "the first" shelter for battered women, while other sources note that it was one of several that emerged at this time. In sociologist Kathleen Tierney's work, she recognized Rainbow Retreat in Phoenix, Arizona as the first, opening in 1973 followed by Haven House in

women who experienced abuse from their partners. Adhering to the historical context of Women's Advocates' origins, "wife abuse" and "battered women" were the terms used at the time. Crediting Women's Advocates and other organizations of the early battered women's shelter movement, it is now widely recognized by scholars and activists that men also suffer abuse and possibly from female partners. The contemporary phrase for "wife abuse" is "domestic violence" and this usage has evolved from the recognition that abusers are not always male, nor are they always husbands. Instead, a more appropriate phrase is "interpersonal violence."²⁵

Although I did not interview women who stayed at the shelter, I must clarify my use of terminology to describe these women. In the Women's Advocates documents, neither "victim" nor "survivor" appeared, rather the advocates called the women "abused women" or "women." I choose to identify women who stayed at the shelter or called for information or any other woman who suffered wife abuse as a "survivor." Sociologist discussions about victimization entered the public arena in the 1960s and 1970s with rising awareness from the civil rights and women's movements. Debates about terminology largely centered on issues of blame and responsibility, and for abused women questions about their culpability often determined whether or not they were considered legitimate victims. Within the battered women's movement, there were debates about the usage of the term "victim." For some advocates, using "victim" evidenced that the woman was not to blame for the abuse. On the other hand, some advocates believed that the term "victim" disempowered women who suffered from abuse. Instead, the

Pasadena, California in 1974. She acknowledges Women's Advocates as forming the telephone service in 1972. Kathleen Tierney, "The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem," *Social Problems*, 29, Feb. 1982, 207-220.

²⁵ Karen Kendrick noted that professionals and social work language has largely contributed to "victims" feeling as "clients" rather than "experts of their own experiences and needs," 155. Karen Kendrick, "Producing the Battered Woman: Shelter Politics and the Power of the Feminist Voice," in Nancy Naples, ed., *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing across Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

word “survivor” signified a more positive description.²⁶

Sociologist Amy Leisenring interviewed women who had dealt with abuse and asked them how different discourses affected them. In her interviews, Leisenring found that some of the women embrace victim discourse while others call themselves survivors.²⁷ Victim discourse has also played a significant role in the field of Women’s History, as early studies tended to focus on “women worthies” and the assumption that most other women—aside from “the hags, the furies, the witches”—were victims or non-agents in their lives. Sara Evans argued that “Victim history also replicates one of the problems feminism intends to combat: the view of women as passive.”²⁸ My research on Women’s Advocates and the insistence that none of the women were “victims” reaffirms the importance of this study into Women’s History.

Sociologists K.J. Ferraro and J.M. Johnson acknowledged that terminology that describes abused women’s experiences as “victimization” limits the broader perspective of a woman’s life. These scholars carefully identified the differences between being a “victim of an assault and assuming [their] identity as a victim.”²⁹

In my own advocate work, the agencies where I worked preferred that we use survivor discourse. Because I have found that this tends to empower women, I prefer to refer to abused women as “survivors” unless they tell me otherwise. I believe that women, but especially abused

²⁶ Linda Gordon and Wini Breines identified “anger against victim blaming” as a theme in feminist works on wife beating in “New Scholarship on Family Violence,” *Signs* 8 (Spring 1983): 490-531.

²⁷ Amy Leisenring, “Confronting ‘Victim’ Discourses: The Identity Work of Battered Women,” *Symbolic Interaction* (summer 2007): 307-330. Other helpful academic discussions of discourse are: Nancy Berns evaluated domestic violence discourse in magazines, “‘My Problem and How I Solved It’: Domestic Violence in Women’s Magazines,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 1 (winter 1999): 85-108 and Martha R. Mahoney, “Victimization or Oppression? Women’s Lives, Violence, and Agency,” in *The Public Nature of Private Violence: The Discovery of Domestic Abuse*, ed. Martha Albertson Fineman and Roxanne Mykitiuki (New York: Routledge, 1994), 59-90. Sociological studies of violence against women started in 1971 and Ferraro and Johnson’s study argues how women “make sense of their victimization within the context of dependencies”—hence, addressing some of the reasons why women stay with abusive partners.

²⁸ Sara Evans, “Toward a Usable Past: Feminism as History and Politics,” *Minnesota History* 48 (Summer 1983): 230-235.

²⁹ Ferraro, K.J. and J.M. Johnson, “How Women Experience Battering: The Process of Victimization,” *Social Problems* 30: 325-337.

women, need to believe they have agency. Agency—acting for oneself—allows women to realize that despite abuse, they are capable of acting for themselves.³⁰

The story of Women’s Advocates’ creation and accomplishments in its first half-decade contribute to a larger body of scholarship that highlights women’s grassroots social movement activism in the latter half of the twentieth century. Works from scholars like Carrie Baker, Stephanie Gilmore, Kathleen Blee, Temma Kaplan provide specific examples of how women organized around issues specific to their community needs and accomplished policy changes on the local and sometimes national scale. One major issue for women was domestic violence addressed in works by Carol Giardina, Nancy Janovicek and Diane Kravetz, which uncovered the creation of battered women’s shelters in Florida, Madison, Wisconsin and Canada, respectively.³¹ Recent works have paid special attention to how race, class and sexuality impact women and their activism. Early women’s history scholarship focused mostly on the activism of white women who most likely emerged out of the New Left, the anti-war movement and sometimes the Civil Rights movement.³² This focus mistakenly labeled the women’s movement as a white women’s movement and the growing scholarship examining race and gender challenged that definition.³³ In my study of Women’s Advocates, I must acknowledge here that

³⁰ Cite Dobash and Dobash for language too. Nancy Naples identified “survivors” as those who have gone through counseling for their abuse and other types of self-exploration, “Deconstructing and Locating Survivor Discourse: Dynamics of Narrative, Empowerment, and Resistance for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse,” *Signs*, 28 Summer 2003, 1151-1185 Davidson and *Conjugal Crime* also discussed how naming the issue can empower victims and survivors. This also helps them to know that they are part of a larger movement to help them.

³¹ Carrie N. Baker, *The Women’s Movement against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Stephanie Gilmore, *Feminist Coalitions; Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), Kathleen M. Blee, ed., *No Middle Ground: Women and Radical Protest* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), and Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Carol Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women’s Liberation Movement, 1953-1970* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010), Nancy Janovicek, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women’s Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), Diane Kravetz, *Tales from the Trenches: Politics and Practice in Feminist Service Organizations* (Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 2004).

³² Evans, Freeman, Bunch?

³³ Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge,

the founding members of the collective were predominately white women. However, the members created a statement prohibiting racism in the shelter and worked to diversify their staff.³⁴ This may have presented challenges to their advocacy for women of color but it does not overshadow the groundbreaking work the women accomplished.

Class is another factor to consider when researching grassroots activism. Women's Advocates' founders did not specify, either in the documents or in the interviews, their socio-economic classes; however, some of the women were single mothers working multiple jobs or married women working to supplement their families' incomes. It is safe to assert that the women were not necessarily wealthy but pieced together the means to either volunteer at or work for minimal wages at the shelter. Sexuality was an issue that Women's Advocates did not specifically address and the records do not evidence residents from same-sex relationships. This is, however, an issue that is increasingly relevant to domestic violence advocates as greater awareness of same-sex interpersonal violence evolves.

Factors of race, class, and sexuality in the study of the battered women's shelter movement present unique challenges to the women served by organized activism. In the twenty-first century, it is more widely known that domestic violence occurs in relationships of all socioeconomic, race, and sexual preferences; however, there is still a lot of work to be done to eradicate social norms that reinforce violence against women. Increasingly, there is more scholarship on domestic violence in same sex relationships and more programs for men who suffer from abusive female partners. However, the overwhelming numbers of people who report

2005), Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), and Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

³⁴ *Women's Advocates, The Story of a Shelter* discusses intersectionality throughout. Demographically, Minnesota is predominately white, which dates back to their Scandinavian, Irish immigration history. Sharon Rice Vaughan quoted in Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 156.

incidents of domestic violence are women. This statistic must consider factors that lead men to oftentimes not report, such as shame, while still acknowledging that women are at greater risk based on factors of inequality that permeate our society.³⁵

Ongoing data collection and advocacy to help domestic violence survivors grew out of Women's Advocates' work to raise awareness of wife abuse. Although their work was part of a larger movement to help abused women, their voices and efforts are essential to understanding the evolution of the battered women's shelter movement into the modern effort to end domestic violence. Largely unknown in the historical record of the U.S. women's movement in the 1970s, Women's Advocates played an instrumental part in bringing the issue of wife abuse into public discourse. As women and men in the St. Paul community were exposed to the experiences of abused women, they were more likely become allies with Women's Advocates. The advocates traversed a road that eventually led to a strong agency in St. Paul that continues to help abused women, children, and men. The history of Women's Advocates' grassroots organizing contributes to the broader history of the U.S. women's movement, the battered women's shelter movement, domestic violence advocacy programs, and offers a compelling foundation for social justice activism.

The following chapters describe the creation of Women's Advocates and how it evolved into a viable agency in St. Paul. Chapter Two details the formation of the collective and how its founders came to realize that abused women lived in their community and needed help. Chapter Three explains how Women's Advocates raised money to support their programs, how they created advocacy policies and procedures, and inspired the formation of local and state legislation to support battered women's programs in Minnesota. These chapters are largely

³⁵ This is an ongoing issue and evidence of how the battered women's shelter movement has progressed with greater awareness of the issue.

based on the archival records of Women's Advocates and the oral histories of some of the early advocates. Chapter Four positions the work of Women's Advocates within the larger history of Minnesota and suggests why one of the first shelters for battered women opened in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1974. Overall, this study of Women's Advocates provides a compelling narrative of how ordinary women foment meaningful community changes through their grassroots organizing and coalition building.

CHAPTER II. MAKING THE CASE FOR WOMEN'S ADVOCATES: THE COLLECTIVE AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Women's Advocates began as a consciousness raising (CR) group that initially wanted to create a women's house that would offer women space to take time for themselves and commune with other women. The idea for the House emerged as a "response to the many women who 'need to get away right now' and have no place to go" and wanted a space "for shared growth through learning new skills, participating in individual and group discussions, and exchanging information and materials."³⁶ The idea for a battered women's shelter evolved from the experiences of two women who staffed a St. Paul legal information and referral telephone line. This resource helped women who wanted to change their names and/or divorce their husbands. As the workers listened to the explanations and reasons of why some women wanted to take these actions, they identified spousal abuse as a primary factor. Because no existing services offered help for abused women, the CR group would evolve over time to one that provided support to battered women. Operating as a collective, their innovative grassroots activism encouraged the development of local policies in St. Paul to help women in domestic violence situations.³⁷ Their activism influenced other groups across the United States to do the same. In order to understand the context in which St. Paul's battered women's shelter arose, it is important to examine the social norms that discouraged women from accomplishing a mission like changing their names or leaving abusive partners. Documents included in the Women's

³⁶ "Newsletter, March 11, 1973," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-74, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁷ Women's historian Jo Freeman, writing as Joreen in 1973, discussed the collective dynamic and the emphasis on "the leaderless, structureless [sic] groups" that formed out of the "natural reaction against the overstructured [sic] society in which most of us found ourselves, the inevitable control this gave others over our lives, and continual elitism of the Left and similar groups among those who were supposedly fighting this overstructuredness [sic]." Joreen, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Koedt, Levine, and Rapone (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 285-299. Nancy Naples, "Deconstructing and Locating Survivor Discourse: Dynamics of Narrative, Empowerment, and Resistance for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse," *Signs*, 28 Summer 2003, 1151-1185 also discussed the importance and nature of collective formations.

Advocates archival collection help to understand the societal and legal restraints of women in the 1970s as well as provide a glimpse into the worldview of Women's Advocates workers.³⁸ Their work as activists brought them an awareness of deeper problems faced by women in their community and kindled aspirations to build a women's shelter. Women's Advocates' grassroots organizing established coordination and coalition building with other agencies to ensure that battered women received needed support and inspired community attention to the widespread problem of wife abuse. The voices of some of the founding Women's Advocates activists here further enrich the history of one of the first battered women's shelters in the United States.

The story of Women's Advocates' beginnings complements the larger social movement activism in the United States during the 1970s, particularly in the women's rights movement. Because the women's movement is well-known in U.S. history, it serves as a prism through which to examine the creation of Women's Advocates. The group of women in St. Paul was part of a larger movement that raised community awareness of injustices specific to women and adopted tendencies of women's groups at the time. For example, Women's Advocates operated as a collective, that is, without a designated power hierarchy. "Feminism" became a word used to describe the activities of many women's groups but oftentimes included negative connotations. Members of Women's Advocates also grappled with the issue of whether or not to use the word to describe their own activism. While Women's Advocates' formation was similar to that of other women's groups, their location in a progressive Midwestern city offered them a unique space in which to operate. However, long held patriarchal norms presented the group

³⁸ In order to concentrate on the atmosphere in which the advocates functioned, this chapter concentrates on the sources from the Women's Advocates' archival collection. A scholarly article that overviewed the early media coverage is Kathleen Tierney, "The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem," *Social Problems* 29 Feb. 1982, 212-214. Tierney argued that the issue of wife abuse "was a good subject for the media" because of the scandalous nature of the problem. She also suggested that the media was valuable to the battered women movement because it gave public attention to the issue that was previously hidden from public discourse.

with problems as they heralded women's rights to live without violence and sought to change policies to help abused women. Women's Advocates emerged as a leader in what would later be called the battered women's shelter movement. But first, the issues of name change and divorce brought them together and helped them realize the problem of domestic violence in St. Paul.

A woman attorney in St. Paul generated the idea that the local telephone and referral system should include information for women who had questions about the process of changing their names or divorcing their husbands. As one of the original members of Women's Advocates, Susan Ryan, recalled, "Delores Orey, the only woman attorney in the legal aid office of St. Paul, told us that women needed information they didn't get from lawyers. At that time you had to prove fault with two witnesses to get a divorce and there were questions about the difference between a legal separation and a divorce. So we [the CR group] wrote a booklet called 'Divorce Rights.'"³⁹ Ryan and another woman named Ilene⁴⁰ were hired through the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program to work in the St. Paul Legal Services of Ramsey County office in December 1971.⁴¹ As they gained more experience answering the telephone line, they recruited other women to work with them. Ryan was part of a CR group that Sharon Rice Vaughan remembered had existed:

For about a year in St. Paul and then they decided they wanted a project and they got Delores Orey who was the only woman attorney at legal assistance in St. Paul, she talked to them and said we don't have any real services for women or even information for women, lot of women call and [St. Paul, being] pretty much a Catholic city and a lot of them were doing Catholic stuff, you know, then being good Catholics and not getting

³⁹ "Susan Ryan speech," August 27, 2004, Women's Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn. The speech is included in a three-ringed binder that commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the shelter. The Divorce Rights booklet was not found in the archival material, nor did any of the interviewees have a copy. However, there was a "Dissolution Handbook" in Box 4, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. The handbook was updated in April 1974 by the Legal Aid Clinic at the University of Minnesota. This overviewed the process for a divorce, which at my perusal, was a convoluted process that anyone would need assistance to complete.

⁴⁰ Ilene's last name is unknown to the author; more information about here was not available.

⁴¹ Sharon Rice Vaughan, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 19, 2010.

divorced and she said that... women want to know what the difference between a legal separation and a legal divorce [was]...it was an important issue because at that time it cost as much to get a separation as it did to get a divorce and a separation was a temporary, it was really nothing, it expired, had an expiration date, or something like that, and so she [Orey] said we're not giving women the information they really need when they first call us to find out more about what their options are and lawyers are really, really touchy about [people other than lawyers] not giving legal advice because you have to have a law degree and you have to pass the bar exam to give legal advice [so VISTA workers were instructed to] just to give information to people about their options.⁴²

This first resource for women in St. Paul provided information and referrals for legal issues such as name change, discrimination, institutionalization, welfare rights, divorce and attorney referrals but “advocacy for women, who were stuck in systems which did not respond to their needs or recognize their rights, became the necessary next step to information and referral.”⁴³ Because the legal system was dominated by men and perpetuated the contemporary period’s assumptions about women, it was not always in tune to the needs or experiences of women. At worst it was discriminatory, and at best, it ignored women’s requests. Ryan and Ilene decided on the name “Women’s Advocates.” After Ilene left the office, Vaughan replaced her as a VISTA worker. Vaughan clearly explained that she was not part of the initial CR group and at the time had disagreed with their feminist leanings.⁴⁴ She, however, had prior experience with social activism and had met Ryan while protesting the Honeywell corporation during the Vietnam War.⁴⁵ Vaughan joined the CR group to discuss the needs of the telephone hotline and

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter* (St. Paul, Women’s Advocates, 1980), 3, borrowed from Bernice Sisson Personal Collection, St. Paul, Minn. The manuscript was published in 1980 as an answer to the countless requests Women’s Advocates received from other groups that wanted to start shelters for battered women. The book was a culmination of Women’s Advocates’ experiences and keeping with their collective organization, no names were ascribed to any aspect of the book, including its authorship. Prior to its publication, Women’s Advocates handwrote or typed responses to requests for information. After the book’s publication, inquirers about the shelter could order and purchase a book and the proceeds benefitted the shelter.

⁴⁴ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁴⁵ Ibid. In the interview, Vaughan described their efforts as such: “Honeywell was a worldwide corporation based in Minneapolis that manufactured anti-fragmentation bombs which were designed to go through flesh, they had little pellets in them and they got really sophisticated so there was a very strong group of people in this area that were organizing around buying shares of Honeywell, meeting with the CEO, putting out a lot of publicity about their manufacture of these weapons and Susan was in that group.” Interviewees Monica Erler and Bernice Sisson also

remembered the dynamics of the group:

They were mostly from the CR group and it is sort of an interesting evolution of how they kind of moved from that, the way it had been defined at the beginning to kind of how it changed to better meet the needs of the callers and then as women who had been in the CR group slowly dropped out and more new women came in.⁴⁶

The evolution in the scope of the group's work to address women's varied needs started by helping women with name changes and divorce, but in the process challenged social norms in significant ways.

Through the information telephone line, Women's Advocates helped women with *pro se* name changes, that is, without the counsel of an attorney. The request for women to change their names was not new in the 1970s but the demand increased as the women's movement inspired women to think about themselves as individuals with their own identities. However, the customs that the women challenged had become fundamental to the mainstream patriarchal American ways of thinking about women and marriage. Following tradition, married women took their husband's names and found it difficult to retain or reclaim their maiden names for any reason. According to antiquated laws of "coverture," the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1966 that in marriage, man and woman were "one" and according to Justice Hugo Black, "the one is the husband."⁴⁷ According to the custom of coverture, women lost their individuality and did not have rights to their own property or their own lines of credit.⁴⁸ Some women in the 1970s wanted to make the statement that their marital status was not indicative of their identities and abilities as human beings. Because the title of "Mrs." denoted marriage, opponents to this custom adopted the title of "Ms." as a rejection of the societal norms that differentiated between

recalled briefly Vaughan and Ryan's Honeywell activism and efforts at Legal Assistance of Ramsey County in their interview with the author, tape recording, Little Canada, Minn., Sept. 25, 2010.

⁴⁶ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁴⁷ Diane Schulder, "Women and the Law," *The Atlantic*, March 1970, Box 5, Folder: Legal Information Minn, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

married women and unmarried women and the expectation that a married woman should take their husband's name.

Local and national media devoted significant coverage to the name change issue, and the archival collection of material related to the Women's Advocates group includes numerous articles that outline the process and potential obstacles for women who wanted to change their names.⁴⁹ The local Twin Cities media provided readers who were unfamiliar with information about the tradition of women changing their names and reasons why some women wanted to reclaim their maiden names. As overviewed by the *Minneapolis Tribune*, women's history includes several examples of women refusing to become their husband's "property" upon marriage and detailed one example dating back to the nineteenth century. Lucy Stone married Henry Blackwell in 1855 and kept her maiden name. She faced opposition for her choice; for example, she was denied the right to vote in the 1879 Massachusetts school election if she did not use Blackwell's name. Stone did not budge on the issue and inspired other women to resist traditions oppressive to women. The Lucy Stone League formed in the 1920s and adopted the slogan, "My name is the symbol of my identity, which must not be lost."⁵⁰ In the 1970s, the issue of women retaining their maiden names gained attention from supporters on behalf of women who wanted to marry but keep their maiden names and/or divorce and reclaim their maiden names. While women believed they had a right to control their identities through their names, the patriarchal norm was not easily challenged.

⁴⁹ Sociologist Kathleen Tierney overviewed media coverage of wife beating in the last years of the 1970s in her work, "The Battered Women's Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem." A few of her noteworthy findings include: Between 1970 and 1972, there was not a single reference to battered women in *The New York Times*; however, the newspaper began recognizing the issue as noteworthy in 1976 and identified shelters as a practical "approach to combatting wife beating" (213). Television coverage of wife abuse started in 1975, including news stories and television dramas (213).

⁵⁰ Lucy Stone information included in Margaret Zack, "For Better or for Worse, but Not for a Husband's Name," *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1974, Box 5, Folder: Name Change, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

In the early 1970s, in Ramsey County, where St. Paul is located, if a married woman wanted to reclaim her maiden name, the process of changing a name in Ramsey County took approximately one month and cost nineteen dollars, excluding attorney fees. Ramsey County first granted name changes for women in May of 1972, and in November of 1973, the *St. Paul Dispatch* reported that the number of women seeking name changes increased during that eighteen-month period. The court clerk's office spokesperson asserted that most of the requests "have come in the past year since women's liberation and feminists groups began advocating the idea."⁵¹ Vaughan commented on behalf of Women's Advocates that when a woman completed the name change form, the reason for the change could be as simple as "personal preference."⁵² However, county judges did not uniformly implement the policy. In August of 1972, Ramsey County Judge Harold Schultz denied one woman's request because he did not believe her reason for the change—"to preserve her self-identity"—was "good enough."⁵³

The *St. Paul Dispatch* article highlighted a number of reasons why a woman applied for a name change. First, professional women, especially women who published their work, wanted to continue using their maiden names in order to "avoid confusion" after marriage.⁵⁴ Other women believed that their names reflected their identities. Minneapolis woman Gerri Perreault, married for five years, recalled instances when she "realize[d] that she was being regarded not as a person but as a wife."⁵⁵ For example, on one occasion, she took her family's pets to the veterinarian and the bill came in her husband's name, which she explained made her feel "as if I had never been there." When she first applied for a name change, the judge denied her because

⁵¹ Linda Kohl, "Women 'Change' Names to Keep Them," *St. Paul Dispatch*, Nov. 22, 1973, Box 5, Folder: Publicity, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Margaret Zack, "Wife Now Legally Uses Maiden Name," *Minneapolis Tribune*, undated, Box 5, Folder: Name Change, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

he believed “it was ridiculous for her to want her own name” and “it was not sound social policy” for him to approve the change. The second time she applied, her request was granted “easily” by Hennepin County District Court Judge Douglas Amdahl.⁵⁶ Perreault explained that when she married she did not realize that she had a choice to keep her maiden name because of the custom for married women to take their husband’s last name. Other women in the Twin Cities area echoed this sentiment.

““In the loss of personal identity you have the feeling that if you have to use your husband’s name you are just Mr. so and so’s property, and you have no name or identity without your own,”” explained one St. Paul woman who applied for a name change after twenty-three years of marriage.⁵⁷ In this instance, the woman stated that her husband “fully approved the name change.” However, she had concerns about potential confusion that could arise when the couple registered for a motel or when their children introduced her to their friends. This woman emphasized that she was not “a member of the women’s lib movement” because ““they’re a little far out on many subjects that have nothing to do with the basic principle.”” But the article indicated that “she does feel its is [sic] incumbent on every woman to get an education that will enable her to become self-sufficient.””⁵⁸

Not all women interviewed in the local newspapers opted to change their names but supported the choice for women to keep their maiden names. “I married four years ago—before feminism—and it never even occurred to me to change my married name back. But it did disturb me some to be called by a new name,” one woman commented.⁵⁹ However, she felt like she had

⁵⁶ Ibid. The article described Judge Doug Amdahl as a “good judge” in Minneapolis, one who would decide cases with an open mind; however, Judge Winton was labeled as one to “avoid.”

⁵⁷ J.C. Wolfe, “Married ‘Miss’ Says Identity Restored with Maiden Name,” *St Paul Dispatch*, May 30, 1972, Box 5, Folder: Name Change, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Kohl, *St. Paul Dispatch*.

formed an identity with her married name and did not plan to change back to her maiden name. Inclusion of these women's experiences in the local newspapers showed that the mainstream media encouraged a dialogue about the issue of women's name changes and that women understood and appreciated feminism in a variety of ways. In some ways, the coverage of this issue helped to eventually create a more accepting culture of women's rights.

Throughout the 1970s, activists in the women's movement identified various ways that legal and cultural mores created and reinforced systems which discriminated against women. Grassroots activism called attention to specific injustices and demanded changes to systems that upheld patriarchal norms.⁶⁰ In 1975, the Minnesota legislature passed a state law that offered women a choice to keep their maiden names when married. According to the new law, men and women had the choice of retaining their family name upon marriage, utilizing hyphenated names and/or using their former spouse's name for the sake of professional or business purposes.⁶¹ No direct link between the new policy and Women's Advocates activism existed; however, the increased demand exhibited by women to change their names and Women's Advocates' involvement with the issue provides evidence of a culture in Minnesota that was becoming more cognizant of women's concerns.

The progressive nature of Twin Cities politics in the 1970s fostered conditions in which Women's Advocates developed and thrived beyond their work in the legal aid office. In March of 1972, Women's Advocates was designated as a non-profit organization and with the new

⁶⁰ Secondary sources that speak to this topic are cited in Chapter 1.

⁶¹ The Women's Advocates collection included the same article in two different folders: "Bill May Allow Wedded Name Option" reported that Minnesota would "desex" sixteen statutes and amend the name change law. Neither copy included an author, date or place of publication: "Bill May Allow Wedded Name Option," Box 5, Folder: Name Change, Folder: Publicity, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. An online search of the Minnesota legislature record evidenced that in 1975, the legislature revised sixteen laws to refer to "persons" instead of "men." These laws related to issues of snow removal, boiler inspector, vaccination of domestic animals, and killing of diseased animals. Laws of Minnesota, www.revisor.mn.gov, accessed online February 10, 2011.

status, adopted the VISTA positions. They continued to answer the phone service in the legal aid office until February 1973 when they moved it to an apartment rented by one of the VISTA workers.⁶² As the advocates talked with women, they discovered an array of issues that women faced: “women who were isolated and without support, women who were being evicted, women who were coming out of institutions, women with no place to go and no financial resources.”⁶³ Women’s Advocates referred many of the callers to other agencies but when women spoke about needing a divorce because of violence in the home, there was no place for the women to go for safety. Vaughan recalled that early on,

We were getting all these phone calls and we were getting, we were kind of a dumping ground, we were getting women who had called other places and they didn’t know what to do with them so they said, call this number and of course we had no professional credentials at all, so we were dealing with some really hard things, we knew we had to find out the resources in the community otherwise we would just be passing women through and through and through so we did some good research about what was available, what phone numbers we could give to women and there was nothing for a place for women to stay, except for emergency social service which was overnight or over the weekend until the welfare department opened and you had to be means tested, you couldn’t have any money, and that was just incredible, we just said that we had to do something about that.⁶⁴

St. Paul’s “emergency social services” provided women and children a couple nights’ stay at a local hotel, but Women’s Advocates identified the dangers of sending women who were escaping violent partners to a hotel with no security or support.⁶⁵ When a woman left an abuser she faced extreme danger to herself and her children, if they were with her.

The need to house women in crisis was apparent, but the group members heatedly debated how the program would function. Vaughan remembered that the collective took a

⁶² *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.* During the author’s interview with Elizabeth Raasch-Gilman, the former Women’s Advocates volunteer spoke about how the state closed several mental institutions at this time and how many women with mental health issues had no place to go. While Women’s Advocates helped many of these women, the shelter faced difficulties in housing women with severe mental health concerns, albeit abuse was often linked to these women’s problems. Elizabeth Raasch-Gilman, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 22, 2010.

⁶⁴ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁶⁵ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 4.

weekend retreat to discuss the varied perspectives the group had about how to answer the phone service and help callers. Some members of the group believed that because “we weren’t in crisis and we mostly had college degrees, we could tell women what was best for them, once they told us what their problem was.”⁶⁶ However, Vaughan and others disagreed, “We don’t know, a woman who is calling knows what she wants, we have to help her get it, we have to help her maybe define what she wants, we don’t know what she wants, she knows what she wants but she just can’t get it so we have to help her with the resources that she needs but she has to articulate what she needs.”⁶⁷ After a weekend of “fierce” discussion, which Vaughan described as not “fun at all and it was raining,” the collective voted to define their approach to advocacy: the women callers were their own experts and the group’s purpose was to aid them in getting their needs met.⁶⁸ This approach to policymaking, albeit not an easy process, reflected the core beliefs that motivated Women’s Advocates. Operating as a collective, the women based their decisions on consensus and functioned without a hierarchy of power. The members’ devotion to this organizational arrangement reflected their commitment to effecting changes in their community. Knowing how these women came to be a part of Women’s Advocates is fundamental to understanding the organizational structure and thus the effectiveness of the group. An exploration into the backgrounds of some of the founding members reveals that some of the women had similar experiences and shared belief systems.

At Women’s Advocates, each collective member brought her own individual ideals to the group, and combined with those of other members, fostered an atmosphere of equality devoted to helping women live violence-free lives. Women’s Advocates’ functionality depended on the passionate and compassionate efforts of the members. The six women interviewed for this

⁶⁶ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

project offered insight into the dynamic group of women who worked as part of the collective and who created Women's Advocates. Throughout the interview process, each of the women touched on the following topics: social activism prior to their work at the shelter; how and why they started work at Women's Advocates; the influence of feminism on themselves and/or the group; and why they believe St. Paul nurtured the development of Women's Advocates.

As previously noted, Sharon Vaughan met Susan Ryan during their activism with the Honeywell Project; however, Vaughan had prior political activist experience working for Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign.⁶⁹ Two other women, Monica Erler and Bernice Sisson, had also campaigned for the progressive Minnesota political figure where they learned about Women's Advocates from Ryan at a political meeting on the University of Minnesota campus. Erler and Sisson joined Women's Advocates at nearly the same time, Erler as a staff person and Sisson as a volunteer. Friends from college at St. Catherine's in St. Paul, Sisson worked as a nurse and Erler had worked at a law office that specialized on cases related to Wounded Knee.⁷⁰ Erler recalled that she learned in childhood from her progressive father, "that women got a bum deal" but attending college provided her with a formal setting in which to discuss these injustices.⁷¹

College life proved a time of revelation for two other collective members. Lois Severson, a staff person, stated that her years at Antioch College "radicalized" her from her life as "a suburban housewife."⁷² While continuing her education, she worked with the League of Women Voters and for the Welfare Department in adjacent Anoka County. She lived next door to Cheryl

⁶⁹ Monica Erler, Lois Severson and Bernice Sisson, interview with author, tape recording, Little Canada, Minn., Sept. 25, 2010.

⁷⁰ Erler was referring to the 1973 standoff at Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota between members of the American Indian Movement and United States Law enforcement.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

Beardslee, one of the founders of Women's Advocates, from whom she first heard about the group. Severson's experience working in the Welfare Department helped Women's Advocates create a constructive relationship with that agency.⁷³

For volunteer Betsy Raasch-Gilman, college opened her eyes to women's issues and sparked her quest for justice. She heard about Women's Advocates when she returned to St. Paul after graduating from Grinnell College in Iowa.⁷⁴ A family friend told her about the shelter and she started volunteering, mostly in the evenings. Raasch-Gilman traced her social and political awareness back to her grandmother who was "a leading social worker in Minneapolis" in the early 1900s.⁷⁵ When she attended Central High School in St. Paul, she recalled that her formative years were "dominated by the black power movement . . . [and] the Vietnam War" and in college she "got feminism as a piece too." She described her awakening at Grinnell as a time when:

Women had recognized one another and we wanted to do something together and our voices were important and were being ignored and we weren't seeing ourselves represented in the curriculum or on the faculty so that the piece of feminism came to me mostly in college, I mean, I read the *Feminine Mystique* in high school but beyond that it really came to me in college and I got involved in the Iowa Women's Political Caucus, I was one of the founding members . . . even as a college student and the League of Women Voters in town, feminism was sweeping through the faculty wives too and so they were very much, like, something's gotta change here, here we are stuck in this little town of Grinnell, Iowa being the wives of the guys who are employed at the college, what's wrong with this picture and so the League of Women Voters became a good place, college wise, to connect. . . .⁷⁶

Burgeoning activism in political and social justice movements formed a common experience for those who would members of the Women's Advocates collective, many of whom also attended

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

⁷⁵ Ibid. For more information on Catheryne Cooke Gilman, see Elizabeth Gilman's essay in *Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays*, ed. Barbara Stuhler and Gretchen Kreuter (St. Paul: Minnesota History Society Press, 1998), 190-207 and Leigh Ann Wheeler, *Against Obscenity: Reform and the Politics of Womanhood in America, 1873-1935* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

⁷⁶ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

college. These commonalities reflected the group's demographic as predominately white, heterosexual, middle-to-lower class women who worked to create a more just society through bettering the lives of women. The interviewees briefly acknowledged factors of race, class, and sexuality, but did not make explicit connections between these dynamics and their work.

Raasch-Gilman recalled their focus as “really getting our hands dirty, down and dirty, with women's issues and the reality of women's lives and how they played out in the home, in the hospital, in the police department, in the places that are supposed to be responding to women's needs.”⁷⁷ Women's Advocates encouraged justice for women and demanded that society - acknowledge how cultural, political, and legal norms and practices discriminated against women.

During the women's movement of the 1970s, activists and opponents employed the term “feminist” to describe an ideology that emphasized women's rights. The term developed a negative connotation, mostly in the mainstream media and by those who opposed women's assertion of power. Some women's groups; however, embraced the term “feminist” and used it to describe their activism.⁷⁸ Discomfort with the term was such that Women's Advocates, at its inception, debated using “feminist” and “feminism” in association with their work. During the interviews, the former collective members discussed the usage of this contentious term. Lois Severson stated that “we called ourselves feminists,” however, Bernice Sisson remembered it differently. “Susan Ryan and Sharon Vaughan never thought of themselves as feminists,” Sisson continued, “I remember sitting, this was like in 1972, sitting in Sharon's living room, they were sitting on the floor and they were supposed to talk somewhere and they said, ‘Well, we're just

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Anne M. Valk explored the use of the term “feminism” in the women's movement in the 1970s and how the context of place must be examined to fully understand the context of how activists employ (or eschew) the label. Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008). Judith Ezekiel's work, *Feminism in the Heartland*, also details how a grassroots activist group in Dayton, Ohio organized feminist activities (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002).

gonna tell them we're not feminists,' well, I don't know what they thought that that meant.”⁷⁹

Vaughan intensely expressed in 2010 that she did not consider herself a feminist during her time at Women's Advocates; rather she thought of feminists as women “who had station wagons and Irish Setters in the back and took their kids to ballet lessons all week long.” In contrast to those women, Vaughan described herself as a single mother who was “struggling financially.”

Looking back at Women's Advocates' early years, Vaughan captured how “feminism” has constantly evolving meanings. She explained that “feminism” is not “a very useful word unless it is put into a context all the time, particularly in the history of this movement and the shelter itself.” Vaughan asserted that, “The women who started it pretty much weren't feminists, we didn't think of ourselves as feminist, but we acted like feminists and we wanted to make it work so we didn't worry about what people called themselves.”⁸⁰

Regardless of Vaughan's memories of the term “feminism,” Women's Advocates offered Raasch-Gilman “a different way to be a feminist and a different expression of feminism.”⁸¹ In some respects, her time at Women's Advocates reconnected her with her family's “social worky heritage” and because of that she said she “spent many years trying to tease out the relative value of social work and social change.” Raasch-Gilman remembered Women's Advocates as a feminist organization “from the get-go” even though “Sharon says that we weren't [feminists] but that's not the way I remember her talking at the time.”⁸² Raasch-Gilman fondly spoke of how Monica Erler influenced her ideals of feminism, particularly as related to women and anger and how those concepts influenced the collective structure. As a collective, Women's Advocates formulated their strategies through group consensus with each woman bringing different ideas to

⁷⁹ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

⁸² Ibid. Raasch-Gilman offered this statement without the interviewer mentioning Vaughan's comments.

the table. Vaughan described the collective as creating:

A system of governance based on this philosophy of horizontal power, it was really, I love the way we conceptualized it, because women were being beaten by men in a patriarchy, so I guess we were feminists, but I still don't think I called myself one, but we understood really well that this whole way women's silence had been maintained for so long until they finally spoke.⁸³

Overall, the collective identified injustices towards women, especially as related to violence against women in the home.

Another issue that the group confronted was its tendency to take on countless projects and commitments. Raasch-Gilman recalled one particular collective meeting in which the members were trying to decide how to focus their energies when Erler boldly stated: “fuck this project, fuck this person, until we get our act together just fuck it all, that is what is most important is that we get our act together.”⁸⁴ Raasch-Gilman said,

I was so shocked, this woman who was probably my age now, in her 50s, saying ‘fuck’ but that was really what it was, anger was a big piece and each of us understanding that we were angry and that we had really, really, really good reasons to be angry and validating one another's anger and saying it's okay, it's really fine that you are angry.⁸⁵

The collective contemplated with how to handle their anger and best channel it into productivity, and did so with the help of therapists Anne Wilson Schaef and Phyllis Chesler. These women and their writings, in addition to meeting face to face with Wilson Schaef, helped the collective “validate that it's okay to be a woman, it's okay to be angry, it's okay to not be polite and nice and all those things we were trained to be.”⁸⁶ This approach challenged the patriarchal system that dictated gender norms and granted the members of Women's Advocates permission to explore their individuality and how they might best serve the bigger picture—the

⁸³ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁸⁴ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. See especially, Anne Wilson Schaef, *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in the White Male Society* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981) and Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970).

group's advocacy program.⁸⁷

The collective nature of Women's Advocates allowed equal time for members to talk about their opinions and frustrations and this provided some of the women confidence to contribute more than they would have within a different organizational structure. Bernice Sisson recalled that the collective dynamic "fascinated me and the good thing was too, because I'm not pushy when I'm in a group, but there, because everything was on the collective system, you could get up and say your piece and be heard as well as somebody else."⁸⁸ Monica Erler found the true collective structure of Women's Advocates empowering, as she had negatively experienced collective organizing while at a legal office in St. Paul. She had worked on a legal offense/defense committee for Wounded Knee cases and she stated that it was a "collective, but the men, the attorneys, were the top dogs."⁸⁹ At Women's Advocates, however, she experienced a more pure collective structure and when people inside and outside of the group, had doubts about the collective nature, she would remind the members, "You don't realize how smart you are and how well you work together. There are no men here and when there are men in a collective, the women just don't count and this [Women's Advocates] is really wonderful."⁹⁰ The societal norms that Erler referenced were part of the larger patriarchal system that Women's Advocates challenged.

Despite internal and external challenges, the members of Women's Advocates sought to help women find justice in an unjust society. Their community, St. Paul, generally supported the

⁸⁷ Local historian, Joseph Amato reasoned that the "expression of a reaction to differing emotions" is an essential part of studying the "local" in order to understand a sense of place. Women's Advocates' recognition of their anger and subsequent guiding into constructive work, is an example of what Amato described "As emotions are formed by distinct times, so they are embedded in unique social situations, institutions, and movements. A group's existence can be accounted for by a specific configuration of emotions." Joseph Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 78.

⁸⁸ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

emergence of a shelter for battered women and the collective members spoke to several reasons why Women's Advocates was possible in their city. Vaughan believed that St. Paul resembled a small town, even though it is the state's capital, largely because of its history as "kind of the old Irish Catholic oligarchy." She described it as "very homogenous at that time, mostly Scandinavians, we didn't have big urban problems, or big urban areas that were out of control, we did have some . . . but the scale was doable."⁹¹ Sisson remarked that St. Paul, being "like a small town, it was not that hard to get to know people," which helped the collective find local support.⁹² Through their activism and work with social services and legal offices, they found a critical ally in St. Paul's only female police sergeant.

Sergeant Carolen Bailey worked closely with the shelter on issues of security and education. She spoke candidly about why she believed St. Paul cultivated the creation of one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States. "Community-based teams" across Minnesota, and St. Paul in particular, were responsible for raising awareness to issues of child abuse, incest and sexual assault before the issue of wife abuse entered the realm of discussion.⁹³ Bailey described the community-based teams as coordination between agencies that dealt with specific issues, starting with child abuse in the late 1960s. With the creation of Women's Advocates, cooperation between agencies, such as the police department, the welfare department and hospitals, slowly emerged to help battered women. Therefore, with this model of collaboration, combined with the small community-feel of St. Paul and the passion and devotion of Women's Advocates, the environment was right for the shelter to thrive. What started out as making legal referrals and aiding women with name changes spurred a larger movement to help abused women. Even though the members of Women's Advocates realized that women were

⁹¹ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁹² Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

⁹³ Carolen Bailey, interview with author, tape recording, North Oaks, Minn., July 21, 2011.

suffering at the hands of their spouses, “wife abuse” was not part of the societal dialogue at the time, thus public recognition of the issue was badly needed.

Once Women’s Advocates established a shelter and helped propel the battered women’s shelter movement to raise awareness of wife abuse, the media noticed and underscored the significance of their activism. Articles in the local and national newspapers and magazines overviewed the success that Women’s Advocates and other women’s organizations had at bringing the issue of wife abuse into the public arena for discussion. The Women’s Advocates’ archives included numerous newspaper and magazine stories that showed the growing awareness of and varying perspectives about the issue. These sources evidence how the media, and in turn the public, tried to make sense of who batterers were, why abused women stayed in abusive relationships, and what role law enforcement and the courts played, or did not play, in incidences of wife abuse. Although these articles are not indicative of all printed media about domestic violence—as that would entail a much larger study than the one at hand—they do reveal ways in which the issue was being addressed and presented to the public in St. Paul and across the United States. Weaving together nationwide studies as well as experiences of the St. Paul workers, the articles illustrate how Women’s Advocates was recognized in the national media as part of the larger movement to address wife abuse. In turn, the media attention to wife abuse suggests that while Women’s Advocates’ work was groundbreaking, it existed within the larger context of rising awareness.

In the 1970s, most ordinary Americans did not acknowledge or feel comfortable discussing wife abuse even though it existed on a surprisingly large scale. An article in the *National Enquirer* addressed the issue of wife abuse and quoted the Family Court Lawyers Association’s Jesse Rothman who stated that “Well in excess of 200,000 American husbands are

habitual wife beaters.”⁹⁴ An article entitled, “The Wife Beaters” cited recent studies that exposed a shocking number of incidents of wife abuse never reported to law enforcement. In Cleveland, 37% of women in 600 couples who applied for divorce cited violence in the home as the justification for leaving their marriages.⁹⁵ At the University of Michigan, two law students interviewed twenty “known victims of wife abuse and 50 public officials who had dealt with such cases in one capacity or another.”⁹⁶ Abuse also transcended socioeconomic lines. Owen Lee, an independent counselor at Family Services in St. Paul, noted that clients who spoke about abuse were professionals, college educated, and had “. . . Summit Avenue addresses [an affluent neighborhood of the city].”⁹⁷ Del Martin, author of *Battered Wives*, wrote an article for the *New York Times* on October 6, 1975 and noted that little was definitively known about abusers because men “guilty of assaulting their wives are seldom arrested and generally refuse therapy.”⁹⁸

Information about perpetrators became more commonly known as abused women revealed their experiences with some social service agencies. Abusers tended to share a trait that many women called the “Jekyll-and-Hyde personality: a loving, caring individual one minute and a raving, flailing maniac the next.”⁹⁹ Women described their abusers as “angry, resentful, suspicious, competitive, moody, tense . . . [which created] an aura of helplessness, fear,

⁹⁴Allan A. Zullo, “It’s a Growing Problem that Affects People of All Ages, Incomes and Social Levels,” *National Enquirer*, August 19, 1975, Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁹⁵ Marj Jackson Levin, “The Wife Beaters,” *McCall’s*, June 1975, handwritten date, Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Nancy Livingston, “Why Wives Stay, Take Abuse,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 1, 1974, Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁹⁸ Del Martin, “Beating Her, Slamming Her, Making Her Cry,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1974, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

inadequacy, insecurity.”¹⁰⁰ A *McCall's* article described abusers “as demanding, possessive and jealous to the point of paranoia” and reported that these men claimed that their spouse was not a good wife and had made mistakes in the home, like being late or not taking care of their children.¹⁰¹ These so-called explanations were used as excuses for on-going abuse in marriages. Maria Roy, executive director of Abused Women’s Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), noted that “in the average pattern of wife beatings, the assaults start early in the marriage and the wife endures them for about eight years” and “the assaults are usually the result of the husband’s drinking.”¹⁰²

A *St. Paul Pioneer Press* article focusing on alcohol and wife abuse quoted St. Paul municipal judge, Joseph Summers, who remarked that “he rarely sees a case of wife beating where alcohol is not involved.”¹⁰³ Likewise, Sergeant Dave Hubenette noted that “usually the man—and sometimes the woman, too—have been drinking before wife beating sessions” and Owen Lee, counselor at St. Paul Family Services stated that “the most serious cases of wife beating involve alcohol or drugs” because when the man was drunk, “he has an excuse to be violent.”¹⁰⁴ “Alcoholism, jealousy, unemployment and frustration are often cited as contributing to a husband’s violent outbursts” but one abused woman asserted, “I may be his excuse, but I am never the reason for his violence.”¹⁰⁵ The University of Michigan study reiterated this woman’s belief, finding that alcohol use was sometimes a precursor to violence but usually

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Robert Pear, “How the Battered Women are Stymied in Official Maze,” *Washington Star*, Jan. 3, 1976, Box 4, Folder: Women’s Shelters Newsletters, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁰² Zullo, *National Enquirer*.

¹⁰³ Nancy Livingston, “Wife-beating, Alcohol Linked,” *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, Dec. 1, 1974, Box 5, Folder: Publicity, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Martin, *New York Times*.

“some relatively minor annoyance” incited abuse from the husband.¹⁰⁶ Alcohol may have been a convenient justification as to why violence ensued in the home, but further research identified more information about husbands who abused their wives.

Professionals found certain commonalities in wife abusers. Richard Gelles, sociologist at the University of Rhode Island, wrote extensively about wife abuse and argued that there was no single source of a man’s violence toward his wife.¹⁰⁷ However, as many battered women learned, any type of disruption to the abuser’s life triggered his abusive behavior, which could run the gamut of controlling behavior to physical violence. According to some psychologists, men suffered “from a feeling that he cannot cope with or control something in his environment”¹⁰⁸ and “we [society] put so much pressure on men to perform in every way, as breadwinner, father, and captain of the ship.”¹⁰⁹ Maria Roy from AWAIC stated that “the recession” in the early 1970s contributed to wife abuse because men concerned about their unemployment took their frustrations out on their wives.¹¹⁰ St. Paul Judge Joseph Summers also noted that “wife beating goes up as the economy gets worse,” especially if the husband was unemployed. Therefore, when some men felt like they had lost control over particular aspects of their lives, they cruelly manipulated their spouses.

Certain researchers attributed men’s abusive behavior to the pervasive patriarchal system that dominated society. Sociologists R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash argued that “the correct interpretation of violence between husbands and wives conceptualizes such violence as the extension of the domination and control of husbands over their wives” and “the successful socialization of men and women for their positions within marriage has provided a mechanism

¹⁰⁶ Levin, *McCall’s*.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, *New York Times*.

¹⁰⁸ Pear, *Washington Star*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Zullo, *National Enquirer*.

for both the legitimization and reinforcement of the marital hierarchy.”¹¹¹ Terry Davidson, scholar on wife abuse, identified a “shocking dichotomy between proclaimed values and practiced way of life” in the United States. She argued: “America is a violent country. It is also a country that places high value on God and family. By law, the national motto ‘In God We Trust’ is inscribed on all the currency. By custom, marriage and home are elevated to sacred, inviolate institutions, not to be interfered with by laws.”¹¹² Therefore, because of norms and traditions, society often ignored wife abuse and by default, deemed it beyond the bounds of public interference.

The women’s movements of the 1970s, particularly the battered women’s shelter movement, challenged these norms. However, according to some professionals, the women’s liberation movement was to blame for creating an upheaval in American society and in some ways, it caused men to beat their wives. In the *National Enquirer*, attorney Rothman blamed “women’s lib” for wife abuse because ““women are becoming much freer in expressing themselves and this makes some men insecure.”” He also noted that societal norms contributed to violence in the home because with “society’s general permissive attitudes today, some husbands are no longer afraid of being exposed to the public as wife beaters.”¹¹³ Further addressing the speculation that the women’s movement contributed to men’s lack of control, *Ms.* magazine published a story in its November 1974 issue raising the question, “Do Women Make Men Violent?” Journalist and founding editor Letty Cottin Pogrebin responded to what she read as an inflammatory series of editorial columns in the *New York Times* by Dotson Rader who blamed women for an increase of violence in American culture. Rader asserted that “dominant

¹¹¹ R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 15, 44.

¹¹² Terry Davidson, *Conjugal Crime: Understanding and Changing the Wifebeating Pattern* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1978), 3.

¹¹³ Zullo, *National Enquirer*.

mothers (and female teachers) are figures of ‘repressive, defeating authority’ who emasculate the young male.” Because of dominant women, young men, according to Rader, ““experience the greatest inability to cope with contemporary life,”” and “women must bear the responsibility for this because ‘it is they who rear the rest of us.’”¹¹⁴ In the *Washington Star*, a psychiatrist argued that “men have lost the mutual support and education that an ‘extended family’ of uncles and grandfathers, cousins and nephews used to provide.” On the other hand, women have “a lot” of support from other women, ““they bump into each other at the supermarket and the PTA. But a man starting out to be a husband and father often begins with a clean slate. He doesn’t know what to do.””¹¹⁵ These claims about men, their responsibilities and their behaviors seemed to suggest excuses as to why husbands abused their wives rather than providing research-based explanations about this complex problem.

Despite the lack of research-based consensus on the reasons why husbands beat their wives, the fact remained that women experienced abuse from their spouses. Some professionals identified long-term effects of spousal abuse and cautioned against perpetuating the ““macho”” image of men which was “rooted in the training that teaches boys to be rough and belligerent while girls learn to be delicate and submissive.” This mentality perpetuated the notion that violence “is a way for anxious boys and men to demonstrate their masculinity.”¹¹⁶ Counselor Mary Peck identified family backgrounds as potentially playing a role in the continuation of spousal abuse since many women whose mothers were abused “expect” to be beaten, or if a man’s father abused his mother then he would be more likely to beat his wife. Unless society challenged these norms, the article speculated that children who witnessed violence in the home

¹¹⁴ Letty Cottin Pogrebin, “Do Women Make Men Violent?,” *Ms.*, Nov. 1974, Box 4, Folder: Assault General Information, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹¹⁵ Pear, *Washington Star*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

would continue the cycle of abuse.¹¹⁷

Information about the causes and effects of wife abuse slowly emerged in public and academic discourse. The above examined articles shed light on the environment in which the Women's Advocates collective formed and operated. Although the *National Enquirer's* article presented several problematic assertions on behalf of the 'professionals,' the inclusion of an article about wife abuse in a tabloid newspaper speaks to the rising awareness of the issue in the mid-1970s. In this article, Rothman argued that if abused women left the home the husband may realize "that he has lost all the comforts of home" which may "bring him back to his senses." But, Rothman noted, "for this strategy to work, a wife needs strong advisers. She must not return to the brutal husband until the reason for his brutality has been removed."¹¹⁸

Theoretically, Rothman presented a seemingly simple solution of leaving; however, in reality, battered women faced enormous complexities in their attempts to leave their controlling abuser.

A widely-held assumption about battered women was that a woman could easily leave an abusive situation.¹¹⁹ If a woman talked about the abuse, friends and family often pressured her not to press charges on her husband and to work to maintain the marriage. Some women related that their so-called support system told them that they "made [their] bed, now lie in it."¹²⁰ So why did women stay with the men who abused them? The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* addressed this question and challenged the notion that it was "easy" for women to leave abusive relationships. Some common assumptions about why abused women stayed with their abusive partners were: ". . . certain women like to get beaten up" or "women just get resigned to the situation," while

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Zullo, *National Enquirer*.

¹¹⁹ The assumption that a person who is abused can simply leave the situation continues to be one of the leading misconceptions about domestic violence and the author does not want to ignore this fact. However, for the sake of grammatical continuity, the manuscript will continue to read in the past tense.

¹²⁰ Pear, *Washington Star*, Jan. 3, 1976.

others supposed that “women are too scared and apprehensive about making it on their own,” and speculated that “beating, for some people, is just so much sexual foreplay.”¹²¹ The truth was that abused women, and women in general, were socialized to rely on men, and that “women are not raised with the expectation that they will have to take care of themselves,” stated Carol Garrison from the Ramsey County Mental Health Center.¹²² Karen Klinefelter, staff person at the Ramsey County Mental Health Center and at Women’s Advocates, believed that women who suffered abuse belittled themselves and “they begin to believe the cruel, disparaging remarks of their spouses” and “begin to think they are crazy.” Women who wanted to leave, Klinefelter acknowledged, were oftentimes impaired by a lack of independent income and the responsibility of caring for their children. Psychological impacts diminished a woman’s perspective of the situation, especially when some abusers tried to make amends by apologizing and buying them material items, no doubt creating more confusion and insecurity for the woman.¹²³ Overall, then as in the twenty-first century America, there were a variety of reasons why women did not leave their abusers or returned to them if they left.

When and if a woman had the means to leave, they found it difficult and dangerous to escape violent relationships that could turn deadly. Activist author Del Martin wrote:

The man, after all, has a lot to lose if he lets his wife walk out on him. He loses the stability of married life that is so significant to his mental health. . . . He loses ‘his’ woman, the scapegoat that is living proof of his superiority. A husband’s desperate need to hold on to these symbols often makes divorce meaningless to him. Some men would rather kill ‘their’ women than see them make a new life.¹²⁴

One appalling incident in Minneapolis in 1975 presented the reality of wife abuse and how it could result in a woman’s death. This woman suffered serious physical abuse prior to her

¹²¹ Livingston, “Why Wives Stay, Take Abuse,” *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Del Martin, *Battered Wives* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), 79.

murder and her story illuminated the difficulties women faced if they tried to break free from their abuser's control. The *Minneapolis Tribune* reported that two years prior to the October 10 murder, the woman's husband was on probation after he was "convicted of assaulting his wife with a hammer."¹²⁵ After this incident, the woman testified that her husband did not attack her with the hammer, but the district court jury convicted him. In 1975, he shot her and then turned himself in to police.¹²⁶ A follow-up story reported that he was found to be "mentally ill and a dangerous person" who was not fit to stand trial and should be held in a state facility. The column also indicated that he was convicted for the December 1972 incident with the hammer because he initially admitted to the assault although he later retracted his confession.¹²⁷

A copy of this news story in the Women's Advocates archives included an attached typed statement from Gary Schoener, executive director of the Minneapolis Walk-in Counseling Center. Schoener commented that the murder "was a sad example of a woman staying in a relationship or situation which was potentially dangerous, even after the obvious demonstration of the serious potential for harm." In reference to the prior charges and the woman's denial of abuse, Schoener wrote that "The wife had apparently lied to protect her husband." To this comment, a staff person from Women's Advocates inserted a handwritten asterisk and wrote at the bottom of the page, "Women at Women's Advocates point out this is often due to fear of the husband." Despite Schoener's implicit victim blaming of the murdered woman, he concluded his commentary with the statement, "This [incident] serves to underline for me the important work of Women's Advocates as well as the importance of the community projects undertaken by

¹²⁵ Doug Stone, "On Probation for Assaulting Her, Man Indicted in Gun Death of Wife," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1975, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women's Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ No author, "Judge Commits Suburban Man Accused of Killing His Wife," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 1976 [date handwritten], Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women's Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

the ‘Battered Women’s Consortium.’”¹²⁸ Recognition of Women’s Advocates’ work from a cooperating community ally was considerate but the continuous abuse this woman suffered highlighted much needed changes in the ways that agencies handled abuse cases. Help for abused women was only one aspect of addressing the issue of domestic violence. Without changes to law enforcement and judicial procedures, the possibility of eradicating wife abuse was moot; however, these transformations would require a complete rethinking about abuse and the people involved in violent incidences.

Prevalent misunderstandings about wife abuse led to abusers remaining in the home, even if police were called. Escalating abuse put numerous lives in danger—not only those of the women and children but also law enforcement who responded to calls and the abusers themselves. Activist Del Martin argued that in abusive relationships, “it isn’t only the wife who is in danger. Since she is no match for her husband in physical combat, her only defense is to grab whatever is handy as a weapon.” The result is that “a good number of battering husbands wind up in the morgue.”¹²⁹ The following stories resulted in the death of the abuser and highlight examples of the complicated relationship between the battered woman and the police.

Battered women who sought help from law enforcement often experienced a lack of police response. For a variety of reasons, police officers were reluctant to aid women who were in need of protection against their abusive partners. In one reported instance, a Chicago woman, mother of twelve, “‘begged [the] police to take him away’” but “‘they said they just couldn’t do it.’”¹³⁰ The police had been called to the home several times before the incident that resulted in

¹²⁸ Attached to the article, “On Probation for Assaulting Her,” Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. Chapter 3 details the work of the Twin Cities Battered Women’s Consortium.

¹²⁹ Martin, *New York Times*.

¹³⁰ Anne Keegan, “Beaten Woman’s Story: ‘I Begged Police to Take Him Away,’” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 26, 1976, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

the husband's death. He was shot repeatedly by two of his adult stepchildren after he returned from his job at 7:00 am and began abusing their mother. He was intoxicated when he arrived at the home and his wife reported that he was mad because he "hadn't been fed before he left for work the night before." She witnessed him kicking the dog and then telling her, "Somebody around here is going to get killed." She said that then he "started on me" by kicking her face and sides, pulling her hair and breaking a trophy over her head. One of her children called the police from a neighbor's house and eventually she escaped to safety. When the police arrived at the residence, the husband would not let the officers inside and told them that "he was master of his own house." The police talked to him through the screen door for an hour and then left the premises, despite the wife's pleas to take him. A few hours later, two of his adult stepchildren shot him over a dozen times while he was asleep in a recliner. They told police that they shot him because "he had beaten members of the family for years."¹³¹

In Minnetonka, Minnesota Brenda Clark killed her husband in October 1975 after a verbal and physical altercation involving her husband Robert Clark. He "hit, slapped and kicked her" and when she told him she was going to leave him, he told her that "she was so ugly no one would have her."¹³² After he beat her, she grabbed a knife and he "walked into the knife." She called the police and "made a spontaneous confession" to stabbing her husband and causing his death. A neighbor reportedly heard gunfire and three shells and holes were found in the home. A Minnetonka police detective reported that the police had been called to the home at least four times prior to the stabbing "on complaints that Clark was beating his wife." When the police responded to one of the calls, Clark had "ripped a telephone off the wall" and hit Brenda

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Robert Sullwold, "Woman Said She Was Beaten Before Stabbing," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Feb. 14, 1976, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

in the head with it.¹³³ Brenda testified that her husband beat her “twice a month for five years” and twice on the day of the stabbing. In reference to the gunshots heard on the day of his death, she said that she did not intend to kill him and fired into the ceiling. She related that she grabbed the knife because she “knew he was going to beat me again and I wanted to protect myself from him. I was afraid and I didn’t want to be hit again.”¹³⁴ Because of his pattern of behavior, Brenda’s attorney argued that she acted in self-defense but she was charged with second degree murder.

These stories illustrated the realities of repeated abuse in the home and numerous futile calls to the police to stop the violence. Statistics showed that police were reluctant to respond to domestic calls “because they’re extremely hazardous. Forty percent of all police injuries and 22 percent of deaths in the line of duty occur on family-fight calls.”¹³⁵ Pat Micklow, co-author of a study at the University of Michigan, argued that law enforcement and courts did not intervene in cases of wife abuse because social mores dictated that women were their husbands’ property and family relationships were private matters. In divorce cases, if a woman filed an injunction against her husband for him to leave the home, the process typically took several days and was filed in civil court. If granted, the police did not usually enforce the rulings because the cases were not considered criminal matters, thus leaving opportunity and possibly motive, for a batterer to continue the abuse.¹³⁶

Further describing women’s experiences with law enforcement and the courts, a *Washington Star* article described the “official maze filled with pitfalls” that battered women

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Doug Stone, “Wife Testifies Husband Beat Her Often and On Day She Stabbed Him,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1976, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹³⁵ Levin, *McCall’s*.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

encountered when they sought help.¹³⁷ It identified that women often stayed in the violent home because of economic insecurity and no alternative living arrangements. If a woman went to the police for help, she faced hesitancy on their part for intervening in a “domestic quarrel,” and oftentimes the police “discourage [her from] filing a complaint.” Law enforcement officers were also not adequately trained to intervene in domestic calls and some psychologists speculated that police officers “often behave in such a way as to bring on violence rather than placate the parties.”¹³⁸ One battered woman recalled that when she refused to let her drunken, estranged husband inside her apartment he “tore the door off its hinges.” Her neighbor called the police but they did not arrive until several hours later. Their solution to the incident was to force the husband to leave. Unbeknownst to her, he did not leave the area and later when she left her apartment she recalled that “he wouldn’t let me get in my car. He tried to kick me and I hit him with the piece of iron again. He threatened to kill me.” Her neighbors called the police but the “policewoman wouldn’t do anything because he is my husband.”¹³⁹ Another woman stated that even if a woman filed charges against her abusive husband, “as long as the man has a fixed address and a job, he’ll be released on his own recognizance. The husband then becomes just smarter and a whole lot angrier.”¹⁴⁰

Although law enforcement officials often misunderstood spousal abuse, some police departments in the United States started to change their policies. Del Martin cited James D. Bannon of the Detroit Police Department who argued that “we must begin to view domestic violence as a ‘public issue’ rather than a ‘private problem.’ As distasteful as it may be, ‘Society must recognize the role it has played in creating an ideal of the sanctity of the home, behind

¹³⁷ Pear, *Washington Star*.

¹³⁸ Ibid. St. Paul Police Sergeant Carolen Bailey worked tirelessly to educate and train police officers about wife abuse. Her work with Women’s Advocates is detailed in Chapter 3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

whose doors anything goes.”¹⁴¹ In December 1974, *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reporter Nancy Livingston announced that “Wife beating looms as a major city crime.” Sergeant Dave Hubenette of the St. Paul Police Department “is the only one who seems to take [women’s complaints of violence in the home] seriously,” and he had an office in the city attorney’s office where women could make statements against their husbands. He reported that he saw about forty women a week who wanted to press charges against their husbands. While most other officers were “inclined to write off their problems as a lovers’ tiff,” Hubenette documented recent abuse by taking photographs of injuries. He also applied for federal grant money to provide counseling services “for the people he sees.” In order to gauge the scope of the problem, Hubenette stated that the St. Paul Police Department filed over 100 police reports per week related to “wife beating,” although this number did not include calls in which a woman decided not to press charges.¹⁴² Unfortunately, even if a case was documented, the chances of the perpetrator being brought to justice were slim.

The judicial system, like law enforcement, was wrought with preconceived notions about marriage and family violence. The *New York Times* quoted New York attorney Emily Jane Goodman about the legal injustices abused women faced if they complained against their partners: “For the wife who has been physically abused by her husband, shame, guilt, economic and emotional dependency, and belief that it’s all part of marriage are only some of her problems. In addition, she is generally without adequate legal remedies.”¹⁴³ Most social service agencies discouraged women from pressing charges by raising questions about family income if

¹⁴¹ Martin, *New York Times*.

¹⁴² Nancy Livingston, “Wife Beating Looms As Major City Crime,” *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, Dec. 1, 1974, Box 5, Folder: Publicity, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁴³ Emily Jane Goodman, “Abused by Her Husband—and the Law,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 7, 1975, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

a husband lost his job. Goodman argued that:

The theory in all of this, and the problem, is that the laws and courts are supposedly acting in the interests of the family unit, though at the expense of married women. The attitude of the legislature, police and judges is that they are dealing not with a public crime, but signs of a ‘troubled marriage.’ But since the laws pertaining to wife-abuse and domestic relations in general, are governed by our society’s indulgence in ‘male supremacy’ statutory modifications are unlikely to solve the problem. Only radical social and legal changes in prevailing attitudes toward woman, family and marriage can make any significant difference.¹⁴⁴

The article declared that abused women described a “Catch 22” if they decided to take action against their abusers. In Washington D.C., the Citizen’s Complaint Center could help battered women but most “young attorneys” were reluctant to because according to “one senior prosecutor,” “they come out of Harvard and Yale and Columbia law schools and they’re brilliant in law, but they don’t have common sense borne out by experience and maturity and life.”¹⁴⁵ It was not only novice attorneys who refused to take on abuse cases but also the U.S. attorney’s office. James N. Owens, chief of the misdemeanor trial section of the U.S. attorney’s office remarked, “It’s very difficult for a prosecutor to believe a married woman is serious about prosecuting when she is living in the same household with a man and has not filed for divorce.” He further alleged that if a woman did not want to be beaten, she should leave the home: “If the woman doesn’t assert her right to leave her bed and board, we’re just not going to do anything to help her.”¹⁴⁶ Owens seemed concerned for the protection of the U.S. attorney’s office rather than that of the abused woman and provided several reasons why abused women cases were not worthy of consideration. Overall, his biggest problem with battered women was that they may initially want to press charges but later drop them. When this occurred, he believed that it was a “waste of our resources” and that “the woman may be using us as leverage over the man’s head

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Pear, *Washington Star*.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

to bring him to his heels.”¹⁴⁷

The only assault cases Owens deemed worthy to prosecute were those involving a gun. The lack of a weapon was the reason a woman named Marina had to return to her abuser without any help. A *Newsweek* article reported Marina’s experience of abuse. Only days after she gave birth to her second child, her “unemployed drug addict” husband “stumbled into the bedroom and began to beat her and kick her in the stomach.” A couple weeks later he hit her in the face and head with his fists. Because there was no evidence of a weapon used in the assault, the D.C. Citizen’s Complaint Center did not help her press charges. Marina found some support from a social worker and lawyer who tried to find her a safe place to go, but there was no space for her and her children in temporary shelter facilities. The social worker remarked that she “felt like a rat” having to send Marina and her children back to the violent household.¹⁴⁸ In this case, Owens clearly misunderstood the complexities of domestic violence, while the social worker identified flaws in the system that stymied social service agencies and further abused women.

In Washington D.C., if abuse charges were not followed through in criminal court by the U.S. attorney’s office, the woman could seek a civil suit and possibly obtain a protection order in which the accused could not “molest, assault or in any manner threaten” the person named in the protection order. A violation of the order would be contempt of court and the offender could serve jail time. In addition, a judge also had the option to assign psychiatric, medical or alcohol treatment, as well as family counseling.¹⁴⁹ The article reported that in the previous year, 668 civil protection orders were filed in the D.C. Superior Court of which 382 were granted and sixty-two cases were currently being investigated for violation of the protection order. While

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Linda Bird Francke, “Battered Women,” *Newsweek*, Feb. 2, 1976, Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁴⁹ Pear, *Washington Star*.

these numbers show an effort to address abuse, prosecutors identified several problems with protection orders. First, the judge “presumes [that] the abuser will be intimidated into compliance, an assumption not always warranted.” Protection orders also took several weeks to process, leaving the abuser a window of opportunity to continue the abuse. Some prosecutors argued that the civil court route prevented the actual numbers of abuse from being calculated as a way to keep “crime statistics low;”¹⁵⁰ however, this was not surprising given the fact that wife abuse was not perceived as a legitimate crime.

Gladys Keller, attorney from the Women’s Legal Defense Fund, speculated that ““if a dozen middle-class professional white men were sent to jail for wife-beating, it would have a substantial deterrent effect on the community.””¹⁵¹ Perhaps if these men went to jail, more people would be aware of wife abuse and penalties for it, but still, the reality of abused women’s lives was that they often depended on the abuser’s income to support themselves and their children. If a woman left her husband, the chances of actually receiving state ordered child support or alimony was slim: ““Only 14.7 percent of the divorced women polled in a national survey were awarded any alimony at all””¹⁵² and another study found that ““40 percent of divorced husbands in a major Midwestern city rarely or never paid their child support payments.””¹⁵³ Del Martin argued that affluent women who would ideally have money to leave, suffered financially at the hands of their abusers. Often, these women did not have access to their family’s cash, but instead to charge accounts, which could serve as a tracking system.¹⁵⁴ Abused women who worked were often subjected to the control of their husbands and forced to hand over their

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Davidson, *Conjugal Crime*, 89.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 90. This was a “reliability study” directed by William J. Goode, a sociology professor at Columbia University.

¹⁵⁴ Martin, *Battered Wives*, 84.

paychecks. One woman's experience was testimony to this situation, as described by her co-worker: "On pay day her husband would be right there to collect her check, a good portion of which he spent on booze and other women. He beat her up habitually."¹⁵⁵ Regardless of socioeconomic status, women faced economic obstacles to leaving an abusive husband which were further frustrated by additional adversities related to his power and control over her.

Domestic abuse was exceedingly complicated: prevailing attitudes, existing laws and the lack of sympathetic attorneys hindered the prosecution of abusers and acted in conjunction with the fear abused women had about calling the police and the negative stereotypes of battered women. Slowly, the media helped to expose the harsh realities of abused women's lives, generated awareness of the problem and identified barriers that impaired help for battered women. Women's Advocates was part of the national discussion as an example of how traditional policies and practices could be thwarted.

Wife battering in the United States and abroad was the subject of a series of CBS Morning News segments that aired in December 1975. Reporter Hughes Rudd introduced the first part with the following commentary: "The Women's Liberation—or Women's Equality—Movement, which has been growing so much in the past few years, is aimed mainly at getting better treatment for women in terms of law and in terms of culture. But some women have a much more basic problem—a problem which we suppose goes clear back to the cave-man days."¹⁵⁶ Reporter David Culhane noted that "All over the United States women are beginning to come forward and acknowledge that they are battered wives." He interviewed an abused woman who recalled her experiences of being hit on the head and face, sometimes bleeding, but she noted, "mostly my husband is very careful cause he's, he's well-educated too, and he didn't

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 86.

¹⁵⁶ "Script," *CBS Morning News*, Dec. 1-4, 1975 [no page numbers], Folder: Scripts, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

want the bruises or anything to show.”¹⁵⁷ Another woman said that she had been to the doctor for broken bones but did not want to talk with her parents about it because she did not want them to know. Although this type of abuse was not new, Culhane remarked that the awareness of wife abuse increased “perhaps because of a greater post-Vietnam sensitivity to violence and surely with the support of the Feminist Movement.” In order for viewers to grasp the scope of the problem, St. Paul policewoman and supporter of Women’s Advocates, Carolen Bailey, reported that she saw several instances of “husband-wife domestic violence” every day.¹⁵⁸ Doctor Kipton Lundquist, from the Hennepin County Hospital (the county in which Minneapolis is located), reported that medical professionals saw a variety of women’s injuries inflicted by their partners.¹⁵⁹

Reporter Culhane noted that the actual number of abused wives was unknown because of the veiled privacy of the home and until recently researchers had been reluctant to investigate wife abuse. The increased awareness uncovered that more assaults happen in the home “than anyone had thought” and the abuse “takes place not just in lower-class families, but throughout society.”¹⁶⁰ Speaking to the stereotype that abused women were only from lower socioeconomic households, one battered woman remarked that this idea was perpetuated by the notion that “all you have to do is educate people and that’ll solve all problems.” Culhane concluded the first segment with the remark that professionals studying wife abuse were “startled” at the high number of incidences but what was “just as amazing, is the frequency with which wives tolerate beatings—even for years.”¹⁶¹

Part two of the series included excerpts from a meeting of women at Abused Women’s

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), a New York group that formed in 1975 as a result of a statewide meeting on wife abuse.¹⁶² The women interviewed offered their suggestions as to the reasons why they believed their husbands beat them. One woman said that she had asked her husband why he hurt her and he replied that he did not know but he was sorry. Another woman relayed that her husband said he had to beat her because of the “other things happening in his life” and a different woman said that her partner “had the habit of going out on weekends, and drinking and playing, and then coming home and taking his frustrations out on me.”¹⁶³ Culhane inserted that professional research indicated that drinking was “only a trigger or a superficial excuse” and the reality was that “the beater is a man who feels powerless, inarticulate and somehow inadequate.”¹⁶⁴ Addressing another misconception about battered women, the reporter asked women why they stayed with the abusers. One woman said that she was afraid of change and the insecurity that could stem from leaving the relationship. This commentary segued to the third installment which addressed options for women who wanted to leave abusive homes.

Culhane reported again from AWAIC in New York City and noted that even though the need to help women was increasing, the group could only operate their telephone line for two hours a day. He then recognized Women’s Advocates as an agency that provided twenty-four hour a day support via the telephone line and shelter program. Culhane stated that other cities planned to establish shelters, but Women’s Advocates “is the most advanced.”¹⁶⁵ According to the report, the first year Women’s Advocates opened it housed 141 women and children with an average stay of ten days. Sharon Vaughan spoke on behalf of Women’s Advocates and overviewed the shelter’s advocacy policy and a woman’s experience going to shelter. “When a

¹⁶² Maria Roy, *Battered Women: A Psychological Study of Domestic Violence* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977), 288, 294.

¹⁶³ “Script,” *CBS Morning News*.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

woman comes in . . . it's a crisis situation" and the staff helped her with urgent needs, like food, shelter and clothing. Part of the advocacy process included setting goals and connecting her with resources for "legal, medical help, employment, job-training and counselling [sic], help with her children, help with herself." "Whatever she specifies," Vaughan explained, "then we commit ourselves as a staff to try to meet."¹⁶⁶ Culhane concluded the report by stating that "we need more shelters for women all over the United States. And we need a place for men to go, to find out why they are violent, to get help."¹⁶⁷

The final segment of the CBS report focused on wife abuse outside of the United States and reporter John Laurence spoke with Erin Pizzey, founder of Women's Aid in London. Women's Aid, which opened in 1971, was acknowledged as the first shelter for battered women in the world.¹⁶⁸ "Why do women need a place like this?," Laurence asked Pizzey. She replied that society did not punish men for battering their wives or for possibly killing her. The refuges were necessary, she argued, "because we understand his irrational violence, and we create a situation where he simply cannot get at her." The space that Pizzey alluded to was described by Laurence as communal living where women shared chores, cooking, and donated items. "Despite the commotion," Laurence observed, "there is a sense of community spirit here, something approaching genuine happiness."¹⁶⁹

In order to dispel any myths that the refuge and the women there hated men, Laurence reported that Women's Aid provided "a service for women who need to escape from continuing cruelty at home with their husbands." Pizzey stated that the agency's work "is about human

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Martin, *Battered Wives*, 6-7. Erin Pizzey's work, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors will Hear*, offered an excellent, first-hand overview of the shelter. Another source that overviews the refuge is: Jan Pahl, "Refuges for Battered Women: Ideology and Action," *Feminist Review*, Spring 1985 no. 19, 25-43.

¹⁶⁹ "Script," *CBS Morning News*.

beings—men and women, boys and girls” and she expressed a sort of sympathy for an abusive man because she argued that they often emerged from abusive households where “nobody cared or helped when he was young.”¹⁷⁰ In conjunction with information about abuse in the United States, Pizzey corroborated that spousal abuse surpassed socio-economic lines. One woman wrote a letter to Women’s Aid and explained that her husband was “a prominent barrister” and “everybody else thinks he’s a wonderful man” but she had suffered beatings for over twenty years. She declared “He’d kill me if he knew I’d written to you.” She had never mentioned the abuse to anyone because of his professional status and in her words, “There was no point in mentioning it before because no one wanted to know—not the police, not the welfare people, not the neighbors, no one.”¹⁷¹ Pizzey commented on the silence this woman referenced, ““It astonishes me how women who’ve been beaten for years manage to hide the fact even from people very close to them. The skilled wife-beater doesn’t go for places that show,” she explained, and women endured a massive amount of shame at being abused.¹⁷²

Pizzey noted that the complexity of wife abuse “is made more acute by the official denial that any problem exists” because of a cyclical interaction between law enforcement, welfare agencies, and social services that did not take a woman’s complaint seriously—despite physical evidence. And because a woman who left her abusive partner vacated the home ‘willingly,’ she did not qualify for services to help the homeless. Due to the legal and societal barriers, Pizzey called for the creation of more refuges but admitted, “It’s like putting a Band-Aid on a cancer. What’s really needed is legal and societal recognition of the problem.”¹⁷³ Pizzey was well-known in Europe and the United States for her work with abused women. She chronicled her

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Gay Search, “London, Battered Wives,” *Ms.*, June 1974, date handwritten, Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

experiences with Women's Aid in her 1974 work, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors will Hear*. After its release, activist Del Martin asserted that in the United States, "interest in the problem of battered women has gradually increased," especially among activists. A major indicator of this shift, according to Martin, was the 1975 creation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) National Task Force on Battered Women/Household Violence.¹⁷⁴

In the mainstream United States, greater awareness of wife abuse and the need for shelters resulted from the four-day CBS report. Since Women's Advocates had opened their shelter, countless women and men wrote to Women's Advocates, mentioned that they saw them on television and oftentimes asked for help starting their own shelters. The CBS story, as well as other types of media attention, prompted progressive minded people to write to Women's Advocates. Letters arrived from across the U.S. and helped build a base of support for the staff at Women's Advocates. In turn, responses from the St. Paul organization encouraged the creation of programs to help battered women.

Patricia E. Schlusser, the executive director of the Tri-County Council on Addictive Diseases, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, wrote to St. Paul's KSJN Radio Station after hearing about Women's Advocates on National Public Radio. Schlusser stated that she was involved with "a local organization called Women in Crisis which is trying to provide a similar service in the Central Pennsylvania area." She noted that the organization had support from the community, but did not have funds to "operate a crisis shelter for women and their minor children."¹⁷⁵ Schlusser's letter was forwarded to Women's Advocates and Cheryl Beardslee responded on August 22. Relaying information about their search for funding, Beardslee described how Women's Advocates initially sought funds from private donors but had recently

¹⁷⁴ Martin, *Battered Wives*, 7.

¹⁷⁵ Patricia E. Schlusser to KSJN Radio Station, July 21, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

received public money from the Ramsey County Mental Health Board and the State Department of Welfare. In order to help the Pennsylvania organization, Beardslee sent them a copy of Women's Advocates' funding proposals and added the organization to the newsletter mailing list.¹⁷⁶ This type of response was typical from Women's Advocates: they were generous with information related to their experiences and continued communication via their newsletter.

Also in July of 1975, Women's Advocates received a letter from Joyce E. Mefford in Springfield, Illinois. She explained that she had called the shelter a few days prior to her letter and was "anxiously awaiting your printed material."¹⁷⁷ She enclosed a calendar of events taking place at the Sojourn House, the agency that her organization planned to open. Beardslee wrote to Mefford on August 22 and provided her with similar information as she had to Schlusser but included this statement about Women's Advocates:

We do not have any formal ties with other women's groups. A couple of women's clubs are interested in doing something for us as service projects and that is really helpful. We also get a lot of people who are interested in volunteering and are examining right now how we can best use their help and input. We do have support from the community particularly from agencies who refer to us. We've received newspaper, radio (national) and tv publicity since we opened. That helps in terms of support and the education of the community at to the problems of battered women.¹⁷⁸

The national television coverage prompted Edward Maguire of the Missouri Department of Mental Health to write Women's Advocates. He stated that "from the brief description given, your program sounds very similar to the one we are attempting to begin near Salem, MO." The goal of his agency was to create a "Safe House for women and juveniles who are economically trapped in a home with a spouse who abuses them, physically or psychologically. This house

¹⁷⁶ Cheryl Beardslee to Schlusser, Aug. 22, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁷⁷ Joyce E. Mefford to Women's Advocates, July 30, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁷⁸ Beardslee to Mefford, Aug. 22, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

would offer vocational rehabilitation and counseling. The volunteer staff would be supplied primarily by Al-Anon members” and he suspected that the majority of their residents would “be the spouses of alcoholics.” Although his location was in a rural part of Missouri, his group faced similar problems as Women’s Advocates “because of traditions and because of the lack of law enforcement, violence is usually seen as normal and physical control of spouses as natural.”¹⁷⁹

In January 1975, Women’s Advocates received a letter from the Cleveland West Side Community House that wanted to establish “a women’s help center.” They too had VISTA workers and had read about Women’s Advocates in a publication called “Interaction.” The women from Cleveland hoped that Women’s Advocates would pass on any helpful information about their beginnings.¹⁸⁰ Paula Kelleher in Charlottesville, Virginia requested similar information in the fall of 1975. She wrote that she was part of a task force “for investigating the feasibility of a Women’s Center to serve the Charlottesville area” that could function as “an information and referral center for community, educational, and legal services, and to serve as a counseling center.”¹⁸¹ The Boulder County Women’s Resource Center sent a \$5 donation to Women’s Advocates for copies of the newsletter and for the house fund. Karen Thoreson, Outreach Worker, stated that Women’s Advocates and her group had similar goals. Specifically, the Colorado agency was “very interested in your emergency housing program, as we are in the process of re-opening our program to Boulder women. Information you may have on how you are funding and implementing this would be of extreme value.”¹⁸²

More requests for information arrived at Women’s Advocates in 1976. A woman from

¹⁷⁹ Edward Maguire to Women’s Advocates, Dec. 12, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁸⁰ Jeri Diehl and Judy Corrigan to Women’s Advocates, Jan. 30, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁸¹ Paula Kelleher to Women’s Advocates, Oct. 1975, postmarked Nov. 12, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁸² Karen Thoreson to Women’s Advocates, Dec. 17, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

Miami, Florida's Citizen Dispute Settlement Center wanted to "set up a haven for battered women in Miami" and inquired about Women's Advocates shelter structure and funding.¹⁸³ Teri DeSchryver, coordinator at Macomb Inter-agency Council, Emergency Food Program in Warren, Michigan wrote that she heard about Women's Advocates on the CBS radio program "What's Happening." She stated that she was part of a group "concerned about this problem and are involved in developing a similar program in the Detroit area" and would appreciate any helpful information.¹⁸⁴ A Toledo, Ohio woman wrote that she saw the CBS story about Women's Advocates and "wondered how to get one started in Toledo. Because wife abuse goes on in most all communities."¹⁸⁵ An organization in Aurora, Illinois wrote that they heard about Women's Advocates from Women's Coalition, Inc. in Milwaukee and had an "active women's group in Aurora putting together a women's center."¹⁸⁶

The Women's Advocates collective generously shared information with people who wrote to them. They described their evolution from answering questions about divorce and assisting women with name changes to realizing the need to support battered women. The collective grew as socially conscientious women learned about the opportunity to help women survive the complexities associated with wife abuse. Even though the task was daunting, long-time volunteer Bernice Sisson recalled how she stayed motivated:

It [the work at Women's Advocates] was something I felt drawn to, very much drawn to, and it was a way in which that I could show respect for other women and sometimes be of some help; and also just to help with the, I don't know if you'd say, the development of the organization, Women's Advocates because it was quite unique, it started out as a

¹⁸³ Florence Morzen to Women's Advocates, Jan. 20, 1976, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁸⁴ Teri DeSchryver to Women's Advocates, Jan. 31, 1976, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁸⁵ Thelma B. Wilson to Women's Advocates, no date; reply dated Feb. 5, 1976, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁸⁶ Mutual Ground, Inc. to Women's Advocates, no date; reply dated Feb. 5, 1976, Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

collective and there weren't that many organizations [like] that.¹⁸⁷

The women in St. Paul were not the only ones willing to help abused women in their communities. People with various backgrounds wrote letters to Women's Advocates—members of organizations of women and men that already worked in social service fields and/or concerned citizens who recognized the significance of helping battered women—and looked to St. Paul as a model to help abused women. Women's Advocates' members willingly conveyed their experiences with those who inquired, including Del Martin as she wrote her book, *Battered Wives*. In correspondence with Sharon Vaughan, Martin wrote in August of 1975, "You are apparently the only group . . . in the United States that has managed to obtain funding."¹⁸⁸ This success intrigued other organizations wanting to open shelters. In addition to inquires about how their agency functioned, the most often asked question of Women's Advocates was how they raised money to support their programs and purchase a house for the shelter. Fundraising and grant writing consumed much energy from the advocates, especially challenging the patriarchal norms that regulated many funding agencies. Women's Advocates inspired groups from across the country to help battered women but they also propelled women and men in the Twin Cities to build coalitions and address the issue. Through the work of the Battered Women's Consortium, the state of Minnesota was forced to address the problem of wife abuse and provide funding for battered women's programs. The following chapter details the long-term influences of Women's Advocates as well as their fundraising efforts and the day-to-day operations of the house. The collective evolved to address new concerns across their region that in some ways necessitated a transformation of their grassroots foundation.

¹⁸⁷ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

¹⁸⁸ Del Martin to Sharon Vaughan, Aug. 28, 1975, Box 4, Folder: Battered—Del Martin, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

CHAPTER III. MAINTAINING MOMENTUM: CREATING ADVOCACY AND EXPANDING ACTIVISM

From 1972 to 1975, Women's Advocates solidified its advocacy program, increased its visibility in the St. Paul community and strengthened cooperation between the shelter and social service agencies and the St. Paul Police Department. During this time, the demand for services increased and thus the collective urgently needed funding to sustain its advocacy program for abused women and children. As a grassroots organization, Women's Advocates coordinated fundraising campaigns, first requesting money from individuals and then from local foundations. The transition from receiving individual donations to corporate money marked a shift in the collective structure and nature of Women's Advocates as it contemplated how to comply with mainstream rules for funding. During the early years of the shelter, Women's Advocates' work, coupled with the greater awareness of wife abuse, inspired the formation of the Twin Cities Battered Women's Consortium. Throughout the late 1970s, these two organizations cooperated with other socially conscious groups to initiate state legislative support for battered women's programs. The work that started in St. Paul expanded across the state of Minnesota.

Women's Advocates successfully established a telephone referral service for women who requested help with various needs. Through this work, Women's Advocates became a well-known and reliable group that assisted abused women and children. Social service agencies in St. Paul, such as the welfare department, police department and hospitals, started referring women to the organization. Women's Advocates took over the telephone hotline, which was initially located in the Ramsey County Legal Aid office and eventually moved it to the collective members' homes. In February of 1973, Susan Ryan's one bedroom apartment housed the

Women's Advocates' office.¹⁸⁹

The first resident arrived in St. Paul from Wisconsin on a Greyhound bus with hopes of starting over without her abusive partner. When the woman arrived in the city, she called social services who then contacted Women's Advocates because the woman had no other place to go. The collective scrambled to find provisions to accommodate the woman and her child, and Sharon Vaughan recalled that “. . . We put her in our office with her two year old, who totally wrecked the office that night, but that was the beginning.”¹⁹⁰ Another early client was evicted from her home and referred to Women's Advocates by a social service agency. Women's Advocates became a safe haven for these women and housing them “reaffirmed our goals and efforts.”¹⁹¹

As agencies increased their referrals to Women's Advocates, the one-bedroom apartment became full, with office work and two residents, volunteers from the Planning Committee decided to open their houses to two other women.¹⁹² Ryan's apartment served as the office and shelter for only a few months. The apartment building was sanctioned for adults only and after a tenant found a diaper in the garbage, the owner evicted Ryan, and subsequently Women's Advocates from the building.¹⁹³ Women's Advocates moved to Vaughan's house where she lived with her three children. Karen Klinefelter recalled that Vaughan's children would arrive home from school to a flurry of shelter work which Klinefelter described as having “taken over

¹⁸⁹ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter* (St. Paul, Women's Advocates, 1980), 4, borrowed from Bernice Sisson Personal Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5; Sharon Rice Vaughan, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 19, 2010. Sharon also recalled that for years after, the woman sent her a Christmas card with one dollar to express her appreciation for Women's Advocates.

¹⁹¹ “Newsletter, May 1973,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁹² “Newsletter, July 1973,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁹³ Vaughan, interview with author; “Founding Mothers Reminisce,” prod. and dir. Terri Hawthorne and Kathleen Laughlin, 48 min., 1997, DVD borrowed from Women's Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

the house.” As space was needed, Vaughan’s children gave up their beds to women and children. The office and shelter space occupied Vaughan’s house for about nine months and then moved “to a one-bedroom apartment above a restaurant” until they purchased the house at 584 Grand Avenue. The shelter at Grand Avenue opened in October of 1974 and continues to operate as Women’s Advocates.¹⁹⁴ In addition to housing women and children, Women’s Advocates continued to empower women with information regarding name changes, divorce, welfare, and job discrimination. “The word is out that the House has begun!” the May 1973 newsletter exclaimed, and a variety of institutions, even a convent, referred women to Women’s Advocates.¹⁹⁵

Housing residents prompted the group to reaffirm their advocacy philosophy during a weekend retreat in June 1973. Bernice Sisson remembered how the group decided “in that living room in that cabin” that the most “important thing for us is to listen and believe her [the battered woman] and with that she would have her own energy to make decisions.”¹⁹⁶ This approach to advocacy was important because as Vaughan stated, “If we thought that we knew more than she did then that meant we weren’t believing her so we could see this as precipitating this secondary trauma where she became traumatized by calling for help.”¹⁹⁷ Monica Erler explained that their way “of trusting the person that has the problem came out of the [19]60s and that whole grassroots question of authority.” “The person who comes and has a need knows what they need and that the most important thing you do in the job we were doing is learning how to listen . . . and seeing them as a person,” Erler declared.¹⁹⁸ The advocacy of the organization aimed to foster positive interactions with women and their children and empower women to

¹⁹⁴ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 6.

¹⁹⁵ “Newsletter, May 1973,” “Newsletter, July 1973.”

¹⁹⁶ “Founding Mothers Reminisce.”

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

make their own decisions.

Advocacy varied depending on the needs of each woman, but the overall goal was to help the residents feel safe and supported. “When a woman first arrives at the shelter, what happens depends to a great extent on how she is feeling at the time. Attention is given to the children as well as their mother to make them feel welcome,” described *The Story of a Shelter*.¹⁹⁹ During the initial intake process, advocates talked with the women and evaluated her and her children’s immediate needs and goals. Advocates also overviewed the house policies which centered on communal living, cooperation with household chores and meals, non-violence and mutual respect. The staff and residents frequently held house meetings to discuss policies and concerns. Support groups also helped residents through the healing process. The advocates found that women staying at the shelter often formed bonds with one another, as each of them were coping with similar issues, but Betsy Raasch-Gilman recalled that “the texture of life at Women’s Advocates was very uneven.” She continued:

It depended a lot on how the women were getting along with each other because these were just strangers thrown in the same house, not of their choice, it was just the best of the bad alternatives and sometimes women were just not kind to one another, there was a lot of ethnic tension, racial tension as well, women being quite critical of each other’s parenting styles in particular. But tensions were discussed during house meetings and after the children went to sleep: Then the women could actually talk to one another and often the best conversations happened between 10:00 pm and midnight in the kitchen with women talking about their situations and about their lives. By that time the staff telephone was mostly dead so the staff could stay and listen and talk and then we could have some real conversations that sometimes went on pretty late into the night.²⁰⁰

In the newsletter, the advocates described discussions between residents and staff as having a common theme: “Starting over, finding new vision, or sometimes not finding it but talking,

¹⁹⁹ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 30.

²⁰⁰ Elizabeth Raasch-Gilman, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 22, 2010.

sharing experiences, getting new knowledge and insight.”²⁰¹ Women’s individual responses to this advocacy approach were probably varied; however, Women’s Advocates’ groundbreaking style offered abused women a safe space to discuss their experiences and the opportunity to be heard, sometimes for the first time in their lives.

Former residents provided the shelter with feedback and some of the positive experiences were shared in the newsletter. “I prefer the warm lovely atmosphere of Women’s Advocates,” wrote a former resident, “compared to a cold agency without feelings.”²⁰² One woman wrote and described her quest for independence and expressed her appreciation for the advocates. She sent a \$20 donation with her note and remarked, “It would be nice if there were more organizations like yours around the country.”²⁰³ With support from Women’s Advocates, women found the strength and support to transform their lives. The February 1975 newsletter commented that “Watching how quickly women and their families adapt to the living situation here is miraculous. Not only are they learning to deal with other families, but the families are finding new ways of interacting.”²⁰⁴

As the shelter evolved, so did the advocacy programs for children. Through their work with children, the advocates came to understand that wife abuse often victimized children, even if they had not been directly abused. Oftentimes, children felt “the guilt of not having been able to stop” the abuse of their mother and would sometimes “act out their feelings of anger and despair.”²⁰⁵ Advocates listened to the children about their concerns, if the child could express them, and consistently provided them with a violence-free space to live and play. Children who

²⁰¹ Newsletter, Feb/March 1976, Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁰² “Newsletter, Nov. 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁰³ “Newsletter, June/July, 1975,” Women’s Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁰⁴ “Newsletter, Feb. 1975,” Women’s Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁰⁵ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 36, 39.

came to the shelter often lived chaotic lives with little to no structure because of the unrest in the home. Women's Advocates "want[ed] to have a predictable environment for the children with some routine and a regularly scheduled staff" in addition to helping the mothers.²⁰⁶

The advocates believed in woman-centered advocacy that prioritized women's rights and their humble, yet determined, attitude allowed them to assist women who could not find help elsewhere. In the newsletter they described the creation of their policies as "trial-by-group-fire," but their instincts led to many successful interactions with women and their children.²⁰⁷ A former resident wrote this to the shelter staff:

Without your help—I was helpless. Over the weekend that my daughter was taken by her father from my home (we are not married) I must have dialed a million numbers and been told in general, 'tough luck,' that is by everyone but your group. Besides the legal direction, which was immediately effective, the twenty-four hour a day emotional support and comfort. . . . You pulled me through—I have my daughter back, I'm back in school, life is quite different without an obligated dependence on a man, I feel like I'm just getting to know myself. Besides the legal and emotional support, I've made some friendships with people who are dedicated and genuinely sincere.²⁰⁸

In addition to safety, women and their children who arrived at Women's Advocates often needed guidance with legal concerns and making sense of systems such as welfare and housing concerns. Advocates assisted women in submitting applications as well as finding attorneys who would help battered women file assault complaints or divorce procedures. Armed with the power of information and their dedication to justice, the advocates largely "made a lot of it up as we went along," recalled Gilman.²⁰⁹ "Me, good 'ol middle class me with my liberal arts education, what did I know about applying for welfare," Gilman remarked. Part of the advocacy process was adapting to situations and "often the residents knew more about it than I did or other

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 37.

²⁰⁷ "Newsletter, Nov. 1974,"

²⁰⁸ "Newsletter, Jan./Feb. 1976," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁰⁹ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

staff members, we had to figure it out, partly they had to teach us and we had to figure it out with them.”²¹⁰ The advocates were largely successful because they did not claim to know it all; rather they were willing to learn how the systems operated in order to best aid abused women in and around their community.

The advocates exhibited a strong sense of perseverance, with their efforts sometimes stretching beyond the borders of the city. Volunteer Bernice Sisson recalled the story of a young woman who tried to leave her abuser who “shot holes around her head and said, ‘next time I won’t miss.’” The woman frantically called Women’s Advocates and spoke with Sisson who assured her that they would help her and her baby leave their home, which was approximately ninety miles from St. Paul. As part of the advocacy program, Sisson encouraged the woman to safety plan and prepare for her departure by stashing needed items, like clothing and diapers, under the bed where the abuser would not find them.²¹¹ The escape date and time were set for a Saturday before noon when the abuser would be at work and Sisson planned to pick up the woman and child from their home. It “was my first direct action,” said Sisson, proudly referring to this incident. She recruited a male neighbor to drive with her and assist loading the woman’s belongings to take back to the shelter.²¹² The woman and her baby stayed at the shelter, which at that time was located in Vaughan’s house, until the abuser learned her location and kidnapped the baby. He was emboldened to take this action because, as Vaughan remembered, the man’s lawyer advised him that “possession is nine-tenths of the law . . . so he had custody [of the baby]” before the woman initiated divorce proceedings. While at Women’s Advocates, the woman filed for divorce. Vaughan, attorney Delores Orey, and an attorney they hired went with

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ For advocates, past and present, safety planning is an essential part of helping a woman prepare to leave her abuser—which is statistically the most dangerous time for an abused woman.

²¹² Monica Erler, Lois Severson and Bernice Sisson, interview with author, tape recording, Little Canada, Minn., Sept. 25, 2010.

the woman to the divorce hearing, which took place in her previous hometown. The woman's attorney presented the bullet holes as physical evidence of abuse but the judge told them, "We don't like people coming from the cities to tell us what to do" and the woman lost custodial rights to her child. Going to court with the woman "was one of those things that you come home much wiser and sadder [about]," recollected Vaughan.²¹³ The advocates learned that despite their best efforts, they faced challenges from institutions that held deeply rooted ideals about women, children and marriage.

Through trial and error, the advocates navigated systems often traversed by battered women, and in the process found supporters willing to help them. When an advocate had a good experience working with someone at an agency, they recorded the person's name into a log book that other advocates could reference. Gilman recalled that "it was a matter of finding one, or two, or three allies within the institutions."²¹⁴ At the local hospital, the advocates worked with doctors, interns and social workers to provide abused women with better care. Some staff personnel documented battered women's injuries by taking photographs, which aided in prosecuting abusers. Pressing charges for assault or filing for a protection order or for a divorce was expensive but the advocates found certain attorneys who were willing to work with women for little to no money.²¹⁵ Lois Severson remembered that attorney Bjorn Ulstad worked on several cases for residents of Women's Advocates, even after he was assaulted by an abuser one day after court.²¹⁶ Another cooperative relationship formed between Women's Advocates, social workers and the hospital. The advocates encouraged and advised the county hospital to modify the schedules of social workers in order to provide more comprehensive service. Previously, the

²¹³ "Founding Mothers Reminisce."

²¹⁴ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

hospital only scheduled social workers for Monday through Friday, until 4:00 pm. Women's Advocates found that abused women sought treatment at other times during the week and worked with the social workers to "fill in a huge gap in what women needed."²¹⁷

Women's Advocates instigated changes to the county social work policy with the help of Karen Klinefelter, a social worker at the Ramsey County Mental Health Center and a volunteer at the shelter. Her experiences as a professional in a social service agency offered a unique perspective into how the professional world viewed Women's Advocates:

I think there was really a question about whether professionals of any sort really had a role or a place in this organization because professionals had not heard this before. They had been counseling women for hundreds and hundreds of years and how come they hadn't picked up on it and I think there was, I think it took a long time to figure out and ask what role professional women could have and that's why I made a big point of making sure I spent a night a week there as an advocate, slept over and did my tour because I was kinda the professional woman.

I started as a volunteer but then as we started to talk about funding and I started to get some real support from Ramsey County Mental Health Center, in ways that were beyond what I'd hoped for, we were even encouraged to go to them for money. So we used to, I began to use some of my time there to do this work. Originally I didn't, I did a job and then I came and did Women's Advocates. But the Mental Health Center at that time was doing lots of innovative programs, they were doing an alternative to commitment program, they had started a child abuse treatment program, going into communities and trying to work with young mothers. So they were fairly easily convinced that this was something that mental health money ought to be going towards. So I got to spend more of my work time doing work [at Women's Advocates].²¹⁸

Klinefelter parlayed her volunteer time at the shelter into a constructive cooperation with her professional work. In turn, she helped the mental health center obtain a greater understanding of the services that Women's Advocates provided and used her skills as a social worker to benefit both agencies.

Forming alliances with individuals in social service agencies improved battered women's

²¹⁷ Vaughan, interview with author.

²¹⁸ "Founding Mothers Reminisce."

experiences negotiating institutions that typically neglected their needs. The shelter developed a groundbreaking advocacy program rooted in women's empowerment and the rights of women to lead violence-free lives. The advocates quickly learned the reality that abused women faced and oftentimes they resorted to survival mode in order to ensure the safety of the women, children and staff at the shelter. Women's Advocates adhered to their advocacy philosophy and when needed, adapted to situations and weaved together strategies to help women and children. Because a guide book did not exist at the time, the advocates charted their own path of advocacy through unexpected issues.

While located at Vaughan's house, the group did not advertise the location of the shelter, but the constant flutter of activity did not escape the neighbors' notice. Vaughan recalled that one summer night the electricity went out in the neighborhood and she sat on the porch at her next door neighbor's house. The neighbor asked her "what is going on at your house?" "It's this group thing," Vaughan replied and the women then told her that some of the other neighbors created a petition to "get her out" because of the perceived disorder of her house, such as the numerous women and children coming and going and the police sometimes visiting the residence.²¹⁹ Although Vaughan did not elaborate further to her neighbor, the collective recognized that tensions were arising because of their work. The group discussed whether or not to publish the shelter's address and formally announce what they were doing in the house. Some members cautioned that more abusers would show up while other members believed that the more visible the shelter was, fewer people could ignore the problem of domestic violence. The latter strategy won the approval of the collective and they decided to have a public address. Over time, Women's Advocates grew more comfortable with that decision because, "We came to see that the secrecy and hiding-out increased the sense of vulnerability and powerlessness women

²¹⁹ Vaughan, interview with author.

felt.”²²⁰ After leaving an abuser, most women “no longer felt defenseless and we didn’t want to promote that feeling at the shelter.” The collective recalled that, “Our open address has not created problems. The number of men who came looking for wives or girlfriends did not increase. Our visitors’ policy has remained the same; residents must arrange to meet visitors away from the shelter, in order to protect the confidentiality of other residents.”²²¹ Privacy and safety were the primary goals to be met, but also presented immediate obstacles. The group considered how much they could predict and what was beyond their control, like abusers’ reactions.

As more women left their abusers, who were used to dominating their partners and children, Women’s Advocates had to address safety concerns. The advocates valued the survival of the shelter and oftentimes they had to think on their feet to keep safety a priority. An incident at Vaughan’s house in late 1973 or early 1974 prompted serious discussion about the visibility of the shelter.²²² The county hospital called Women’s Advocates because it was not safe for a woman patient to return to her home. The hospital told them that “she’s been kicked with these really pointed boots and we think she has kidney damage,” and they asked if they could transport her to the shelter in a cab. “We knew whenever they wanted to pay for it, it was serious,” Vaughan recalled, “so she came over and I can remember she laid down in my son’s bed.” The abuser of the woman learned her location and “he had hurt her so badly that he scared us a lot.” The collective held an emergency meeting to decide how to handle the dangerous situation. A male volunteer suggested that they should leave the house, but the collective voted to stay. In the middle of the summer heat, they closed all of the windows of the house and “took turns

²²⁰ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 12.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² The exact dates of this story are uncertain; Vaughan recalled the story to the author in their interview. Based on the timeline of when the collective was evicted from Susan Ryan’s apartment (in June/July of 1973) and the opening of the shelter in 1974, the author suspects that this episode occurred sometime after July 1973 and before May 1974.

staying up next to the phone.” It was a risky decision to remain in the house with a violent abuser on the loose but Vaughan remembered thinking, “we did it, we did make the right decision.”²²³ Reflecting on their experiences and their strategies empowered the advocates to create policies and practices in the best interests of their residents and clients.

On a regular basis, the advocates faced threats from abusers finding out where women and children were, which precipitated violence at the shelter. When security issues arose, the shelter needed cooperation from the police to protect the women, children, and staff. Women’s Advocates had a difficult time strengthening their relationship with the St. Paul police department, largely because as a historically a male dominated institution, the department tended to minimize the danger of abuse situations. In the beginning, police reactions were not consistent, either in their reactions to the emergency nature of a call or in their understanding of the grave danger the incidents created for the residents and staff. Eventually, after the advocates met with city officials, and with the help of Sergeant Carolen Bailey, Women’s Advocates gained respect from the St. Paul Police Department and received quicker, more considerate responses.

Once Women’s Advocates moved into the house at 584 Grand Avenue, they installed a security system but still encountered threats and violent acts. The company that installed the security system assured the staff that if a security sensor on a window or door on the ground floor was tripped or if a panic button on the first or second floor was activated, an alarm would be sent immediately to the police department and officers would arrive in four to five minutes. This, however, was not what Women’s Advocates experienced. Shortly after the new system was installed, the alarm was triggered but the police took an average of thirty to forty-five

²²³ Vaughan, interview with author.

minutes to respond and were not always helpful.²²⁴ The problems with the police were particularly apparent through the summer of 1975.

Women's Advocates faced the reality that some men would stop at nothing to find a woman and children, and these situations especially needed law enforcement support. Susan Ryan recounted a horrifying story that occurred on May 9, 1975, in which a man broke the front window and entered the shelter wielding a knife. The staff called the police. Vaughan recollected, "I can remember him coming to the doorway and we were a little bit afraid of him anyway because we had heard things about him that were terrible" and with quick thinking and action, the staff rushed the woman and child out the back door. The rest of the residents fled upstairs and the staff hid in a small closet. Vaughan recalled that the abuser "roamed his way through the house and found her bedroom with her stuff [on the bed] and stabbed himself."²²⁵ The police, after taking twenty minutes to respond, transported the man to a local hospital for medical treatment. Despite the violence surrounding the incident, the police did not arrest him or place a "hold" on him in the hospital.

Over the weekend, the same abuser made seventeen harassing phone calls to Women's Advocates and said that "he was going to leave the hospital, get a gun, and shoot his wife."²²⁶ As far as the advocates and residents knew, he was free to leave the hospital and carry out his threats. The advocates called the hospital and discovered the man refused surgery and that the hospital staff "had received no information as to the circumstances of his being there." After learning this information and seriously considering his threats, given his violent break-in earlier that day, Vaughan consulted the police department via the non-emergency phone line and was

²²⁴ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 10.

²²⁵ "Founding Mothers Reminisce."

²²⁶ "Women's Advocates to Sergeant L.T. Benson, June 5, 1975," Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

told that someone at the police department would find out more information and contact the shelter. That night, Betsy Gilman took a message from the police that the man was in surgery.²²⁷ The following day, a Saturday, Vaughan again called the non-emergency police number and an officer told her that “there was no hold on [the man], that he had not been charged, nor was there any evidence of a police report at that time.” The sergeant she spoke with told her, “You will have to look into it Monday’ and that under present circumstances [the man] was free to leave if he so chose.”²²⁸ This reaction by law enforcement was typical of the time period because wife abuse was considered a private concern. However, given the man’s violent nature and the severity of his threats, Women’s Advocates expected a more serious reaction from law enforcement.

Sharon Vaughan submitted a “complaint of poor service” to the St. Paul Police Department regarding the incident on May 9. The department responded in a letter and reported the findings of their investigation into the incident. They found that the call from Women’s Advocates about the man with the knife “came in at one of our shift-change times—half of our fleet was off the street.”²²⁹ Women’s Advocates called the police twice and officers arrived at the shelter twenty minutes after the second call because the responding squad “was ‘tied up’ on another matter” which was “unavoidable and we are sorry for the delay.”²³⁰ The police did not arrest the man because “neither [the wife] nor anyone else present at the scene requested the arrest of [him]. They [the officers] were asked only to remove him.”²³¹ Although the advocates believed that the police displayed a complete lack of understanding about the severity of the

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ “Sergeant L.T. Benson to Sharon Vaughan, May 16, 1975,” Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

situation and the threat it caused everyone at the shelter, the officers' reasoning was consistent with prevailing beliefs about abused women.

Security concerns continued throughout the summer of 1975. One day in July, the shelter received a number of "threatening and obscene" phone calls from the husband of a woman staying there. Later that evening, a rock thrown at the shelter broke a window and shattered glass around several women and children who were inside the house. The advocates called the police, suspecting that the harassing phone calls and broken window were related, and a half hour later, officers arrived at the shelter. The police response disappointed Women's Advocates, who recorded that the officers:

Only reluctantly agreed that it was possible that the rock was thrown by the man who had been threatening us. They did not respond at all to the information which we gave them regarding the man's hanging out at the corner phone booth and the presence of his car in the neighborhood a great deal of the time. In fact they suggested that we try to find the man that we suspected had broken the window. The fact that we did not have proof that the rock had been thrown by this person was reason to dismiss the request we made for frequent patrolling [sic] in the area immediately around us.²³²

Another incident in July warranted an emergency call to the police. The abuser of one of the residents called the shelter numerous times "threatening to come over and rape us all," according to Pat Murphy, the advocate on duty that night. A few hours later the man called again saying that he was "'coming to get his wife' and expect him in three minutes." After the second round of phone calls from this man, Murphy telephoned Vaughan and asked if she should contact the police. Vaughan told her to do so and the police arrived ten to fifteen minutes later. The officers took notes from the Women's Advocates telephone log regarding the harassing phone calls from this man and told Murphy to request their aid if he called or showed up at the shelter. Murphy

²³² "Report of Monica Erler, Sept. 29, 1975," Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

noted that she felt like the police response was “immediate and reassuring.”²³³

In this instance, Women’s Advocates seemed to have had a more constructive experience with law enforcement and made an ally. Sergeant Tony Policano of the Crime Prevention Unit followed up about this incident in a letter to the advocates and said that he had mentioned the episode to the man’s parole officer and then “requested his assistance in exercising some control over the activities of his client.” Evidently the parole officer spoke with the man and related to Policano “that he felt he had created enough of a threat that [the man] would curtail his previous activities” and that the parole officer was assisting the man in gathering resources to move out of state.²³⁴ Sergeant Tony Policano also met Women’s Advocates to discuss strengthening security measures at the shelter and provided the advocates with several suggestions based on his observations. Trimming the trees in the front of the house would allow more lighting and provide greater visibility from the sidewalk and street as to prevent “concealment of any person wishing” to trespass on the premises.²³⁵ He suggested that the current silent alarm system, which sent a message to the police, be modified with an audible alarm because “the activation of the audible alarm in nearly all cases will curtail the activity of some irate husband attempting to forcibly enter the home.”²³⁶ The windows and doors on the lower level should have “virtually unbreakable” material or at the very least, a security screen on the doors. Policano also recommended that the basement doors and windows have better “security hardware,” particularly the door leading from the basement to the main floor of the house.²³⁷ The advocates strongly considered his advice and modified the security system. Monica Erler remembered “that the

²³³ “Pat Murphy, Police Call Report, July 31, 1975,” Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²³⁴ “Tony Policano to Women’s Advocates, Sept. 29, 1975,” Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

most security that we had was to have that big horn and punch it and people would stop in the street, the cars and neighbors, and that turned out to be our biggest security, just make a lot of noise.”²³⁸ Although improved security system helped and they appreciated Sergeant Policano’s assistance, Women’s Advocates still needed cooperation from the entire police department.

The advocates made repeated appeals for increased patrols in the neighborhood and quicker response times to emergency calls. Most of those requests were ignored, except in one instance where the paramedics were also called to the shelter. On August 1, a family staying at the shelter had an interfamily dispute during which the sixteen year old son cut himself on a glass door. Erler reported that “the other residents were so upset by a family argument that it was necessary for me to get some help in order to care for the young man.” She called both the paramedics and the police but neither responded in twenty minutes, so she called the paramedics again who then called the police and within five minutes both emergency teams arrived. That night Erler, the only advocate at the shelter, needed help to calm the situation in the house which was compounded by the security alarm repeatedly sounding due to malfunction and a mess of scattered broken plate glass from the door. She recalled that “this was an inside emergency but there was no way that I could have handled it alone without having things get into a still more dangerous situation.” She recorded that one of the two responding police officers “was absolutely great . . . [he] sensed what was needed and helped get things done.”²³⁹ Again, Women’s Advocates experienced individual cooperation from officers but felt that the department’s policies overall were not empathetic to the needs of the shelter.

In August, Women’s Advocates made another complaint to the police department regarding a particular officer’s attitude during his response to the shelter. During a disturbance,

²³⁸ “Founding Mothers Reminisce.”

²³⁹ “Report of Monica Erler, Sept. 29, 1975.”

the shelter staff called the police for help. The police department determined that the “domestic” call was really a “civil matter involving visiting privileges (of the children involved).”²⁴⁰

Advocate Maryanne Hruby recalled that a responding officer told her, ““You’re a woman’s advocate, I’m a man’s advocate”” allegedly as a reaction to Hruby reference to herself as a “woman’s advocate. Hruby replied, “To my knowledge I never volunteered such information, and distinctly do not recall making such a remark prior to his statement [and] that is precisely why the officer’s statement that he was a ‘man’s advocate’ surprised me.” Her indignation about the officer’s attitude was reflected in a letter to Police Chief Richard Rowan: “I ask you, is it not a policeman’s responsibility as a public servant to service all citizens equally? If so, this officer had no right to take sides as he did.”²⁴¹ The department’s response was only that the complaint could not “be sustained” because of “a lack of impartial witnesses and the conflict in statements.”²⁴²

All of these incidents culminated in direct action from Women’s Advocates. On September 16, 1975, “thirty-four residents, staff and friends, went to the mayor’s office to discuss with him our relationship with the police.”²⁴³ Lois Severson and Monica Erler recalled that they had to wait for a lengthy period to meet with the mayor so they let the kids “up on the mahogany table and run around.” Severson remembered that one of the women in the group remarked, “Good, [the kids] are filling their pants, let’s get it stunk up in here and then he can see what it was like. Because that’s what we had there, kids with diarrhea, kids with flu,

²⁴⁰ “Captain Wilfred E. Dugas to Maryanne Hruby, Sept. 3, 1975,” Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁴¹ “Maryanne Hruby to Captain Wilfred E. Dugas, Sept. 14, 1975,” Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁴² “Dugas to Hruby, Sept. 3, 1975.”

²⁴³ “Newsletter, Sept. 1975,” Women’s Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn. *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter* stated that thirty-seven people went to the meeting, 11.

vomiting. . . .”²⁴⁴ According to the *St. Paul Dispatch*, Mayor Lawrence Cohen told the women that “it is ‘really stupid’ for St. Paul police ‘to make excuses’ for not answering calls for help promptly.” He also stated that “‘I would say if a call went out that a man with a knife is threatening people, that shouldn’t take twenty minutes; that is a prime call.’”²⁴⁵

The group reported that their discussion with Mayor Cohen was “promising” and noted that he scheduled a meeting with Chief Rowan.²⁴⁶ A mayor’s aide prepared a summary of five requests that Women’s Advocates took to the police chief, which included:

Any call from Women’s Advocates about violence be given top priority; Squads check the 584 Grand residence at regular intervals throughout the night on a regular basis, and serious consideration be given to extend the foot patrolman’s beat to include 584 (one block past present limit); Greater availability of police records; Women’s Advocates be part of the next training for the police department to make all the police officers aware of what we are trying to do; Get suggestions and recommendations from the Crime Prevention Bureau about Women’s Advocates’ security system.²⁴⁷

On October 1, advocates Lois Severson and Maryanne Hruby attended a meeting with Mayor Cohen and Police Chief Rowan. The October newsletter reported that the meeting “got off to a bad start” because Rowan constantly diverted the discussion to “husbands’ rights,” particularly “access to their wives and children.” He “seemed to doubt that we had the right to deny physical contact at Women’s Advocates between women housed and their men.”²⁴⁸ The tide turned, however, when Tom Hughes “was magically produced straight from the City Attorneys’ office (while Cohen was saying that we certainly needed an attorney at Women’s Advocates to settle these tricky legal questions).”²⁴⁹ Hughes “said essentially what we had just said, that the man in

²⁴⁴ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

²⁴⁵ “*St. Paul Dispatch*, Sept. 19, 1975,” Box 5, Folder: Publicity, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁴⁶ “Newsletter, Sept. 1975.”

²⁴⁷ “Newsletter, Oct. 1975,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ “Handwritten notes of the meeting by Lois Severson,” parenthetical notes in original, Box 5, Folder: Police

this case had no right to ‘self-help’ in seeking his rights to custody and visitation that could be considered at the very least a trespasser. The man has the right to seek recourse through the court and his attorney.”²⁵⁰ Severson’s notes recorded what happened next: “This seemed to satisfy Rowan and he at this point (very offhandedly) conceded that the Grand Avenue foot patrolman’s beat could be extended. (Later the mayor said he nearly fell off the chair when he heard that.)”²⁵¹ Rowan addressed Women’s Advocates’ request to lead awareness training for officers, but instead proposed that the advocates “could prepare information to be given at daily roll call” to ensure that “every police officer in the city” gets the relevant information.²⁵² He also recommended that when Women’s Advocates called the department, they should report that there was a “crime in progress,” which might expedite police response time. Overall, Women’s Advocates felt “very optimistic about working toward a good relationship with the St. Paul police department. Three out of five demands have been met. Hopefully, these concessions will also help alleviate the other two problems.”²⁵³ The meetings with city officials inspired optimism that Women’s Advocates was forming coalitions with potential allies in the quest to raise awareness of wife abuse and help battered women.

Several times throughout the fall, the shelter required emergency police assistance and the advocates observed that the police officers were more helpful. The husband of one of the women staying at the shelter “called and threatened to break in with some of his friends.” Erler summoned the police who responded to the shelter within five minutes. The officers stated that they would patrol the area during their shift and as they left the shelter another police car stopped

Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁵⁰ “Newsletter, Oct. 1975.”

²⁵¹ “Handwritten notes of the meeting by Lois Severson.”

²⁵² “Newsletter, Oct. 1975.”

²⁵³ Ibid.

at the house. That night the threatening calls stopped and further police assistance was not needed.²⁵⁴ On September 20, the police offered their assistance in relocating a resident and her children. The woman and children were in great danger because the father had “on previous occasions removed [the children] with force.” The advocates planned to transport them to a safer place and on the day of the move the husband made harassing phone calls to the shelter. During the transfer of the resident and her children, “a police officer came to be certain that we were able to keep custody of the children . . . and leave St. Paul without being harassed.”²⁵⁵

With significant effort, Women’s Advocates and the police department fostered cooperation between their two agencies. In the summer of 1976, Officer William Finney met with advocates about the relationship between the police department and Women’s Advocates and Chief Rowan approved revisions to the police department’s policies and procedures. Women’s Advocates reiterated the need for calls from the shelter to be treated “as a top priority call because when they find it necessary to call, the situation is beyond all rational control and assistance from police is required immediately to abort further assaults.”²⁵⁶ The advocates also expressed the urgency for a more consistent policy regarding privacy of women staying at the shelter. On several occasions, men whose wives had gone to Women’s Advocates called the Missing Persons department and those officers suggested that the men “check with Women’s Advocates.” Another strategy that abusers employed was to ask the police to “just go and check Women’s Advocates to see if she is safe.” Officers would follow through with the request and the following dangerous episode ensued:

The squad, not aware of the circumstances of the separation or of the woman’s desire to

²⁵⁴ “Report of Monica Erler.”

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ “William Finney to Deputy Chief D. J. Blakely, Aug. 17, 1976,” Box 5, Folder: Police Security 1975-76, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

keep her position secret from anyone, innocently questions a staff person if the client is there and safe and upon hearing the answer, returns to the man to relay the response. The man then knows for certain that his woman is in hiding at Women's Advocates, waits till [sic] the squad leaves and proceeds [sic] to Women's Advocates causing havoc.²⁵⁷

In order to curtail this problem, Finney suggested that when a woman left her husband, she should contact Missing Persons, report that she was safe but that her location was confidential.²⁵⁸ Meetings like this facilitated increased understanding between the two agencies and helped them both better serve the needs of battered women.

Changes in the St. Paul Police Department evolved from meetings with Women's Advocates, but another significant part of the equation was the effort by Sergeant Carolen Bailey. Bailey heralded women's needs by developing trainings about abused women for all St. Paul officers. Betsy Raasch-Gilman recalled that Bailey "really listened to us and she put us in touch with another police officer . . . it was really gradually, through them that we got better response times and we got the police to [realize] this should be more of a priority."²⁵⁹ Bailey understood that security was a fundamental concern for Women's Advocates and in order to encourage better police responses, the officers needed to understand the severity of abuse situations. Unlearning attitudes on the part of law enforcement officers about battered women was the key to creating a better relationship between the police department and the shelter. Bailey had learned from leading classes about child abuse and sexual assault that officers often perceived trainings as being told that they were doing their jobs incorrectly. Her approach was to avoid putting them on the defensive and to help them understand battered women's emotional states, including why they sometimes went back to their abusers.²⁶⁰ Bailey's educational courses were paramount to educating officers about battered women's experiences and the need for

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

²⁶⁰ Carolen Bailey, interview with author, tape recording, North Oaks, Minn., July 21, 2011.

Women's Advocates.

Bailey's passion and devotion to Women's Advocates went beyond leading trainings for officers. Bernice Sisson remembered an incident when Bailey happened to be at the shelter and a man came looking for his wife and children. Bailey answered the door and the man demanded his family. When he was denied access to them, he said he was going to call the police and Bailey told him "I am the police" and showed him her badge. Her presence certainly curtailed this man's potential threatening behavior.²⁶¹ Bailey stated that she developed a close relationship with Women's Advocates and "if they ever had any trouble with a patrol officer they would call me and then I'd come out and handle it."²⁶² With her connections and influence in the St. Paul police department, Bailey was a vital ally of Women's Advocates. Her enthusiasm encouraged the police department to modify their policies and procedures in order to help serve abused women and the advocates who assisted them.

Having better cooperation from the police department cultivated a greater sense of security for both staff and residents at Women's Advocates. Support from other local agencies strengthened and solidified their power in the community. From 1972 to 1975, Women's Advocates worked to establish the agency as an accepted organization in St. Paul. The advocates envisioned a program to help battered women and provided exemplary advocacy to ensure that when faced with obstacles, their efforts were not overturned. Generously, the advocates offered their time and efforts to the shelter with little to no monetary reward. Undeniably, however, the operations of the shelter required financial support, a fact that the advocates realized as the need for services increased.

To raise money for their shelter and programs, Women's Advocates started a fundraising

²⁶¹ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author.

²⁶² Bailey, interview with author.

campaign. Campaigning for both individual and corporate monies generated funds to purchase and maintain a house for the shelter but this work was grueling. “Committed to maintaining autonomy from the controls of public funding,” the collective composed a written statement of their “vision” and compiled a mailing list of over 400 names of “every friend, relative, acquaintance, close and distant contact we could recall.”²⁶³ As the demand for services increased, they had to expand their fundraising requests to local foundations. Women’s Advocates drew strength from individual donors who had few financial means but provided overwhelming emotional support; whereas corporate funders could provide more money but needed constant validation that the shelter was necessary and relevant. The complexities of the grassroots funding campaign epitomized Women’s Advocates’ struggles to find substantial and on-going financial support in order to continue the programs for battered women and children.

Women’s Advocates mainly communicated with individual supporters through a monthly newsletter they first distributed in March of 1973.²⁶⁴ The newsletter highlighted the activities at the house and when readers wanted to know more about what was going on at Women’s Advocates, they started a monthly column called, “View from the Trees” that specifically overviewed projects and local outreaches by the advocates.²⁶⁵ The newsletters also expressed

²⁶³ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 4.

²⁶⁴ The newsletter generally came out every month, however, depending on how busy the shelter was during a given month, the newsletter was printed every other month. The archival collection included copies of newsletters fairly consistently from March 1973 to December 1978, except for a few months’ copies that the author found in the Women’s Advocates Shelter Collection and on microfilm at the Minnesota Historical Society Library. The newsletter not only gave updates about helping battered women but also served as a way to bring together like-minded individuals in the community. Oftentimes, the newsletters would include a commentary about world issues or concerns, especially wars. Another interesting inclusion evidenced how feminist ideas were spreading: “A Japanese woman named Kiyoko called us for house help. She and her three-year-old son are looking for other women, preferably with children, to live with. Kiyoko is hoping to learn as much as she can about the women’s movement and women living together communally and raising children so that when she goes back to Japan, she can share her experiences with single women there. If you are looking for a roommate or know anyone who is, Kiyoko can be reached at 644-6688.” “Newsletter, Sept. 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁶⁵ “Newsletter, Feb. 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. was the first time the “View from the Trees” appeared.

the dire financial conditions of the organization and petitioned readers for assistance. The first issue included a letter that explained the various ways readers could support the collective: monthly pledges, a one-time contribution, gently used furnishings or volunteering. The newsletter described the Women's House as a place where women would find support, education, and safety. They explained that the idea for the House emerged as a "response to the many women who 'need to get away right now' and have no place to go" and wanted a space "for shared growth through learning new skills, participating in individual and group discussions, and exchanging information and materials."²⁶⁶ Women's Advocates relied on a pool of volunteers from the collective, community members, and students from Macalester College in St. Paul to help with programs for children and women.²⁶⁷ Volunteers led women's programs and shared their areas of specialty, such as crafts, cooking, health, and literature. Children, welcomed with their mothers, received "a place to be creative, to grow, to learn, to participate, and to feel secure."²⁶⁸ Volunteers described their work as rewarding and as a time for "experiencing the feelings of friendship and mutual support with the women helped at the House."²⁶⁹

The House programs required volunteer time, but day-to-day costs necessitated monetary donations. The initial push for donations was truly a grassroots effort, as collective members reached out to friends and family members across the country, even as far away as Juneau,

²⁶⁶ "Newsletter, March 11, 1973," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-74, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁶⁷ "Colleen Nun and Donna Ahrens to Women's Advocates, Sept. 1, 1973," Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. The writers of the letter were co-directors of the Community Involvement Programs at Macalester College. They wrote that through their experiences, a women's house was needed in the community and that Macalester students would benefit from the "multifaceted activity centers into which they can put their volunteer energies."

²⁶⁸ "Newsletter, March 11, 1973."

²⁶⁹ "Newsletter, Oct. 1973," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

Alaska.²⁷⁰ Donations arrived in a variety of denominations, some as one-time donations and others as monthly pledges ranging from seventy-five cents to five dollars. The May 1973 newsletter reported that since their first mailing in March, they had received \$750 in one-time contributions and \$430 in monthly pledges. The advocates assured supporters that “monthly pledges will serve as a meaningful support for the Women’s House” and reassured donors that no amount was too small.²⁷¹

The contribution and pledge campaign required constant and consistent promotion that sometimes expanded beyond the newsletter, taking the form of a phone drive or a cocktail party fundraiser. They frequently celebrated their contributors in the newsletter with statements such as, “You are the strawberry on our oatmeal!”²⁷² But even with such efforts, the July 1973 newsletter reported that they received only fifty percent of the monthly pledges promised.²⁷³ This was particularly worrisome to Women’s Advocates as the demand for their services increased and in turn, their costs multiplied. From February to November of 1973, the total operating cost of Women’s Advocates was approximately \$1,380.²⁷⁴ Donations were necessary for daily and unanticipated expenses, like petty cash for resident needs, office supplies, and minimal salaries.²⁷⁵ The advocates relied on donations of used furniture and simple decorations to help the women and children staying there feel more comfortable in crisis situations.²⁷⁶ After

²⁷⁰ “Mortgage Fund Record Book,” spiral notebook in Box 1, Folder: Mortgage Task Force, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁷¹ “Newsletter, May 1973.”

²⁷² “Newsletter, May 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁷³ “Newsletter, July 1973”

²⁷⁴ “Newsletter, Nov. 1973,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁷⁵ “Newsletter, May 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁷⁶ Evidence of the community’s generosity was found in the August 1974 newsletter: [We have an] overabundance of couches and drapes so making a plea for beds, dressers, a dining room table—and most important—plants, pictures and any other items you feel the house needs to help create a homey atmosphere.” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library,

the shelter moved to its own house at 584 Grand Avenue in October of 1974, Women's Advocates exerted much effort into the mortgage fund. The newsletter made a plea for readers to organize fundraisers or at the very least, pass their newsletter on to one other person.²⁷⁷ In January of 1975, Women's Advocates hosted an Open House for donors to visit the shelter and see the fruits of their labor and monetary generosity. In the June/July 1975 newsletter, the collective started a project called "Operation Homing Pidgeon" because of the high cost of printing and the paid postage included on all newsletters. The group suggested that if possible, donors send in as little or as much as they could and that even "loose change, quarters and half dollars can be taped to a paper before closing."²⁷⁸

The September 1975 newsletter reported that "Operation Homing Pidgeon" was a success, yielding 43 envelopes returned with contributions ranging in quantities of one dollar to \$100 from a variety of sources: "a woman on welfare, women making low wages and having to pay for child care," and "women pooling their financial resources."²⁷⁹ Women's Advocates continually reported in the newsletters that individual donors were their "life line" because "foundation money does not allow: emergency fund, salaries, office expenses [or] money to pay volunteers."²⁸⁰ They specifically mentioned some of the donations to put a human face on the numbers:

\$20 from a former resident who wrote, 'It would be nice if there were more organizations like yours around the country';²⁸¹
 \$500 from an appreciative and encouraging municipal court judge;
 \$25 from a woman who sold sea shells and driftwood;

St. Paul, Minn.

²⁷⁷ "Newsletter, June/July 1975." According to Monica Erler, the mortgage was in the name of Women's Advocates, Inc., interview with the author via telephone, Dec. 6, 2011.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ "Newsletter, May 1974." This edition further encouraged individual donations because "The men with button down shirts will never be a substitute for the checks that come in far smaller amounts from you."

²⁸¹ "Newsletter, June/July 1975."

\$400 from a woman who received it as a payment for a biography she wrote of her grandmother, a former social worker from Minneapolis;
 \$700 from a woman from an Eastern state who read about us in a magazine and sent the money because Women's Advocates is a good place;
 \$100 from a couple who said it felt good to have enough money to support a cause they believe in;
 \$200 from a man who simply sent a check;²⁸²
 Women's Advocates to receive profits from the book, *Community Cooking, an Uncommon History of Summit University* that traces the history of this area through recipes and the narrative of its residents. Authors: Steven Trimble, Barbara Young and Alyce Guilfoile, \$3.50, \$.50 postage;²⁸³
 \$500 from the Catholic order of sisters, servants of Mary in Ladysmith, WI; a nun discussed it with her sisters and submitted a proposal to the Director and \$500 was sent!²⁸⁴
 A woman wrote that she is giving 10% of her earnings!
 Memorial for a friend's infant daughter came when there were 20 kids in the house, including 3 week old infant.²⁸⁵

Monica Erler recalled that Women's Advocates garnered support from "the Protestant women's groups . . . they didn't have a lot of money but they sent it regularly and they arranged to have us come to their church meetings on Sunday and talk to the whole group about the issue."²⁸⁶ The March/April 1976 newsletter further encouraged individual donations by reminding readers the magnitude of their efforts: "The exciting thing about your contributions to the Mortgage Fund is that together we will be the needed model for the other groups wanting to start a house. Think of what it will mean to have a women's refuge bought and paid for by people in the community!"²⁸⁷

²⁸² "Newsletter, Jan./Feb. 1976."

²⁸³ "Newsletter, Feb./March 1976," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁸⁴ "Newsletter, March/April 1976," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁸⁵ "Newsletter, Nov. 1976," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters May 1976-Dec. 1977, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁸⁶ Erler, Severson, Sisson, interview with author. The Women's Advocates collection at the Minnesota Historical Society included a folder entitled, "Protestant Women" which included correspondence in 1975 between Women's Advocates and an organization called Lutheran Church Women. The majority of this information was about Women's Advocates' speakers addressing the organization. Box 2, Folder: Lutheran Church Women, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁸⁷ "Newsletter, March/April, 1976". The September 1975 newsletter included similar sentiments: "Some of the consequences of women pooling their financial resources to purchase the house [include]: It will be the first time such an act is accomplished and it will be a model for needed houses all over the country. . . . It will make women very conscious of the financial power they do have when used as a community" **Newsletter, Sept. 1975**

Various local companies donated specific items to the shelter to assist in the daily operations: The HB Fuller Company gave a rug shampooer and vacuum cleaner and on another occasion a copy machine; Honeybells provided them with a new stove; Long Cadillac donated a station wagon; and the St. Paul Chapter of Business and Professional Women gave a “shower” for Women’s Advocates that included “food, diapers, clothes, laundry soap.”²⁸⁸ Women’s Advocates expressed sincere gratitude for any type of thoughtful donation that eased the shelter operation.

Pledges sustained Women’s Advocates until various foundations awarded money in April of 1974. The program needed approximately \$90,000 to fulfill the 1974 and 1975 budgets, which included the mortgage on the house and minimal staff salaries. The decision for Women’s Advocates to apply for corporate monies generated passionate dialogue within the collective.

Susan Ryan wanted to “build up” the grassroots base and remembered:

I had that fear of becoming institutionalized and bureaucratized and more of a hierarchy . . . I also felt that’s why the house should not be two or three houses, but more houses around the city even though you’d have to deal with that security issue more, which you had to deal with anyway, but that would allow that opportunity for those relationships to develop.²⁸⁹

In the end, however, the majority of the collective agreed that they needed to apply for grants. Vaughan recalled a meeting when they were discussing corporate funds “as being dirty money” and Erler said, ‘Well, it’s what you do with it that make money dirty or clean’ and the whole group went, ‘Hey, yeah.’” After that, the group felt more comfortable with their decision to seek foundation monies. However, deciding to apply turned out to be less complicated than adhering

²⁸⁸ “Newsletter, Sept. 1975;” “Newsletter, May 1976,” microfilm, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.; “Newsletter, May/June 1976,” Women’s Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.; “Newsletter, June 1977,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters May 1976-Dec. 1977, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.; “Newsletter, Feb. 1978,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters Feb. 1978-Oct. 1978, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁸⁹ “Founding Mothers Reminisce.”

to the rigid qualifications some foundations required.²⁹⁰

Susan Ryan and Vaughan worked together to write the first grant applications. Vaughan remembered, “We couldn’t believe we got funded, we had never written anything.”²⁹¹ Several resources provided overviews for applying for foundation grants, including one was a book entitled, *The Bread Game*.²⁹² Vaughan learned about the book while attending the National Socialist-Feminist Conference and in the fall of 1975 she wrote to a woman who sent it to her. Women’s Advocates found the book useful as evidenced by their recommendations of it to groups that inquired how Women’s Advocates solicited funds from corporations.²⁹³ Another potential resource that guided Women’s Advocates through the grant application process was a conference called “Funding for Women’s Organizations.” Vaughan attended in October 1975 and her handwritten notes highlighted several suggestions for writing and submitting grant proposals.

The speakers were local corporate representatives who presented strategies for preparing applications. The workshop attendees were advised to provide information related to: The goals of the program and how much money it would require, a clear, documented need for the operation, “how the existing community will be effected [sic] by program,” and how the plan will be enacted and evaluated. This was basic information most grants required but what Vaughan’s notes underscored was that the processes did not jibe with the collective structure of Women’s Advocates. The workshop presenters stressed the need for an organization’s board of

²⁹⁰ Ibid. Erler also mentioned in the film that *Hustler* magazine offered to give them money but they emphatically turned it down. For an interesting article that specifically addressed the concerns that shelter organizers in Hilo, Hawaii have about bureaucracy funding and potential co-option by large corporations, see: Noelle Maria Rodriguez, “Transcending Bureaucracy: Feminist Politics at a Shelter for Battered Women,” *Gender and Society*, vol.2, no. 2 (June 1988), 214-227.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² *The Bread Game: The Realities of Foundation Fundraising*, ed. Herb Allen, Director, Regional Young Adult Project (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1973).

²⁹³ “Sharon Vaughan to Ruth, Aug. 19, 1975,” Box 3, Folder: Funding Leads, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

directors which should not include staff personnel, but rather a “good cross section of competent people.” “The board is the chief hirer [sic] and firer and controller” and “is a key factor in the strength of [the] organization,” repeated the workshop speakers.²⁹⁴ Although the conference was entitled “Funding for Women’s Organizations,” the emphasis on a board of directors evidenced one way in which the conference was out of touch with how many women’s organizations were structured. Women’s Advocates had a board of directors to fulfill the requirement of a non-profit organization but the board included staff, a mistake in the eyes of the workshop coordinators and most funders. Vaughan did not believe the “Women’s Organizations” aspect of the conference was fully developed. The workshop organizers provided tips for writing grants that were applicable to any organization, not exclusively those led by and for women, except for two patronizing announcements that Vaughan recorded: Women were “told to go to the wives of chief executives of corporations in order to make our projects known” and to “get together in groups to present joint issues.” Overall, the workshop reinforced the male dominated culture that emphasized an organizational hierarchy centered on a specific composition of a board of directors.²⁹⁵ Because Women’s Advocates operated as a collective and requested money for programs never funded before, they faced unique challenges as they applied for grants.

Women’s Advocates’ 1980 history, *The Story of a Shelter*, testified that they did not want to compromise “the basic integrity of our organization’s goals,” most notably their non-hierarchical decision-making process. Another obstacle, which highlighted the unconventional nature of the organization, was proving the importance of helping battered women. “We did not discuss feminism or collectivity, important as these principles were to us. Instead we focused on

²⁹⁴ “Funding for Women’s Organizations Conference, Oct. 29, 1975,” Vaughan’s handwritten notes, Box 3, Folder: Fundraising/Women’s Orgs Conference 1975, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

the concrete evidence we had of the need for emergency housing,” narrated *The Story of a Shelter*. Even with their hands on experience witnessing the need for battered women’s programs, the encountered constant barriers. Most foundations’ funding board members were elite men who had no understanding of abused women nor did they appreciate the group challenging patriarchal norms. One funding source “suggested that we change our name from ‘Women’s Advocates’ to something ‘less inflammatory.’”²⁹⁶

Although the corporate funding world discouraged them, Women’s Advocates still applied for funding grants. Most of their proposals outlined Women’s Advocates’ history, starting with the telephone referral service and its evolution into an advocacy program to assist women with the ‘hidden’ problem of abuse. The proposals described the grassroots pledge campaign as a partially lucrative approach for gathering funds but realistically, they needed more financial support. They expressed how large funding grants would help provide continuity and advocacy by establishing “a permanent facility for emergency housing” and sustaining a “permanent staff to insure quality management of the house and residents.”²⁹⁷ Other general information overviewed their agency. Incorporated as a non-profit organization, Women’s Advocates consisted of twenty-nine voting members with an eleven-person board of directors comprised of: Three volunteers, three residents or former residents, three community persons, and two staff members “other than the Administrative Director and/or the Program Co-ordinator [sic].” Women’s Advocates, they explained, extended services in three general ways: They provided emergency housing for women and children, operated a telephone information and referral system, and offered advocacy related to issues of “health, discrimination, welfare,

²⁹⁶ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 89, 90.

²⁹⁷ “Women’s Advocates, Incorporated Requests Funding Consideration for a Crisis Intervention Program for Women in the City of St. Paul and the County of Ramsey,” Box 2, Folder: Bremer Foundation, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. This application was duplicated in other folders for applications that same year.

divorce, pro se name change, and housing.” Because agencies like theirs were unconventional at the time, the funding proposals emphasized the need for them in their community. Statistics from one year exemplified the demand: Between January 1973 and January 1974, Women’s Advocates handled 770 calls, 69 of which were requests for housing and in that year, 33 women and 17 children found refuge at the shelter.²⁹⁸ As the advocates composed the applications, they also included on-going data that evidenced the increasing number of requests for their services and thus, a more urgent need for financial support.

To strengthen their funding applications, Women’s Advocates included letters of support from organizations that had referred women to their agency. A sample of the letters illustrates how necessary and effective Women’s Advocates was in their community. Ann Blonston, Director of The Family Tree Clinic in St. Paul, wrote that her agency dealt mainly with women and identified a “critical need for emergency housing for women.”²⁹⁹ Sergeant Carolen Bailey “personally supported the proposal of Women’s Advocates” because in her work she witnessed “daily reports to the police department of assaults, threats of violence, etc. against women by their husbands, boyfriends and other men with whom they have had contact. Many of these women are terrified and have justified fears.”³⁰⁰ “Women’s Advocates helped a woman after other agencies would not help,” wrote Sister Vivian Kovar, a counselor at the North End Health Center.³⁰¹ Migrants In Action, a non-profit organization that helped people “who are moving out of the migrant stream into the metropolitan area,” emphasized that the services Women’s

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ “Ann Blonston to Sharon Vaughan, Dec. 17, 1973,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰⁰ “Bailey to Women’s Advocates, no date,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰¹ “Kovar to Women’s Advocates, no date,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

Advocates provided were “excellent and much needed” in the community.³⁰² A group from the University of Minnesota Women’s Studies Program highlighted that Women’s Advocates provided services that were “not available anywhere else” and “work[ed] for change through its educational, childcare and legal program as well as through counseling.”³⁰³ Women’s Advocates helped a social worker at the Children’s Hospital Clinic in St. Paul who underscored that their services for women and children were “unavailable in St. Paul anywhere else” and for that reason he supported them.³⁰⁴ “Based on my experience with the specific problems of women,” recalled another social service provider, Women’s Advocates’ “programs are appropriate in that they represent, in my opinion, the best chance for reducing the problems they address.”³⁰⁵ With such letters of support and evidence to bolster their funding applications, Women’s Advocates’ grant writing efforts literally paid off.

The first year that Women’s Advocates applied, they received substantial private corporate monies from three local foundations, the HB Fuller Company, the Otto Bremer Foundation, and the Bush Foundation. The Bush Foundation, established by 3M executive Archibald Bush in 1953, awarded \$60,000 to Women’s Advocates in 1974. Women’s Advocates learned about the funding possibilities at the Bush Foundation from an ally who knew that its board had a “responsive woman on the staff.”³⁰⁶ They talked with this woman about their programs and invited her to visit the shelter. After continuous conversations with the foundation,

³⁰² “Francisco Arevalo to Vaughan, no date,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰³ “University of Minnesota Women’s Studies Program and Experimental College Community to Women’s Advocates, May 3, 1973,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰⁴ “Michael Linder to Mary Heffernan at Ramsey County Mental Health Center, March 25, 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰⁵ “Arthur S. Funke to John Catlin at Ramsey County Mental Health Center, March 24, 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰⁶ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 84-85.

Bush allocated the grant for Women's Advocates over two years for the "purchase of a facility and operating costs" of the programs.³⁰⁷ Receiving this significant grant opened the door for matching funds. On August 14, 1974, Vaughan notified the Bush Foundation that the Ramsey County Mental Health Board and the State Department of Welfare matched their monies at \$29,000 and \$15,000, respectively.³⁰⁸ Another local foundation, the Fuller Company, awarded Women's Advocates with a \$6,000 matching grant "for remodelling [sic] expense of temporary home for abused women."³⁰⁹ The Fuller Company was founded in 1887 and manufactured adhesive chemical products, earning over \$100 million in 1974. One of their corporate goals included "shar[ing] in communities in which we do business the profit which they have helped us create" and part of that was "respond[ing] to emergency community needs." Women's Advocates' grant application emphasized the urgent demand for battered women's programs and the company supported their efforts. The third local foundation that funded Women's Advocates was the Otto Bremer Foundation, part of the legacy of an early twentieth-century Midwest investment banker. Bremer matched the Fuller money in September 1974 for rehabilitation of the house at 584 Grand Avenue.³¹⁰ The awards, combined with pledges and contributions for 1974 and 1975, enabled Women's Advocates to make a down payment on the house at 584 Grand Avenue.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ "The Bush Foundation, Annual Report for the Fiscal Year, Ended Nov. 30, 1974," Box 2, Folder: Bush Foundation 1974, 1975, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.; "Humphrey Doermann, to Susan Ryan and Sharon Vaughan, April 15, 1974," Box 2, Folder: Bush Foundation 1974, 1975, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.; <http://www.bushfoundation.org/about>, accessed Oct. 5, 2011.

³⁰⁸ "Sharon Vaughan to The Bush Foundation, August 14, 1974," Box 2, Folder: Bush Foundation 1974, 1975, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁰⁹ "HB Fuller Company, Report on Community Affairs, 1975," Box 2, Folder: HB Fuller Company 1974, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³¹⁰ "Joseph C. Imberman to Sharon Vaughan, Sept. 30, 1974," Box 2, Folder: Bremer Foundation 1974, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. <http://www.ottobremer.org/fh.php> accessed Oct. 5, 2011.

³¹¹ Grassroots fundraising for 1974 totaled \$3,588 and \$1,560 for 1975. "Appendix 5, Sources and Income," loose paper in Box 2, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul,

In each of the grant applications, Women's Advocates outlined the demand for their services in St. Paul and the need for immediate funding to purchase a house for the shelter. Through the grant applications and meeting with funders, Women's Advocates convinced the aforementioned three foundations of the critical need to support services in the community. Other local foundations that traditionally sponsored community programs, however, initially refused to support them. The Hill Family Foundation and the United Way rejected Women's Advocates' requests and challenged the need for services, and particularly objected to an organization that lacked a hierarchical structure and a guaranteed future. Rejection by these two agencies represented the barriers Women's Advocates faced from the dominant patriarchal society that did not always appreciate the efforts of women, particularly on issues that were not generally accepted in mainstream society, such as wife abuse. The Hill Foundation denied money for Women's Advocates in 1974 partly because of the perceived high cost of running the programs and the uncertainty of prospective funding.³¹² They suggested that Women's Advocates "establish a fee schedule for women" and "determine the ability of the United Way to subsidize any portion of Women's Advocates in the future." While these were valid concerns that funders had when allocating funds, Women's Advocates interpreted their decision as an affront to their cause. Rejection from the Hill Foundation evidenced that the advocates still faced resistance to their campaign to raise awareness of wife abuse.

In regards to Hill's refusal, the advocates were most outraged that foundation refused to

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³¹² According to their records, The Hill Family Foundation "was created in 1934 by railroad and banking magnate Louis W. Hill, Sr., son of James J. Hill, founder of the Great Northern Railway. At the outset it was known as the Lexington Foundation after one of the streets in the old St Paul neighborhood where Hill was raised. Fifteen years after its founding, following the deaths of Hill and his wife Maud Taylor Hill, it was renamed the Louis W. and Maud Hill Family Foundation to acknowledge the gifts of their estates and the commitment of succeeding generations to their philanthropic purposes." From the "Northwest Area Foundation, Report for the Fiscal Year ended Feb 29, 1976," Box 2, Folder: Hill Foundation, 1975; a.k.a. the "Northwest Area Foundation," Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

believe that Women's Advocates was the only agency providing direct services for battered women. Instead, they suggested that Women's Advocates solicit other social service agencies for help and volunteers.³¹³ In a letter dated December 9, 1974, Robert Bonine, Assistant Executive Director of the Hill Foundation, further explained that the board believed that funds "would be used to provide ancillary services that may be admittedly desirable but difficult to support at a time when many social service agencies are financially hard pressed."³¹⁴ According to Vaughan, his naming Women's Advocates an "ancillary service" was "a fundamental failure to comprehend the vital need Women's Advocates meets." She and Susan Ryan met face to face with the Hill Foundation and Bonine reiterated the belief that Women's Advocates provided an "ancillary service." Vaughan recalled, "That word just made me furious and then in the end he turned us down"³¹⁵ until Bonine witnessed the actual work of the advocates.³¹⁶

Robert Bonine changed his mind about the Hill Foundation awarding Women's Advocates money after he visited the shelter. Vaughan described that it "was like a miracle because he was sitting there, we bought the doughnuts . . . and we were sitting at the table and the doorbell rang, we were sitting right in front of the door and somebody went and answered it and this bloody woman walked in, it was like 10:00 in the morning." Erler recalled, "I just remember he stood up and said, 'We'll send a check.'"³¹⁷ The Hill Foundation approved a "one-year grant of up to \$20,000" for operating costs as outlined in their previous proposal but strongly recommended that Women's Advocates advise all of their funders "of your financial

³¹³ "Robert W. Bonine to Sharon Vaughan, May 17, 1974," Box 2, Folder: Hill Foundation 1975, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³¹⁴ "Robert W. Bonine to Sharon Vaughan, Dec. 9, 1974," Box 2, Folder: Hill Foundation 1975, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³¹⁵ "Founding Mothers Reminisce."

³¹⁶ It is unclear in the records or in the interviews whether or not Bonine was invited to the shelter or if he took it upon himself to visit the shelter. The author suspects that the advocates invited him to see their work and how the Hill Foundation's money would be used.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

condition and the strong likelihood that Women's Advocates faces financial collapse unless ongoing public funds can be obtained."³¹⁸

Bonine also suggested that Women's Advocates pursue funding from the United Way. However, the advocates knew that the shelter was "precluded from consideration by . . . [a] policy [that] requires an unpaid Board of Directors and prohibits consideration of agencies which allow paid employees voting privileges in the deliberations of the Board." This directly conflicted with Women's Advocates' philosophy that all members, paid and unpaid, served the best interests of the agency. Catherine Avina and Sharon Vaughan wrote to the United Way director and explained that these conditions prevented Women's Advocates, "a respected and integral part of the St. Paul area social service network," from receiving fair consideration for United Way funds. "Until the United Way changes its priorities in funding consideration," Avina and Vaughan declared, "we urge individuals and organizations who are sensitive to the needs of women in this community to directly support Women's Advocates rather than contributing to the United Way." The advocates acted on this threat by publishing information about the United Way in the newsletter.³¹⁹

Volunteer Betsy Gilman circulated a notice at her full-time workplace, the Minnesota Historical Society, and expressed outrage at the United Way's refusal to support Women's Advocates. Traditionally, the United Way conducted a pledge campaign at the Historical Society but "before everyone makes their pledges," Gilman wrote, "I want to express my belief that United Way officials seem unconcerned about, insensitive to, and/or unaware of the needs of women and children in the Twin Cities." Gilman briefly outlined the services Women's

³¹⁸ "Bonine to Women's Advocates, March 10, 1975," Box 2, Folder: Hill Foundation, 1975, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³¹⁹ "Catharine Avina and Sharon Vaughan to William P. Monahan, March 24, 1975," Box 2, Folder: United Way 1975-76, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. Their comments were also summarized in "Newsletter, March/April 1976."

Advocates provided for abused women and children, services that were not found anywhere else in the area. She explained that when Women's Advocates spoke with the United Way regarding funding, the director told the advocates that "the United Way already supported women's needs through the Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts." Gilman declared that, "Having worked with battered women and their children in the house for nearly a year, we feel that the United Way cannot possibly understand women's needs if they believe the Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls fulfill all of them." "Although we staff members have feminist leanings, little or no consciousness-raising [sic] goes on at the house," Gilman assured her co-workers, "most of our energies are focused on helping the resident women to solve the problems facing them, and forcing institutions like the Welfare to work for them." Gilman clarified that she was not soliciting funds for Women's Advocates, although they were welcomed, but rather wanted her colleagues to know "that in giving to the United Way you are not giving to at least one agency which deals directly with the critical needs of women and children in the Twin Cities."³²⁰

The United Way's Associate Executive Director William P. Monahan called Gilman and declared that that her letter was "incorrect" because there were numerous reasons why Women's Advocates did not receive funding. Gilman dispersed another announcement to her co-workers, retracting her first memo but offered "a more detailed statement which I will be happy to share with anyone interested."³²¹ These interactions between Women's Advocates staff and the United Way demonstrated the loyalty with which Women's Advocates held to their collective philosophy, as summarized in *The Story of a Shelter*:

³²⁰ "Memo Oct. 1, 1975, To: Staff in All Divisions, From: Betsy Gilman, Archives/Manuscripts (Research Center)," Box 2, Folder: Betsy and the United Way, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³²¹ "Oct. 9, 1975, To: Staff in All Divisions, From: Betsy Gilman, Archives/Manuscripts (Research Center)," Box 2, Folder: Betsy and the United Way, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

In legal, medical, and welfare advocacy, we do not approach the systems with an attitude of acceptance of a status quo which does not serve battered women, and we apply the same principle to our fundraising. We reject the powerlessness implied in accepting funds with strings attached which are detrimental to our program, and elect instead to educate and change the attitudes of those who determine criteria and regulations for funding. As advocates, we seek funds from the economic establishment, but we do not accept money if it carries conditions which may jeopardize any part of our service to women. . . . We are proud to be part of a grassroots effort which does not depend on temporary liasons [sic] and influential connections but chooses, instead, to work for policy changes which will open new funding avenues, free of compromising strings, for all shelters.³²²

Women's Advocates faced some resistance to their endeavors, but overall, the St. Paul community came to an acceptance of the program, and supported it with money and referrals.

From 1972-1974, Women's Advocates established successful advocacy program and was creating a financial support base. Most notably, they still lacked suitable space to shelter women and children. With \$10,000 for a down payment from the Bush Foundation, the advocates purchased a house at 584 Grand Avenue and excitedly described it to supporters in the July 1974 newsletter:

The dream-come-true sits high atop a hill on Grand Avenue. Loaded with room and lots of finished wood, it has space for 12 guests as well as our office. The place is divided into a living room, dining room, five bedrooms, a couple of kitchens, two-and-a-half baths and an assortment of nooks and crannies. The giant attic will house the office. Special features include two splendid fireplaces, paved parking area, and a family of fleas which decided to stay rather than find new quarters (however, the exterminator has different ideas).³²³

584 Grand Avenue was a work in progress to make it both sufficient for their programs and a welcoming environment for women and children, but most importantly, it was Women's Advocates' space. Because the demand for services continued to grow, when the house next door at 588 Grand Avenue was available for purchase in 1975, Women's Advocates jumped at the opportunity to physically expand their endeavors. Just a short walk next door, the new house

³²² *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 93-94.

³²³ "Newsletter, July 1974," Women's Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

would offer areas exclusively for children's programs and child-care facilities. As the advocates announced in their newsletter, "The children deserve and have a right to much more space and attention than we have been able to give them."³²⁴ Women's Advocates explained to their supporters that they purchased the house for "\$1,000 and contract for deed on the remaining \$9,000. Delinquent taxes amount to \$5,000, which we hope can be negotiated. Also, we plan to submit proposals for rehabilitation funds."³²⁵ At the time of purchase, the 588 property was unlivable; and therefore Monica Erler spearheaded the search for funds to support their purchase and pay for needed repairs.

Local foundations prohibited the use of their money for capital improvements so in December 1975 Women's Advocates applied for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to be awarded to the city of St. Paul through the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency.³²⁶ Prior to 1978, HUD did not allow funding for battered women's shelters, but potential existed if the agency expanded on the 1974 Housing and Community Act.³²⁷ This provision represented the first federal legislation on housing policy that directly addressed the needs of women.³²⁸ Two representatives from Women's Advocates attended a

³²⁴ "Newsletter, Jan./Feb. 1976."

³²⁵ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 88-89.

³²⁶ "St. Paul Women's Advocates Proposal Section 8 Substantial Rehabilitation Project, A Congregate Residence for Battered Persons," Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³²⁷ "Richard C.D. Fleming, Deputy Assistant Secretary, HUD to Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Dec. 28, 1977," in response to Humphrey's letter to Fleming dated Dec. 5, 1977 but not located, Box 6, Folder: White House Meeting, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³²⁸ The greatest disparity between the housing needs of women and men centered on the fact that women-headed households were six times as likely to be poor than those led by men and domestic violence complicated women's housing needs. The need for affordable housing for women created several obstacles for Women's Advocates. The September 1977 newsletter reported that only three former residents out of 1,000 were able to secure public housing and only four received Section 8 certificates; most of the others rented apartments or houses that consumed 60 to 80 percent of their income. Women's Advocates expressed outrage with HUD, calling its "token housing program a sham" and suggested that "citizens take a hard look at where federal funds for Housing and Development are going." The newsletter encouraged readers to write to their congressional representatives and local officials in support of funding. "Newsletter, Sept. 1977," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters May 1976- Dec. 1977, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. Erler wrote to Congressman Bruce Vento in December 1978 about the rehabilitation plans for the houses, voicing the urgent

conference on September 26 and 27, 1977 in Washington D.C. sponsored by the Women's Program Division of HUD. The group asked for assistance from HUD in the form of rent supplements and \$10 million for emergency shelters.³²⁹ Allene Joyce Skinner, Director of the Women's Policy and Program Division, remarked that "Our office intends to help develop and get funding for projects addressed particularly to women's needs, such as crisis centers for battered women. We want to help women's organizations to become prime sponsors of such projects."³³⁰ Minnesota Representative Donald M. Fraser wrote in support of battered women's shelters receiving HUD funding. At this time in Minnesota, the idea for other shelters was evolving in places such as Duluth and Minneapolis. He explained, "Shelters for physically and/or emotionally abused women and children are a fairly new phenomenon in this country, and I am proud that Minnesotans set up some of the first such centers. Women's Advocates in St. Paul, Minnesota, is one of these shelters."³³¹ Political support from Minnesota congresspersons helped make the issue one of importance. On the grassroots level, between 1974 and 1978, Women's Advocates worked to strengthen their claims that HUD should fund battered women's shelters. Just as in other instances when Women's Advocates found creative ways to obtain their

concerns: "In our work with over 2,000 women we have found housing to be the most demanding problem they face. In fact, we could help more women in our shelter if it was possible for women living here to find housing and move out when they have completed the legal, medical and supportive counseling services which they needed." "Erler to Bruce Vento, Dec. 28, 1978," Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. Overall, abused women and children faced numerous obstacles to securing housing after they departed the shelter but needs of their temporary house, the shelter, were just as pressing. Thus, Women's Advocates focused on how HUD funding could be used to finance shelter repairs and in turn, help women.

³²⁹ The records did not include the names of Women's Advocates' representatives at this meeting but Cathy Avina and Lois Severson were probably the attendees. Evidence for this argument derived from a letter dated July 18, 1977 from Senator Wendell Anderson to Judith Gavin thanking her "for your generous contribution which will enable Kathy [sic] Avina and Lois Severson of Women's Advocates to attend a White House briefing on domestic violence." "Senator Wendell Anderson to Judith Gavin, July 18, 1977," Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³³⁰ "Women Consumers, Women Professionals: Their roles and problems in housing and community development are concerns of special HUD office, Allene Joyce Skinner, *JOH*, 228-230, May 1978," Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³³¹ "Donald M. Fraser to Robert C. Embry, Nov. 29, 1977," Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

objectives, they pressured HUD to uphold their declared goal of helping women with housing.

The application for the Community Development Block Grant required that the organization provide evidence of how the program benefited the neighborhood in which it existed. Women's Advocates argued that restoration to 584 and 588 Grand Avenue would "help prevent further decline in the housing in this part of the city."³³² Moreover, the location of Women's Advocates significantly served the needs of the women and children staying at the shelter because the area offered easy access to stores and a hospital via public transportation. The advocates described the neighborhood as safe because, "police protection is excellent. The Grand Avenue foot patrol officer covers the house and the squad in the area responds immediately when called [and] paramedics are able to reach us in minutes."³³³ This rationale emphasized the need to not only help abused women and children, but also to help prevent neighborhood decay. The city of St. Paul agreed with Women's Advocates' justification for receiving CDBG monies; however, early in 1976, HUD, the federal agency that supervised the grant distributions shut down the program and declared city programs ineligible for HUD funding.

Women's Advocates explained the situation to readers in their March/April 1976 newsletter, not withholding their sentiments: "The frustration of this situation is beyond words, because the situation itself is beyond the logical process of words and language. When something makes absolutely no sense except that it destroys what has been laboriously created by hard work and virtuous intent, it is impossible to bring logic to bear on what has been done, or

³³² "Additional Information Re: Proposals of Women's Advocates for Use of Community Development Funds Requested in Revised Proposals, Dec. 1975," Box 5, Folder: Community Development Block Grant, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³³³ Ibid.

is to be done.”³³⁴ The advocates encouraged their supporters to write their Congressional representatives to pressure the Housing and Urban Development office to reopen CDBG funding options. The September 1977 newsletter announced that Women’s Advocates was awarded \$24,000 to pay the 584 Grand Avenue mortgage and \$12,000 for a new heating system.³³⁵ In order to receive the money, however, the deed for the house was transferred to the city of St. Paul, which officially received the Community Development Block Grant and in theory, would then distribute the rehabilitation money to Women’s Advocates.³³⁶

Achieving permanent space was a victory, but financial difficulties took a new form. By transferring the house’s title, Women’s Advocates was at the mercy of the city to follow through with the allocation of funds. When the city refused prompt cooperation, Monica Erler spoke at a mayor’s hearing in 1977 and explained that Women’s Advocates immediately need the money for repairs and basic necessities in the house. Because of the water system’s low pressure, oftentimes residents could not draw water for a bath. This same dilapidated system hindered the use of appliances such as the washing machine and dishwasher. In order for the kitchen to serve the number of women and children staying in the house, new appliances were required and the St. Paul Health Department demanded the installation of a range vent system. The grant outlined payment assistance but because of the city’s inefficiency, Erler remarked, “We are kept going by the thoughtfulness of women in this community who remember us when they have furniture, bedding and other household items which they wish to give away.” She stated to city officials that if St. Paul would not finance the repairs, as promised, then Women’s Advocates needed the

³³⁴ “Newsletter, March/April 1976.”

³³⁵ “Newsletter, Sept. 1977.” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters May 1976- Dec. 1977, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³³⁶ “Terry McNellis to Monica Erler, March 21, 1978,” Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

title to the house in order to apply for other funding sources.³³⁷ The shelter newsletter explained the severity of the problem and voiced on-going frustrations:

Living in an overcrowded house for three years with inadequate heating, ancient plumbing (almost no water pressure) and a kitchen without facilities needed to prepare large quantities of food has taken a lot of energy that we could have put into our program. Knowing this makes us angry at times. We have not been looking for funding for a pipe dream. We are open and operating 24 hours every day. Almost 2,000 women and children have lived with us when they had no place else to go that was safe. We have referrals from welfare workers, police, hospital personnel and requests from women themselves. We house twice the number that is comfortable and still we turn down more than 3 out of 4 requests for housing. The struggle for shelter is the toughest struggle that we have had.³³⁸

Most shamefully, in the Women's Advocates view was that, "We look around and see that there are millions of dollars for highways, skyways, airports and bombs but pitifully little for housing women and children. . . ." ³³⁹ Women's Advocates encouraged their readers to write letters to Mayor George Latimer, the city council and the county commissioners with their concerns about shelter repairs and funding.³⁴⁰

Rallying their supporters again expedited action and resulted in Mayor Latimer visiting the shelter. The mayor "promised us that we will get funds in Community Development IV to complete the rehab work, doing some much needed insulating, repair and maintenance work. He also agreed with us that something had to be done about our heating soon, and it seems now that we will have our new installation ready before winter comes again."³⁴¹ Only after Women's Advocates staff, volunteers and backers pressed the bureaucracy to uphold their commitments did they get efficient results. Women's Advocates also enacted this same strategy to urge the national Housing and Urban Development to change the oppressive stipulations to their funding.

³³⁷ "Statement of Women's Advocates at Mayor's Hearing, Aug. 24, 1977, by Monica Erler," Box 6, Folder: Misc., Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³³⁸ "Newsletter, Sept. 1977."

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ "Newsletter, Feb./March/April 1977," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters May 1976-Dec. 1977, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁴¹ "Newsletter, Sept. 1977."

Throughout the winter of 1977 and 1978, Women's Advocates continued to press HUD to permanently change the Community Development Block Grant requirements. They found allies in the office of Minnesota Women in Housing which was "an organization of women employed in housing programs" to also insist that the federal HUD office make their programs more inclusive of battered women's shelters.³⁴² Minnesota Women in Housing requested modifications of Community Development Block Grant guidelines to include emergency crisis housing for women and more specifically, financial support of the acquisition and rehabilitation of structures for use as crisis shelters for physically abused persons.³⁴³ The federal Housing and Urban Development agency agreed to consider these changes and Women's Advocates announced this development in the February 1978 newsletter. They thanked supporters and reminded readers that "It is hard to move the mountains that overlay government regulations, and we hold our breath, waiting to see if the mountain budged just a bit."³⁴⁴ This mountain did in fact move because in March of 1978, HUD's Community Development Block Grant regulations changed. Advocate Cheryl Beardslee, who attended HUD meetings in Washington, reported to newsletter readers that one of the highlights of the meeting was the announcement that regulations had been modified to specifically state that HUD money could be used for the purchase and rehabilitation of emergency shelters.³⁴⁵ Moreover, the city was no longer required to hold the deed in order to pay for work on the house.³⁴⁶

Despite the victory, federal funding, however, was often caught in the civil bureaucracy which hindered the completion of projects. Women's Advocates expressed these concerns to

³⁴² "Newsletter, Feb. 1978."

³⁴³ "Nancy C. Freeman, President Minnesota Women in Housing to Office of the Rules Docket Clerk, Nov. 22, 1977," Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁴⁴ "Newsletter, Feb. 1978."

³⁴⁵ "Newsletter, April 1978," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters Feb. 1978-Oct. 1978, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁴⁶ "Terry McNellis to Monica Erler, March 21, 1978."

Governor Perpich when he and his wife, Lola, visited the shelter on September 27, 1978. The newsletter described their visit:

They arrived at 8 am just in the middle of the hectic breakfast and departure for school time. We visited with the Perpichs for more than an hour. Both residents and staff had a chance to air some of our concerns. The women residents talked about the terrible difficulty they have finding housing for themselves and their children, the real discrimination that they suffer as poor women and single parents. The staff talked to the governor about the long and frustrating battle regarding the house next door and the stalemate with HUD which is holding up the final realization of our plans. The governor was interested and sympathetic and promised help very soon. We will be meeting again with Governor Perpich and other officials.³⁴⁷

Politicians such as Governor Perpich and Congressman Wendall Anderson, as well as community social service agencies, supported Women's Advocates' HUD requests, which included a proposal for a "demonstration program" in an effort to effectively evaluate any program benefits or problems.³⁴⁸ In 1980, Women's Advocates announced their inclusion in HUD's Section 8 pilot program. Over the course of one year, HUD monitored the shelter's operations in order to determine whether or not such programs would receive further funding. Women's Advocates was confident that HUD would continue to fund their program, largely because "We have strong support from our elected officials and the citizens of this community; we have the support and assistance of the personnel in Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, the national and area HUD offices; and we have a good record of providing services and using revenues responsibly."³⁴⁹ The pilot programs successfully laid the foundation for other shelters to receive HUD funds. Monica Erler expressed great pride in her work on this important issue and her fellow advocates, Bernice Sisson and Lois Severson also commended her unwavering

³⁴⁷ "Newsletter, Oct. 1978," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters Feb. 1978-Oct. 1978, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁴⁸ "Marilyn Melkonian to Lawrence B. Simons, May 9, 1979," Box 7, Folder: Funds, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁴⁹ "Women's Advocates Building Project, July 1980," Box 3, Folder: Alice M. O'Brien Foundation, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

work on the national housing issue.³⁵⁰ Financial support from HUD allowed for repairs to both 584 and 588 Grand Avenue, which were substantially completed in December 1981.³⁵¹

Throughout the mid-to-late 1970s, Women's Advocates established itself as a groundbreaking grassroots organization in St. Paul that served battered women and children through their advocacy programs and shelter. The advocates' work evolved and in the process, transformed the ways many mainstream organizations responded to wife abuse.

Community reactions to wife abuse evolved in the 1970s, partly as a result of Women's Advocates' speaking engagements and media coverage. The newsletter described several occasions when local and national news reporters visited the shelter and included Women's Advocates in their stories about wife abuse. In early 1975, WCCO Television reporter Don Kladstrup interviewed "women willing to talk about their experiences," including residents and staff personnel.³⁵² Minnesota Public Radio featured Women's Advocates on their program, "All Things Considered" in the summer of 1975. Martin Bunzl interviewed "staff and residents and then contacted the husband of a resident" which resulted in a plethora of "letters and calls from all over the country from women interested in what we are doing in the house."³⁵³ In the summer of 1975, Judy Gingold from *Newsweek Magazine* called the shelter and spoke with several residents and staff for an "hour and a half" about their experiences. For three days in November 1975, a CBS news crew visited Women's Advocates as part of a national story about wife abuse. During their time in St. Paul, the crew interviewed and filmed residents and staff, who were willing to speak on camera, about the programs and the collective. The advocates

³⁵⁰ Erler, Sisson and Severson interview with author.

³⁵¹ "With Audit Reports," Box 1, no folder, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁵² "Newsletter Feb. 1975," Women's Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn. According to the Sept. 1975 newsletter, the story aired on Sept. 10 and 11.

³⁵³ "Newsletter, June/July 1975."

expressed “how both in the long and the short run this relates to the need for rebuilding and restructuring society that the concept of feminism speaks to.”³⁵⁴ Local professionals Judge Bertrand Poritsky, Sergeant Carolen Bailey and attorney Bjorn Ulstad spoke “about the legal situation encountered by women who are battered and want to press charges.”³⁵⁵ CBS also included information from other agencies that had started helping battered women but recognized Women’s Advocates as the only shelter. CBS slated the story for a five minute timeslot. Women’s Advocates claimed that if the news company “can send five people to town for three days to make five minutes of news, we hope that one result will be that in the near future, women who are battered will become acknowledged and at last, will be able to begin to make some basic choices about their lives.”³⁵⁶

Awareness of the issue continued in January 1976 when NBC sent a crew to Women’s Advocates to record “on film what daily life in the house is like.”³⁵⁷ The national publicity about wife abuse was undoubtedly a positive development, but Women’s Advocates stated that:

The ‘solution’ is not refuges. Refuges are the vitally necessary first step in eliminating domestic violence and oppression because they serve to make the problem visible and to meet the immediate need for protection. Yet shelters in and of themselves are not enough. What is needed is change on many levels. We at Women’s Advocates participate in this process by: providing a safe environment that encourages making positive changes in our lives; creating awareness in our community about the causes and problems of domestic violence; and demand that our social service system be responsive to the needs of abused women; challenging each and every person to examine her/his behavior and attitudes around violence and sexism. Real fundamental change will depend upon all of us.³⁵⁸

The media encouraged some of the changes Women’s Advocates sought by bringing awareness to the issue of wife abuse. The advocates worked in their community to educate groups,

³⁵⁴ “Newsletter, Nov. 1975,” Women’s Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ “Newsletter, Jan./Feb. 1976.”

³⁵⁸ “Newsletter, Feb./March/April 1977.”

agencies, and organizations about battered women. As early as February 1974, the newsletter reported that advocates spoke with various health, education, and community organizations about what they were doing in the house. These educational outreaches provided Women's Advocates with greater visibility in the community as well as donation opportunities. However, growing awareness of domestic violence also changed some of the dynamics within the organization.

Operating as a collective, the group had no single leader making decisions. Naturally, some women exerted more time and energy than others, but the collective structure theoretically held all members as equals. However, Betsy Raasch-Gilman explained:

We did a lot of public speaking . . . [and] Sharon . . . eventually got identified as being the executive director And we had struggles over leadership and Sharon was the woman who got trashed, I think that was the word we used, and part of that had to do with the speaking gigs and how we represented ourselves in the media so we started putting up lists of speaking requests in the office and people could sign up and that's how I got to do the speaking gigs, I just signed up like everyone else.³⁵⁹

Although all members cooperated, the group decided that the increased demand for services and outreaches necessitated the creation of a leadership-type position. In the summer of 1974, Women's Advocates advertised for an executive director, who would have the responsibilities of: "staff supervision, house and office operating procedures, administration of Board policies, and community relations." The June 1974 newsletter explained that "the need for a director is because we have grown and are growing and are also growing internally towards working for living wages for all our staff."³⁶⁰

Out of a pool of several applicants, Women's Advocates named Sharon Vaughan the

³⁵⁹ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author. *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter* also mentioned this division in the collective and how they sought to remedy it with the "speaking engagement calendar" on which anyone could sign up to present at a scheduled talk. In the event that multiple advocates wanted the gig, a "lottery" system determined who would fulfill the commitment. *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 63.

³⁶⁰ "Newsletter, June 1974," Women's Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

executive director in the fall of 1974. Tensions mounted regarding her new role as “the leader” which forced Vaughan to contemplate where Women’s Advocates had been and where it was going:

So I applied for the director job and there was an ad in the paper, another finalist, and I got hired and then I came home, I can remember being here one day in the morning, getting ready to go to work, a couple months later . . . I was sitting in my bed thinking why do we have to be any different than we were before we got this money and the house and could hire the staff? . . . I went back to work that day and I turned back part of my salary and my title and I became an advocate.³⁶¹

Vaughan tirelessly continued to write grants and advocate for women at the shelter; however, dynamics in the collective were changing. Vaughan reflected on that time, especially regarding Susan Ryan, the other original VISTA worker:

She had a different philosophy about what we wanted to do and we worked really well together until we got money and then it divided us, it was very painful, but I actually think she’s right, she wanted this movement . . . to be community based all across every community, so that on this block, my house would have a sign that said women are safe here, so it’s everyone’s problem and if you needed to leave, you could go to the house that had the sign and everybody was owning that problem. And I just said, no, it will never work, we have to establish ourselves and get legislation passed and change the systems from that level. Susan was truly grassroots and I love her, we did reform our friendship after several years, but she left, quite bitterly.³⁶²

The May/June 1976 newsletter announced that Ryan had left Women’s Advocates. The organization lamented the loss of Ryan but continued to help battered women and raise money for their mortgages and programs. Vaughan continued on at Women’s Advocates until the spring of 1977 when she left to work at the newly opened Harriet Tubman shelter in Minneapolis.³⁶³

Vaughan’s move to Harriet Tubman exemplified how the awareness of wife abuse spread and sparked the formation of new organizations to address the issue. In 1974, the creation of

³⁶¹ Vaughan, interview with author.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ “Newsletter, Feb./March/April 1977.”

Women's Advocates was only the beginning of a coordinated, empathetic effort to help women and children impacted by abuse in the Twin Cities. After functioning for two years, Women's Advocates "expressed the need for greater awareness of the problem among the community at large, and the human services in specific."³⁶⁴ Several organizations formed to expand the efforts started by Women's Advocates, most notably the Battered Women's Consortium. In this organization there was considerable activist overlap in the membership among women and men who were adamant about eradicating wife abuse and helping battered women. The Battered Women's Consortium formed in February 1975 after a meeting sponsored by Women's Advocates, the Minneapolis Walk-in Counseling Center and the Minnesota chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.³⁶⁵ Sharon Vaughan recalled that the panel of speakers for the gathering included "a social worker, a cop, a battered woman, and me." While it was a bitter cold night in January" she described the enthusiastic atmosphere at the meeting:

Many people came that we had to open up the space, it was amazing . . . a lot of battered women were there and a lot of people in social services that wanted to know what the heck this was, what was going on and when it was over people wanted to keep talking so we put a yellow legal pad at the door and people could sign up and put their phone numbers if they wanted to keep talking and that's how the regional coalition started.³⁶⁶

Bernice Sisson, who later helped write the Women's Advocates history, *The Story of a Shelter*, described the Consortium in this way:

[It] has a long list of accomplishments relating to legislation, police work, court services,

³⁶⁴ The Consortium on Battered Women, An Assessment of Impact, Feb. 1975-April 1976," Box 1, Folder: Letters of Support, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. Another group that formed to coordinate and expand services for battered women was the State Coalition on Battered Women. It organized in Aug. 1978 and merged with the Twin Cities Consortium in June 1979. A few copies of their meeting minutes were found in the Battered Women Resource Center collection. The author suspects that the idea to form a Twin Cities organization may have started as early as 1974. The November 1974 newsletter remarked that advocates were "Meeting to continue working on the creation of a Women's Network" at Chrysalis, the Women's Resource Center in Minneapolis. "The idea," the newsletter reported, is to set up communication and coordination between women's groups in the Twin City area. . . .[As] a response to the need for coordinating important information and making it available to those who want to know what's happening." "Newsletter, Nov. 1974."

³⁶⁵ "Newsletter, March 1975," Women's Advocates Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁶⁶ Vaughan, interview with author.

counseling, and community education. Its real significance, however, may rest in its timing and membership. Looking back, it appears that the coming together of many people with various skills and professions for the single purpose of assisting battered women was an important step in the development of services in our state. That this happened so early is remarkable.³⁶⁷

The formation of the Consortium evolved from the pressing need to help battered women and the opportunities for activists and social services workers to help.

The Consortium composed “An Assessment of Impact,” or an overview of the organization’s efforts, from February of 1975 to April of 1976. At that time, the Consortium consisted of representatives from about twenty organizations in both Ramsey and Hennepin counties, where St. Paul and Minneapolis are located respectively. With the help of the staff at Women’s Advocates, the Consortium first educated themselves about the needs of battered women and then conducted trainings for social service agencies. The group’s most outstanding accomplishments were raising awareness of the issue of wife abuse, organizing to support state legislation for battered women and its cooperation with the police departments in St. Paul and Minneapolis.

The Consortium prioritized the need for more constructive interactions between battered women and police in the Twin Cities. To facilitate this goal, the group cooperated with the police departments to create an information card for police officers to give to battered women. The card included helpful telephone numbers for the local hospital, social services, and Women’s Advocates. It also outlined steps a woman could take if she wanted to press charges against the person who assaulted her.³⁶⁸ When the final version of the card was available in September 1976, the Consortium meeting minutes recorded that “St. Paul seems to be

³⁶⁷ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 67.

³⁶⁸ Sample card found in the Community Planning Organization report, “Battered Women, the Hidden Problem, July 7, 1976,” Box 1, Folder: Battered Women, 1975-89, Bailey, Carolen, Carolen Bailey Papers, 1962-1991, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

responding quicker, and in fact, the police are giving out the cards already, following a memo being read at all the roll calls!”³⁶⁹ The Minneapolis Police Department, on the other hand, was “dragging their feet about it” and subsequent meeting minutes documented on-going struggles with the Minneapolis Police Department.³⁷⁰

In October 1976, Gary Schoener, Consortium member and executive director of the Minneapolis Walk-in Counseling Center, who had worked with the two police departments on the content and purpose of the card stated, “It appears that ‘some people’ within the department are reluctant to use the cards because many more reports will have to be filed and people won’t follow through to press charges or that no report will be filed and a woman might decide to press charges the next day without a report on file—i.e. more work and confusion for the police.” The minutes chronicled that “Gary offered to help with police orientation but was turned down.”³⁷¹ This saga continued throughout 1976 and finally in February 1977, the Consortium and the Minneapolis Police Department reached an agreement and the organization printed the information cards for the department.³⁷² However, the issue arose again in October 1978 when the Consortium addressed inconsistencies in information provided by Minneapolis police to battered women.³⁷³ Obviously, the Twin Cities did not respond consistently to the issue of women’s abuse. St. Paul Sergeant Carolen Bailey offered some insight into the differences between the two cities’ police departments:

See, Minneapolis was way behind us. . . .I don’t know if it’s because we’re a capital city too but I *really* think that the whole basis, I know as far as the police department goes,

³⁶⁹ “Meeting Minutes, Sept. 8, 1976,” Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ “Meeting Minutes, Oct. 6, 1976,” Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁷² “Meeting Minutes, Feb. 9, 1977,” Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁷³ “Meeting Minutes, Oct. 4, 1978,” Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

[the St. Paul Police Department] was way, way ahead because of the political influence in Minneapolis. The mayor there appointed, until not too long ago, appointed the police chief and [in] one, roughly, one six or seven year time period they had eight chiefs. And the chiefs, if they are plucked, appointed from, say a patrolman or something to police chief they know, at the pleasure of the mayor, that they could be back doing, working with the others therefore they [made] any unpopular decisions or change. Police officers resisted change for a long time.³⁷⁴

Regardless of the tensions with the Minneapolis Police Department, the Consortium ultimately organized services for battered women in Hennepin County and strengthened service coordination in Ramsey County. Women's Advocates initiated the Twin Cities movement to help abused women and the Consortium expanded the awareness raising campaign.

Another local organization assisted in raising awareness of wife abuse. In the fall of 1976, the St. Paul Community Planning Organization, "a non-profit, voluntary, citizen-based planning agency," published its report about battered women in the Twin Cities.³⁷⁵ Women's Advocates initiated an investigation into "the plight of the woman who is beaten and abused, the apparent low priority given to her situation by the general community, the inadequacy of resources to respond to her needs, and the lack of information and in-service training related to the problem."³⁷⁶ Thirteen volunteers conducted a six month study that centered on interviews with social service agencies, abused women, and advocates for battered women. Throughout the process,

The committee and staff were overwhelmed by the complex and hidden nature of the problem, deeply moved by the experiences and testimony of the victims themselves, frustrated with the lack of local resources, and groping for solutions to the problem. . . . It became their challenge to present such an emotional issue to the community in a manner capable of effecting serious response to the problem.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ Bailey, interview with author.

³⁷⁵ "Dear Women," undated letter, no folder, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁷⁶ "'Battered Women: The Hidden Problem,' Community Planning Organization, copyright 1976, St. Paul, MN," Box 1, Folder: Battered Women 1975-1989, Bailey, Carolen, Carolen Bailey Papers, 1962-1991, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

The study defined a battered woman as “one who has been assaulted by a man with whom she has a significant relationship.”³⁷⁸ The committee limited the scope of the study to focus on “relationships wherein the woman is the victim of violence and physical abuse on the part of the man. The reverse situation where a man is physically abused by a woman is recognized as a serious problem in some relationships, but was not the subject of this study.”³⁷⁹ The committee described the problem as “hidden” across the United States due to the lack of public discourse about wife abuse.

The study cited nationwide statistics, for instance: The Washtenaw County Sheriff’s office in Michigan reported that abused wives filed half of the assault and battery complaints and only one in six instances were actually reported; in Montgomery County, Maryland, an affluent community, ten percent of domestic disturbance calls involved a physical assault and in 95 percent of those cases, a husband assaulted his wife. The Kansas City, Missouri police department reported that domestic disturbance incidents accounted for a third of the city’s homicides and a third of all reported aggravated assaults. In most of those cases, the police had previously been called and made an arrest.³⁸⁰ In St. Paul in 1975, there were 4,373 assaults reported, but the police department did not differentiate between different types of assault.³⁸¹ In that same year, Women’s Advocates recorded 984 requests for housing but provided emergency shelter to only 268 women and 157 children. Other calls expressed needs for clothing and food and referrals for medical, counseling, and legal assistance.³⁸² The evidence of abuse existed but because of the hidden nature of the problem, the Community Planning Organization made

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 30.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 5. Numbers derived from: the Ann Arbor-Washtenaw County NOW Wife Assault Task Force, a city council appointed task force in Montgomery County and the Kansas City Police Department.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 15.

³⁸² Ibid., 12.

specific and poignant recommendations.

First, the community needed to recognize the problem as a “public concern rather than a private and individual concern” and then citizens ought to “re-examine their personal attitudes toward and experiences with the problem of battered women.” In addition, professional groups should “accept responsibility for developing educational programs and in-service training for the members of their profession working with women who have been assaulted.”³⁸³ Women’s Advocates and activism in the Twin Cities provided a model of how community cooperation facilitated ways to help battered women.

In the fall of 1976, the Consortium organized a conference to educate the public about battered women. The headline of the *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, however, proclaimed: “Battering conference has no answers.” The article provided an overview of the problem, including first-hand accounts of battering, such as: “Last month a St. Paul woman ran for help to eight different neighbors. None let her use their phone. Later a policewoman asked each of the eight why? Nobody wanted to get involved.” One of the panels at the conference consisted of battered women who shared their experiences. A woman stated, “When the violence starts it’s a big shock. What goes through your mind is ‘what have you done wrong?’ It takes a long time to realize you haven’t done something wrong. It’s something in this man’s mind. I went to a gynecologist and all he did was prescribe Valium for two years.” Another woman shared, “I went to church for help. All the priest said was to try, go back. I’d told him everything from beginning to end.” Speakers on the advocate panel presented the issue as a societal problem, hence reinforcing the recommendations of the St. Paul Community Planning Organization’s study. Vaughan stated that “the myth of the idealized family—no conflict—has generally been preferred by the academic community. Scientists ignore what we’re all conditioned to ignore.

³⁸³ Ibid., 25, 26.

The wife who is beaten provides the cement to hold together the unhappy marriage. . . . We legitimize violence while perpetuating the myth that it doesn't exist.” Sergeant Carolen Bailey also offered her perspective as a police officer by stating,

When reporting, wife battering is invariably treated as a simple assault. To qualify for ‘aggravated assault,’ you must have not a broken bone that will heal but a hand that is cut off. We see a lot of assaults on pregnant women where the woman loses her baby. We haven’t been able to establish that as ‘great bodily harm.’ The maximum sentence for simple assault is 90 days.³⁸⁴

Admittedly, the panelists offered no concrete answers, prompting Consortium member and Women’s Advocates staff person Jeanette Milgrom to declare, “If you’re looking for quick solutions you probably won’t find them with this issue.”³⁸⁵ Regardless, the conference successfully brought the issue of wife abuse into the public arena for discussion. Abused women gave their testimonies and representatives from agencies helping battered women presented the issue of domestic violence in the Twin Cities communities as one needing urgent attention.

Many activists in Minneapolis valued the work of Women’s Advocates and recognized the need for a battered women’s shelter in their city. The Consortium helped obtain funding for a shelter in Minneapolis.³⁸⁶ In the fall of 1975, the Women’s Union of the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) requested \$50,700 for emergency housing for “women in crisis” because that type of housing did not exist in their city.³⁸⁷ The HRA director argued that the proposal for women’s housing discriminated against other populations in the city but the Women’s Union contended that it sought “to get the HRA to be more sensitive to problems of

³⁸⁴ “Battering Conference Has No Answers,” Ann Baker, *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, Oct. 3, 1976. Folder: Twin Cities Area Newspaper Articles on Local Problem, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ “Complement” section of *Minnesota Daily*, Leslie Martin, Oct. 20, 1976, Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁸⁷ “2 HRA Employees Seek City ‘Crisis Housing’ for Women,” Linda Picone, *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1975, Box 5, Folder: MHRA Women’s Union Housing Proposal, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

women.”³⁸⁸ The proposal outlined plans to establish a house for women fleeing abusive situations, a salary for a coordinator and maintenance funds to sustain the house and its programs.³⁸⁹ Letters of support supplemented their proposal, articulating the urgent need for a shelter in Minneapolis. “Although St. Paul has a program which is addressing these needs, namely Women’s Advocates, it is overcrowded and burdened by many requests from Minneapolis women. Minneapolis needs a program such as this,” wrote the executive director of the Minneapolis Family and Childrens Service.³⁹⁰ Gary Schoener, from the Consortium and the Minneapolis Walk-In Counseling Center also noted that Women’s Advocates was “overcrowded” and that “a number of Minneapolis women have utilized it, despite the fact that its existence is not well-publicized in Minneapolis.” Women’s Advocates expressed support for another emergency housing program because “while we serve any woman in need, about 40% of our housing requests come from women living in Minneapolis.”³⁹¹ Eventually, the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority supported the creation of a house and in February 1977, Harriet Tubman opened.³⁹² The Minneapolis shelter was a remarkable victory, partially fulfilling the Consortium’s goals.

Community support enhanced the success of battered women’s programs at the

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Earl J. Beatt, to Richard Brustad, Sept. 18, 1975, included in the “Proposal: Emergency Housing for Women submitted by MHRA’s Women’s Union, Sept. 1975,” Box 5, Folder: MHRA Women’s Union Housing Proposal, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁹¹ Ibid.; “Gary Schoener to Richard Brustad, Aug. 21, 1975” and “Women’s Advocates to Brustad, Aug. 26, 1975” included in the “Proposal: Emergency Housing for Women submitted by MHRA’s Women’s Union, Sept. 1975,” Box 5, Folder: MHRA Women’s Union Housing Proposal, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁹² “Newsletter, Feb./March/April 1977.” Harriet Tubman’s articles of incorporation, dated June 3, 1976, explained the rationale for naming their shelter “Harriet Tubman, an ex-slave, was often called the American Moses for leading over 300 slaves to freedom. During her lifetime Harriet was a national speaker, a farmer, a nurse and a spy for the union army. In later years Harriet Tubman’s dream was the foundation of a shelter for the homeless and destitute. Harriet Tubman is a lasting symbol of the courage and strength of women who, through-out history have struggled to live with freedom and dignity,” Box 3, Folder: Harriet Tubman, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

grassroots level, but systemic changes were necessary, particularly to laws that ignored battered women's needs. Women's Advocates and the Consortium joined forces with other women's groups in Minnesota that considered the potential benefits of state legislation to help support battered women's programs. However, activists in the battered women's movement cautiously approached the political system, as it was considered part of the dominant patriarchal society that they challenged. But because "community awareness had grown, and the needs of battered women were beginning to be seriously addressed by concerned people," activists decided to approach the state in 1976.³⁹³ *The Story* included comments about the decision to do so:

We were less certain of the benefits of legislation than we were of its potential dangers. As the only shelter or program of any kind for battered women in our state, we were isolated and in a state of political infancy. Before approaching state politics, we needed to be stronger—to know clearly what we wanted, and to know how to go about getting it without losing what little ground we had gained.³⁹⁴

As a next step, the Consortium formed a Legislative Task Force that worked with state Senator Robert Lewis "who listened and supported our needs and concerns."³⁹⁵ The Consortium's Legislative Task Force reported at the November 3, 1976 meeting that Senator Lewis requested "specific ideas of what we want in legislation" and the Consortium discussed the benefits of a pilot shelter program in Minnesota that would support four new shelters.³⁹⁶ This suggestion was part of the draft bill authored by Senator Lewis, which included a "\$500,000 appropriations bill . . . to provide partial funding to four shelters (two in the metropolitan area and two outstate),

³⁹³ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 75.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76. At the May 1979 Consortium meeting, the members remembered Sen. Lewis who passed away on April 25. He was a "major supporter of battered women over the past years." His wife, Margaret Sandberg, was one of the Consortium members and the group sent her a letter of "concern and support." "The Burnsville Task Force on Battered Women decided to name their soon-to-open shelter in his honor: the B. Robert Lewis House. Also, Margaret has designated that the proceeds from the Robert Lewis Memorial Fund will be used for brochures for battered women to be disseminated in hospital emergency rooms," "Meeting Minutes, May 2, 1979," Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁹⁶ "Meeting Minutes, Nov. 3, 1976," Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

a community education program, and a statewide data collection.”³⁹⁷

In order for legislators to grasp the need to fund domestic violence programs, the Battered Women’s Task Force of the Rochester, Minnesota chapter of the National Organization of Women recorded three battered women’s experiences and presented them to the legislature. One woman outlined her story of twenty years of abuse from her husband—before “the problem of ‘battered women’ emerged from society’s closet.” In the new atmosphere of awareness, she expressed strong emotions about her past abuse and validated the need for advocacy and shelters:

[I] Read a *Tribune* feature on Women’s Advocates and for the first time since before the divorce, I cried. Alone and uncontrollably I sobbed and pounded a pillow and felt the freedom to feel what I was experiencing, to relive in safety some old emotions long buried behind an impassive façade. It was a tremendous relief to know that my ‘case’ was not unique. Not only were there others like me, but people were beginning to do something about it. Something relevant and appropriate! Of all the variety of social services available in our culture, I see the concept of an emergency shelter run by women (with nonjudgmental peer counseling) as meeting a vital need that no existing agency can offer. I’m certain I would have used it years ago had it been available then.³⁹⁸

Another woman explained how she left her husband on two separate occasions, thus highlighting some of the complexities of wife abuse. The first time she left, Women’s Advocates was full, so she stayed with friends until her husband promised her that he would not hurt her anymore.

However, the abuse continued and she left him again and went to Women’s Advocates. She stayed at the shelter for six weeks, during that time she described her experience of:

Four weeks waiting for my temporary hearing and two weeks looking for an apartment. The great thing about Women’s Advocates is that you no longer feel alone—almost everyone there is in the same situation you are—terrified, beaten down, but trying to get back on their feet. We worked together in informal groups giving support and help to all who needed it. . . . Since this happened, I have moved, started back to school, and have been working as an advocate in my town while trying to get a shelter established.³⁹⁹

The voices of these women provided legislators with the realities of battered women’s lives by

³⁹⁷ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 76.

³⁹⁸ “Personal Statements from Victims of Domestic Violence,” Box 4, Folder: Battered Women, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

putting a human face on abused women and the desperate need for more shelters like Women's Advocates.

The Minnesota legislature passed the Shelters Appropriation Bill in the spring of 1977. The bill included funding for four shelters: Women's Advocates, Harriet Tubman which opened in February of 1977 in Minneapolis, and future shelters in Marshall and Duluth.⁴⁰⁰ The bill also allowed for \$50,000 for community education programs, created a medical data collection system and established an Advisory Task Force with representatives from Women's Advocates and Harriet Tubman.⁴⁰¹ The battered women's programs were placed under the supervision of the state Department of Corrections, which initially concerned the Consortium and Women's Advocates because:

A corrections image could reinforce the perception of women who have been beaten as guilty themselves; that the victim treatment approach was inappropriate and damaging to women who had taken the decisive step of coming to a shelter; and that the entrenched bureaucracy of the department would not allow new programs the autonomy needed for self-determination.⁴⁰²

The Women's Advocates June 1977 newsletter further noted their desire for a "more neutral agency" to oversee the program. However, women's issues were generally not a priority to any department, therefore, Women's Advocates suggested the creation of a new department to address women's issues. They realized that working within the state government risked "the possibility of the real needs of women being undermined and the issue of physical abuse being coopted, within the state bureaucracy."⁴⁰³ Monica Erler recalled their final stand against DOC supervision: "One meeting we had was on a Sunday night with [Governor] Rudy Perpich and it was Pat Murphy and Sharon and me and we were telling him why we shouldn't be in corrections

⁴⁰⁰ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 77.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 76. Also, "Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1977," Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴⁰³ "Newsletter, June 1977."

and we were right and he was wrong, but” Perpich said, the corrections commissioner at the time “was the most intelligent commissioner I have that can be trusted.”⁴⁰⁴ Governor Perpich’s prediction was correct and a symbiotic relationship developed between the battered women’s programs and the Department of Corrections. When asked a few years later about Women’s Advocates functioning within the Department of Corrections, Erler replied that, “We are a grassroots organization. Because the size and scope of our service has greatly increased in ten years we have had to change many things. We have, however, maintained control of our program.”⁴⁰⁵ The recently created shelters, medical data collection and advisory board helped to bridge the gap between battered women’s programs and social service agencies across the state.

Continuous education helped police officers understand the complexities of wife abuse but in many ways the laws still hindered the arrest of an abuser. This started to change with a state law passed in 1978 that allowed police officers to make an arrest without witnessing an assault. Under the new law, probable cause allowed police officers to arrest a suspected abuser.⁴⁰⁶ Implementation of these changes depended on the attitude and objectivity of the responder; but, with training from advocates for battered women, along with increased legal protection for abused women, law enforcement could start effectively and consistently helping abused women. After the initial legislation passed in 1977, the state continued to support programs for battered women.

⁴⁰⁴ Erler, Severson, Sisson interview with author. Erler also voiced their opposition to the program placed under the DOC in a letter to Congressman Newton Steers, March 23, 1977 as part of a response to a questionnaire from the Steers Commission, Box 7, Folder: Women’s Advocates Business 1975-77, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴⁰⁵ “To Virginia from Monica Erler, Oct. 4, 1983,” Box 6, Folder: Material Donations, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴⁰⁶ Before the passage of MSA 629.341, a police officer could arrest a person for a misdemeanor assault only if the officer witnessed the assault. The new law allowed officers to make an arrest with probable cause or under one of the following four conditions: the officer observes a recent physical injury and, the injured party either resides with the assailant or is the assailant’s spouse and, the alleged assault has occurred within the last four hours and, the arrest (not necessarily the assault itself) takes place at the residence of the assailant. “Battered Women: An Effective Response,” page 9.

In 1978, the Minnesota legislature passed the Shelters Amendment Bill that provided \$25,000 for a statewide data collection system and \$100,000 for two shelters in rural areas of the state, Brainerd and Rochester.⁴⁰⁷ Continuing in 1979, the legislature approved on-going funding for the Battered Women's Program and provided \$3 million in the Department of Corrections budget to fund fifteen shelters, five in the metropolitan area and ten in rural areas, as well as community education programs. The legislature also mandated \$250,000 for the creation of a court ordered treatment program for abusers.⁴⁰⁸ The 1979 state legislature approved the budget, despite threats from Republican Governor Al Quie to cut the program's budget. Throughout that year, the Consortium and Women's Advocates rallied their supporters to write to the governor and encourage him not to reduce their funding.⁴⁰⁹ In June 1979, the Consortium celebrated because the new laws allocated money "beyond expectations" for battered women's programs and strengthened protection with law enforcement.⁴¹⁰ Despite the governor's threats to cut funds, Women's Advocates recognized the fundamental shifts in attitudes of Congress: "In the 1979 legislative session, the tone and response of legislators had changed; the jokes and offensive remarks which we had confronted in past sessions were almost nonexistent."⁴¹¹

Over the course of a few years, Women's Advocates successfully raised awareness of the issue of wife abuse in St. Paul and in Minnesota. Through their efforts, the visibility of the shelter, and media publicity, attitudes about wife abuse started to change in St. Paul, The Cities,

⁴⁰⁷ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 79.

⁴⁰⁸ "\$3 million Set for Services to Battered Women," Associated Press, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 4, 1979, Folder: Twin Cities Area Newspaper Articles on Local Problem, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴⁰⁹ "Meeting Minutes, Feb. 7, 1979," Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. These concerns arose again in 1981 when Governor Quie threatened to "repeal 1981 legislation providing General Assistance payments to women and children residents of shelters," "Newsletter, April 1981," microfilm, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴¹⁰ "Meeting Minutes, June 6, 1979," Folder: Battered Women Consortium, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴¹¹ *Women's Advocates: The Story of a Shelter*, 79.

Minnesota, and the United States. The women of Women's Advocates were not alone in their mission, they formed allies with law enforcement, legislators, and other like-minded individuals and groups; however, their grassroots work was instrumental in establishing successful programs to help battered women.

CHAPTER IV. “WHY ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA?:” WOMEN’S ADVOCATES AND THE
IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

As the study of Women’s Advocates illustrates, the battered women’s awareness movement that started in St. Paul spread across the state of Minnesota and fomented changes to state laws and policies. The previous chapter evidenced this phenomenon as not exclusive to Minnesota, as exemplified in letters that Women’s Advocates received from across the country that expressed aspirations of women and men to open shelters in their own communities. National media attention also prompted support from individuals and groups from across the United States. The larger context of the nationwide battered women’s movement goes beyond the scope of this study of Women’s Advocates, but a national movement was growing to raise awareness and educate communities about wife abuse and women and men in St. Paul were part of this revolution. In order to fully comprehend the significance of Women’s Advocates, the broader context of the region’s progressive history needs to be examined. A local history framework helps this study of Women’s Advocates contribute to the broader historiography of women’s history. Local history scholar Carol Kammen suggested that “history needs to begin with a question” and one of the most significant contextual questions for this study is: Why did Women’s Advocates organize and thrive in St. Paul, Minnesota?⁴¹²

This chapter will consider the history of Minnesota, and St. Paul in particular, and explain why it is not surprising that St. Paul fostered one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States. Local history methodology helps uncover why this is true. One of a historian’s responsibilities is to analyze place—where an event happens, how the culture of a place evolves over time, and how local events reflect local values and cultures. Local historians Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson define local history as:

⁴¹² Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 3d ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014).

The study of past events, or of people or groups, in a given geographic area—a study based on a wide variety of documentary evidence and placed in a comparative context that should be both regional and national. Such a study ought to be accomplished by a historian using methods appropriate to the topic under consideration while following general rules of historical inquiry: open-mindedness, honesty, accountability, and accuracy. This definition legitimizes all sorts of research projects. Local history is, at its heart—as is history itself—the study of the human condition in and through time.⁴¹³

Local histories flesh out individual's motives and uncover what inspires people to act.

Examining the historical context of Women's Advocates' location in the state of Minnesota provides a greater understanding of the unique, specific environment in which the advocates organized and worked. This approach differs from others because of its deliberate examination of the local in relation to the state or national.⁴¹⁴

Local history, as a genre, began as an effort to promote a town or city in hopes of

⁴¹³ Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2d ed. (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2013), vii. As this definition implies, anyone with empathy and critical thinking skills can and should 'do' local history. The author of this dissertation is not from Minnesota so within the context of local history, can she write local history of a place she has spent little time? As Michael Kammen reassured, just as "outsiders" can write women's history, those not from a particular area can write local history. They may offer a new perspective and approach topics with new questions than "long-time locals." Michael Kammen, "Changes and Opportunities in Writing State and Local History," in *The Pursuit of Local History: Readings on Theory and Practice*, ed. Carol Kammen, (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1996), 138. In the examination of local history, terminology varies depending on the scholar's tendencies to examine the "local" or the "nearby" history. Scholars David Kyvig and Myron Marty prefer to use the term "nearby history" because they believe that the term "Nearby" rather than local, community, family history "include[s] the entire range of possibilities in a persona' immediate environment. Since various elements of nearby history—the resources, research methods, questions, and insights—often overlap, we approach the subject in an inclusive fashion. We also wish to employ 'nearby history' to distinguish the new approaches that emphasize analysis, comparison, and the examination of change over time from the rather static, narrow, and non-analytical historical undertakings of past generations," *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, 2d ed. (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2000), 5.

⁴¹⁴ Several contemporary works provided inspiration and support for social activism on the grassroots level: Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell argued that the stories of the strikers in the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike are "best seen not in abstract or categorical investigations, but in narrative form. . . .as day-by-day responses to the situation on the ground," *When the State Trembled: How A.J. Andrews and the Citizens' Committee Broke the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 7. Their comment reminded me of how significant the daily activism and advocacy of Women's Advocates was to the larger battered women's shelter movement. Local histories are also broadening the historiography of the civil rights movement, as exemplified in J. Mills Thornton III, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2002) . In an effort to determine why significant civil rights events occurred in certain cities over others, Thornton suggested that local generalizations must be explored, 9. David Carter's work on the beginning of the gay rights movement furthers the scholarship on grassroots activism: *Stonewall: The Riots that sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004). Frye Gaillard, *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004) is another work that includes the details of individuals in the civil rights movement and how their specific activisms fomented changes in their communities.

recruiting new residents or tourists. Scholars attribute the roots of local history to English medieval “chroniclers” and then a sixteenth century effort to solidify a national English identity.⁴¹⁵ Often written by so-called amateurs—those not trained in the academy—and by some professional historians, local histories focused on prominent families, successful institutions and industries, and other positive topics to increase the appeal of an area.⁴¹⁶ Ignoring topics that could be perceived as damaging to their community’s reputations, early local historians overlooked subjects such as workers, women, and violence. Although there were some voices, such as historian Constance McLaughlin Green, who argued in 1940 that:

American history in the past has been written from the top down, an approach feasible enough as long as scholars were content to write only political and diplomatic history. But the necessity of studying American life from the bottom up becomes obvious for the cultural historian. The story of how American people have lived as individuals and as communities must be told by details.⁴¹⁷

The details that Green called on historians to uncover surfaced in the United States when social movements in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged meaningful investigations into the histories of individuals and groups typically ignored in the official historical sources and narratives. Historians pondered new questions, examined non-print sources, and conducted oral histories and included women, people of color, and poor people, in the historical record. Enthusiasm for local history was also inspired by the build-up to the nation’s bicentennial in the early 1970s, which sparked greater interest in uncovering how local communities formed and contributed to

⁴¹⁵ John Beckett, *Writing Local History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 3-4. Because some professional historians have criticized the field of local history for being too lax, particularly ‘amateur’ historians who do not have official training, local historians have offered guidance for people interesting in pursuing local history; See Carol Kammen, *The Pursuit of Local History*.

⁴¹⁶ The debate about who can do local history varies but most of the leading local historians note the value and benefit of non-academic or “non-professionals” who can and have made significant contributions to the field of local history. Constance McLaughlin Green, “The Value of Local History,” in *The Pursuit of Local History*, ed. Carol Kammen (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2000), 98.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

the nation's founding.⁴¹⁸

Local historian Carol Kammen pointed out several other transformations within the field of history that energized local history research. The preservation movement, that sought to restore historical architecture and places, thrived in the 1970s and garnered support for local history studies. Also at this time, History Day, analogous to the high school science fair focused on history topics, generated greater interest in local history among students and teachers.⁴¹⁹ History Day thrived, and continues today, thanks to the work of state historical societies, like the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. With more funding and support, state historical societies began to offer the general population and academics the opportunity to explore state histories. With the slogan, "History Matters," the Minnesota Historical Society draws in school kids, middle-aged to elderly individuals and groups, as well as academics to experience exhibits and research in the archives. Finding a way to entice people to examine history can be challenging but organizations, like MHS, have done a phenomenal job of generating interest in local history. Historian Michael Kammen argued that local history gained legitimacy and renaissance among professional historians because of "the inescapable fact that you see different things when you use the microscope rather than the telescope."⁴²⁰

John Beckett, one of the foremost British local historians argued that "local history can and should make a contribution not only to our understanding of national history, but also to our appreciation of our own communities."⁴²¹ In order to contribute to the historiography of a locale

⁴¹⁸ Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 151; Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., "The Amateur Historian," in *The Pursuit of Local History*, ed. Carol Kammen (Walnut Creek, Calif., AltaMira Press, 1996), 30-31. The essay was adapted from Bell's speech at the New York State Historical Association, July 9, 1971.

⁴¹⁹ Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 153-154.

⁴²⁰ Michael Kammen, "Changes and Opportunities in Writing State and Local History," in *The Pursuit of Local History: Readings on Theory and Practice*, ed. Carol Kammen, (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1996), 132.

⁴²¹ Beckett, *Writing Local History*, xii. Although Beckett's work focuses on England, his overview of the field and the guidelines he suggests are useful to understanding the field of local history. He acknowledged that his influences were W.G. Hoskins, considered the "founding father of modern local history" and the *Annales* school in

or topic, local histories need to have a broader historical context.⁴²² For example, grassroots organizing in St. Paul reflects the broader social activism of the mid-1970s. Looking beyond the shelter and examining the atmosphere in which it was created, we have a broader understanding of the battered women's movement. The greater significance of this study of Women's Advocates illustrates how women and men mobilized to raise awareness and educated others about an issue and generated changes in their community and beyond.

Local history methodology can enhance the field of historical study by drawing connections between the national, state, and local. By implementing standards, historians have ensured the credibility of local history. Historian Shelton Stromquist cautioned in 1982 that local history research must include broad historical context, taking into account "important social and economic changes that ultimately define the uniqueness of place" in order to "capture and convey the uniqueness of a place in a time."⁴²³ Combining these two provisos, this examination of grassroots organizing for Women's Advocates qualifies as a local history project. Providing context for local history subjects is also a concern for historian David A. Gerber who warned in 1979 that "the problems with the new popular local and community history underscore what is its most common fault—the failure to integrate local and community history into larger relevant social and spatial contexts."⁴²⁴

Today, local historians address many of the earlier concerns and the field has achieved greater legitimacy. Local historians have made a more concerted effort to broaden the scope of their studies and to discuss "topics that are disruptive" and typically excluded by early local

the 1920s, 3, 107.

⁴²² Kammen, *The Pursuit of Local History*, 13. The Importance of the Nearby Past: "A good understanding of the past, whether designated memory or history, needs to take into account nearby as well as national and international developments" (7)

⁴²³ Shelton Stromquist, "A Sense of Place: A Historian Advocates Conceptual Approaches to Community History," in *The Pursuit of Local History*, ed. Carol Kammen, 182-183.

⁴²⁴ David A. Gerber, Local and Community History: Some Cautionary Remarks on an Idea Whose Time Has Returned," in *The Pursuit of Local History*, ed. Carol Kammen, 226.

historians.⁴²⁵ As leading local historian Carol Kammen argued, “In presenting local history as always positive, we deny the fact that the past was as controversial and complicated as we know the present to be.”⁴²⁶ With that mantra in mind, considering Women’s Advocates within the broader context of raising awareness of wife abuse cultivates a greater understanding of how the social movement to help battered women began and was inspired by the climate of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Education is another major purpose of local history. Early local historian Constance McLaughlin Green called for local history as a teaching tool for the community.⁴²⁷ Kammen suggested that the key to successful local history endeavors is “community education.” Education about social issues such as wife abuse are key to creating a more insightful and empathetic populous and in turn, can help create a “historical consciousness” which is one of the fundamental goals of local history.⁴²⁸ Members of the Women’s Advocates collective helped to educate the community about wife abuse by speaking at meetings, seminars and classes in the Twin Cities area.⁴²⁹ As individuals learned about Women’s Advocates, they sent donations, which were often recognized in the newsletters. One person, who signed their note as V.N., wrote, ““Hi! I wish I could send more. Thanks for the security of knowing there’s a place like yours.””⁴³⁰ Seemingly small gestures like these—speaking gigs and handwritten notes with

⁴²⁵ Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 45-47. A major question I have is how will/would residents of St. Paul receive my work?

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴²⁷ McLaughlin Green, 98. Scholar Joseph A. Amato argued that local history “provides the natural link between immediate experience and general history,” *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 4.

⁴²⁸ Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 161.

⁴²⁹ As early as May 1974, the Newsletter mentioned that members had spoken with certain groups. For example, in May 1974, there was a reference to unnamed persons speaking at an Inver Community College mental health seminar and a Women’s Institute for Social Change class at the Ramsey County Legal Assistance office. “Newsletter, May 1974,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-1974, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁴³⁰ “Newsletter, March/April 1976,” Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women’s Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

checks or cash—were the primary avenues that Women’s Advocates helped raise awareness of wife abuse.

Due to the nature of some local history subjects, local historians must rely on diverse sources to support their theories and analyses, which is not so different from historical work generally. While historical societies have experienced an upswing in financial support and increased resources to process and store historical records, local historians also depend on residents who have foresight to save sources for future research.⁴³¹ Researchers of Women’s Advocates had such allies in Monica Erler, Bernice Sisson, and Betsy Raasch-Gilman who thoughtfully and instinctively donated the early papers from Women’s Advocates to the Minnesota Historical Society.⁴³² Erler, Severson, Sisson, Raasch-Gilman, as well as Sharon Rice Vaughan and Carolyn Bailey, also contributed to the study of local history by generously sharing their experiences in interviews. By incorporating oral histories from some of the women involved with the creation of and early years of Women’s Advocates along with an examination of Women’s Advocates’ archival materials, and city and state histories, the broader context and atmosphere of the battered women’s movement in St. Paul comes to life.

The history of Women’s Advocates is an important example of women mobilizing for peace and justice in women’s lives and how the “politics of place” figure deeply into the history. The reasons behind Women’s Advocates’ establishment in St. Paul are a necessary piece of the historical puzzle and provide a historical context to the story. Local historian Joseph Amato

⁴³¹ Judith Wellman, “Local Historians and Their Activities,” in *The Pursuit of Local History*, ed. Carol Kammen, 55.

⁴³² Monica Erler, Lois Severson and Bernice Sisson, interview with author, tape recording, Little Canada, Minn., Sept. 25, 2010; Elizabeth Raasch-Gilman, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 22, 2010; Sharon Rice Vaughan, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 19, 2010; Carolyn Bailey, interview with author, tape recording, North Oaks, Minn., July 21, 2011.

argued for a better understanding of “the local” in order to spark dialogues and policies.⁴³³

These types of studies provide, he asserted, a better understanding of a person’s place and the opportunities to incite change. He essentially called for local history to ignite social change:

Those who conduct, publish, and disseminate local and regional research can offer indispensable self-knowledge. And this type of knowledge (which is empirical and developed by continuous retrospective and projective inquiry and comparison) awakens a passion for understanding the compass of local action. In this way, local history serves the intelligence that frees the energy of local people to work in the dimensions of the possible. Committed to understanding the present and the changes that characterize it, local history proves a golden asset for all vital people of place.⁴³⁴

The women of Women’s Advocates certainly provided “indispensable self-knowledge” about the grassroots organizing around the rising awareness of wife abuse. While the women interviewed each only briefly mentioned the political history of St. Paul or Minnesota, it is necessary to place the shelter and its activists in a historical perspective of both the city and state in which it functioned.

Providing a general overview of St. Paul, historian Mary Lethert Wingerd’s work, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul*, examined the city’s history. She also echoed Amato in her argument for the significance of place for historical studies. “We cannot,” Wingerd asserted, “understand the past, nor can we effectively use it to make a better future unless we take place-based consciousness seriously—in all its cultural complexity.”⁴³⁵ Considering Minnesota history offers broad historical and cultural context for the origins of Women’s Advocates.

The Minnesota territory opened to white settlement in 1837 and initially, the land was

⁴³³ Joseph Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 185. Interestingly, as a general connection to this dissertation, Amato’s place that he “rethinks” is southwest Minnesota, “a micro-region” that he described as “nineteen counties that share a common history by virtue of being in an agricultural zone within the state of Minnesota,” 12.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁴³⁵ Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 273.

thought to be too barren and useful only for fur trapping and trading. Fort Snelling was established as an outpost for the American Fur Company and the area was populated by men who did not intend to settle or establish permanent cities; rather, these men were mostly “French Canadians and mixed-blood voyageurs. . . . a footloose and independent lot, many engaged in a thriving whiskey trade with the Indians and the soldiers at the fort.”⁴³⁶ After the commander of Fort Snelling dismissed all civilians from the fort, in an effort to clean up the troops, a band of German and Swiss immigrants moved their businesses and make-shift settlements across the Mississippi River. The current city of St. Paul was initially called “Pig’s Eye,” after one of the most notorious whiskey traders in the area. The name stuck until 1841 when Father Lucien Galtier, the first Catholic priest to the area, named the city St. Paul. The fur trade agents who initially went to the area advocated for St. Paul to be named the territorial capital, which it was in 1849.⁴³⁷

As St. Paul and the southern Minnesota territory thrived in the fur trade, permanent settlers flocked to the area. By 1860, St. Paul had quadrupled its population to over 10,000 people but city leaders worried about the seemingly misfit bunch of immigrants who were mostly Irish and French-Canadian.⁴³⁸ Because Father Galtier “had woven the church immediately into the developing social fabric of St. Paul,” St. Paul elites turned to the Catholic Church for help with social order.⁴³⁹ The initial command by the Catholic Church facilitated not only immediate law and order, but also established the Church as a significant part of the St. Paul community. The Catholic Church’s constant presence encouraged citizens to maintain civility and oversaw

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 24.

the creation of an educational system in the city.⁴⁴⁰

The population of St. Paul swelled in the late-nineteenth century, even though the fur traders moved north of the city and the Native Americans were pushed into the Dakota Territories. Land speculation and trading helped the area thrive until August of 1857 when the Ohio Equitable Life Insurance Company “failed in spectacular fashion, setting off a national panic.”⁴⁴¹ When the banks in the St. Paul area closed, businesses failed and most people fled. However, those who stayed in St. Paul succeeded in rebuilding and a shared hostility toward the east facilitated an ease of cultural relations between Irish, German, and Jewish immigrants who settled in the area after the panic of 1857.⁴⁴² Because the financial crisis bankrupted the original merchant class, they formed new business alliances with those they previously snubbed. The city merchants developed a system that was centered in St. Paul, but “depended on operations and investments that radiated outside the city.”⁴⁴³ For example, the lumber industry was lucrative for the city but the raw materials were finished elsewhere, like Minneapolis. This strategy had long-term effects on St. Paul, especially as it struggled to maintain a base of industry in later decades. Most significantly, these challenges encouraged perseverance among its residents.

Politically, St. Paul emerged as a Democratic stronghold especially with the help of railroad tycoon, James J. Hill. Although a Protestant, Hill married Mary Mehegan, a “modest

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. This was especially significant because the Irish Catholics in St. Paul did not face the nativism they had experienced in eastern cities.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁴² Minnesota earned statehood in 1858. Scandinavians became a large percentage of the population after the turn of the century, which Wingerd noted set them apart from the other ethnic neighborhoods, especially the Irish and Germans. As later immigrants to the city, they were not integrated into the city like those before them. Scandinavians mostly settled on the East Side of St. Paul and established a community that facilitated a blossoming, isolated community. In St. Paul, Scandinavians were the political minority but throughout the state, they were a stronger political force for the Republican Party. Ibid., 79.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 35.

Irish-Catholic girl.”⁴⁴⁴ He solidified his presence and devotion to the city by rejecting eastern elites and forming alliances with the British in Canada for a railroad in Minnesota.⁴⁴⁵ Hill also allied himself with the Irish Catholics in St. Paul, providing many of them with jobs. As a “Bourbon Democrat,” Hill supported business interests, especially those of the railroads, but wanted the government to stay out of business affairs. For example, an important issue of the time that affected Hill, among others in St. Paul, was a proposed tariff that offered government protection of businesses. For St. Paulites, the tariff meant higher prices in an economy that few people could afford. Newly forged alliances between working-classes and ethnically diverse groups led to an increase in Democratic political power in St. Paul and created a Republican reputation for anti-Catholicism.”⁴⁴⁶

In addition to the tariff, temperance was another contested issue in the nineteenth century. Progressive reformers discouraged the use of alcohol but immigrants, particularly the Irish, perceived the temperance movement as an assault on their culture. In St. Paul, however, the temperance movement was not only seen as discriminatory of its citizens, but also an attack on the brewing industry. The breweries of St. Paul were fundamental to the city’s economy.⁴⁴⁷ St. Paul’s brewing industry topped that of its rival in Minneapolis and fueled a social scene that drew many travelers and businessmen to stay in St. Paul rather than the neighboring city. Although outside of St. Paul was predominately Republican, the Democratic Party maintained municipal power and advocated within St. Paul. At this point in St. Paul’s political history, Democrats were single-mindedly focused on maintaining a stronghold with business.

St. Paul’s economy boomed in the 1870s and 1880s but thereafter declined in the shadow

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 42-45.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 49.

of Minneapolis. The geographical structure of the city reflected the economic decline, as well as the relationships that had built the city's wealth. After the economic boom, wealthy St. Paulites could not afford to move out of their neighborhoods, mostly situated on Summit Avenue, so they stayed and lived among the workers in nearby neighborhoods. At the north end of Summit Avenue, the infamous St. Paul's cathedral was built to reiterate the presence of the Catholic Church. Wingerd described Summit Avenue as "something akin to a public park" where working class and elites came into contact with one another on a daily basis—not necessarily as equals, but existing in the same social geographical locations. This proximity facilitated the creation of what Wingerd termed a "civic compact," mostly constructed by "tradesmen, skilled workers, middling white-collar professionals, clerks, and managers who shared the neighborhoods on either side of Summit Avenue."⁴⁴⁸ The implied compact vehemently advocated for civic unity and local pride which led to an "insularity had become the defining feature of culture in St. Paul."⁴⁴⁹ This presented a seemingly solidified front among all of St. Paul's residents, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, or religion, and was perpetuated by St. Paul's economy that centered on small business and trade which in turn, caused employers and employees to work closely together.⁴⁵⁰ The primary goals of the civic compact were to foster a sense of civic responsibility and accountability, which even seeped into labor union demands for fair wages and workplace rights.⁴⁵¹ Overall, the civic compact operated peacefully for decades, created civic pride, and fueled the economy.

The civic compact was disrupted by and ultimately ended by the First World War. At the start of the war, like many other cities, St. Paul supported U.S. neutrality and continued their

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 91.

efforts to solidify the city. City leaders organized winter festivals to promote cultural interaction but after the war they tried to mend the widespread discrimination of perceived unpatriotic citizens, especially those with German ancestry. During the war, St. Paul's citizenry was called into question, as a quarter of its population was foreign born, one-third of those from Germany.⁴⁵² Parades were not strong enough to challenge the paranoia and pandemonium created by government officials. The St. Paul Patriotic League supported the war as well as patriotism among its citizens and Archbishop John Ireland sought to subvert any German influences in the Church. The Patriotic League did not accomplish their goals of uniting the city instead St. Paul "seemed more factionalized than at any time in memory."⁴⁵³ The Public Safety Commission was given ultimate power to seek out and stop subversives who they were convinced thrived in St. Paul; however, no spies were found in the city. The Commission unleashed attacks on the Nonpartisan League, businesses, and residents who were deemed unpatriotic. The relentless attack on innocent St. Paulites pulled apart the civic compact, as municipal leaders were allied with the Commission.

By the end of the First World War, a coalition between labor and farmers solidified. In an effort to bring more grain business to St. Paul, the city's businessmen allied with The Equity, a precursor to the Nonpartisan League, which sought to break free from the controlling Minneapolis business elites. The Equity sought to establish communal grain elevators and St. Paulites endorsed them in their city, thus differentiating them from Minneapolis and promoting St. Paul as an ally of farmers. Bringing farmers into the fold of St. Paul's Democratic Party strengthened the party in an overwhelmingly Republican state.⁴⁵⁴

Farmers played a significant role in St. Paul's history and historian William Lass labeled

⁴⁵² Ibid., 161.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 134-135.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 145-146.

Minnesota's progressive history as a "Legacy of Protest Politics" because the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) had its roots in the state.⁴⁵⁵ Officially formed in 1944, the DFL combined a strong third party, the Farmer-Laborers, with a struggling Democratic Party. The Farmer-Labor Party was created through cooperation of workers and farmers who joined ranks in St. Paul during WWI. Lass argued that "frontier Minnesota was a natural seedbed for agrarian discontent," as farmers were first subjected to land speculation and then unfair prices, especially those set by the railroads.⁴⁵⁶ Chapters of Minnesota Grange associations organized in the late 1860s, in an effort to promote farm cooperatives and the political leadership of Ignatius Donnelly demanded that mainstream politics listen to their demands. Donnelly and his supporters created the Anti-Monopoly Party in 1873, which served as political party support for the Grangers.⁴⁵⁷ After the Panic of 1873, the Grangers' problems with the railroad companies were pushed aside by those who supported aid of the railroads that had suffered in the economic crisis.

The Anti-Monopoly Party adopted the "money problem" as its primary issue, which also concerned farmers who demanded currency reform. Donnelly became a spokesperson for the Greenback Party that won congressional seats. By the 1880s, the Grangers, the Anti-Monopoly, and the Greenbacks were no longer significant political players and the Farmers Alliance became a political machine for farmers, much like the Grangers had been in earlier decades. The Alliance aligned itself with labor because both groups believed that the ruling elites, those in political and economic control, exploited both farmers and workers.⁴⁵⁸ In the Twin Cities, the Knights of Labor and the Alliance worked together and the Republican Party agreed to take on their demands, but did not wholeheartedly follow through in later elections. Betrayal by the

⁴⁵⁵ William E. Lass, *Minnesota: A History*, 2d ed., (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), chapter 8.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

Republicans inspired laborers and farmers to create the Populist Party in 1892. Lass noted that the Populist Party did not have huge gains in Minnesota, as it did in other western states, but it did “pave[d] the way for the progressive movement, a broader and yet more profound criticism of American institutions and practices.”⁴⁵⁹

In 1899, Minnesota’s first Democratic governor since 1859, John Lind, called for, although did not achieve, a series of progressive state reforms which established a progressive tone in the state. Although its shift was gradual, “in time the reform urge in Minnesota became broadly based and transcended party lines,” initially coming from agrarian areas that “resented railroads, big banks, and the Twin Cities.”⁴⁶⁰ However, urbanites were enraged with the railroad monopoly of the Northern Securities Company, of which St. Paul’s own James J. Hill was part of in 1901.⁴⁶¹ Minnesota governor, Samuel R. Van Sant challenged the merger and the monopoly was dissolved as one of President Theodore Roosevelt’s trustbusting maneuvers.⁴⁶²

The Farmers Nonpartisan League was another point where farmers and laborers combined their efforts and established a foundation for the Democratic Farmer Labor Party. Arthur C. Townley, founder of the League, was a Minnesota native but started his efforts in North Dakota. The intention was not to create a new party, but rather “to dominate an existing one that would have a broader respectability and base,” which in North Dakota was the Republican Party.⁴⁶³ The League’s headquarters moved to St. Paul in 1917 and adopted a new strategy of appealing to both farmers and laborers since Minnesota’s economy consisted of both farmers and industrial workers.⁴⁶⁴ In 1918, the League challenged Republican governor Joseph

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 207.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 207-208.

⁴⁶¹ In addition to Hill’s Great Northern Railroad, the Northern Securities Company consisted of the Northern Pacific and Chicago and Burlington Railroads, Ibid., 208.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 220.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 220-221.

A.A. Burnquist, who disavowed all aspects of the League, and the attorney general demanded that the candidate have a party label so the term “Farmer-Labor Party” was used for the first time, although it did not officially organize as such until 1922. Although David Evans, the Farmer-Labor Party candidate, did not win the 1918 gubernatorial election, he did finish ahead of the Democratic candidate, which established the party as a viable third party force. The “long struggle and deep hopes such an alliance embodied for ordinary people,” generated overwhelming favorability among many Minnesotans.⁴⁶⁵

The Farmer-Labor Party won congressional seats through the 1920s and finally took control of the governorship in 1929. Floyd B. Olson, one of Minnesota’s most prominent historical figures, identified with the poor and advocated for reforms to help the lower classes. Olson, and his party, was criticized for socialist tendencies and possible connections with the Communist Party but he was elevated to hero status after his death in 1936.⁴⁶⁶ Elmer A. Benson, Farmer-Labor candidate, won the 1936 gubernatorial election but lost it two years later, which Lass attributed to “the patronage excesses of his party, his unswerving dedication to liberal causes, and his unwillingness or inability to dissociate himself from Minnesota’s small group of Communist activities.”⁴⁶⁷ John Earl Haynes, another Minnesota historian, argued that the Communist party in Minnesota aligned with the Farmer-Labor Party and created the “Popular Front.” This group set aside the traditional Communist agenda—Marxists-Leninism—and adopted a platform that supported reforms for farmers and middle-class workers.⁴⁶⁸ Although the Popular Front was influential, it did not withstand attacks from right-leaning political

⁴⁶⁵ Jennifer Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

⁴⁶⁶ Lass, 223-226.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁶⁸ John Early Haynes, *Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota’s DFL Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 3-4.

supporters.

In 1938, Benson was defeated by Republican Harold E. Strassen, who promised to eliminate communism from the state and corruption in the government, and the Farmer-Labor Party never recovered. As the Republican Party gained strength in Minnesota, especially as the more progressive reform party, the waning Farmer-Laborers and weaker Democrats discussed a merger as the only way to take control from the Republicans.⁴⁶⁹ In April 1944, the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party was officially formed and the U.S.'s tenuous alliance with the Soviet Union during Second World War helped ease accusations that the DFL was an arm of the Communist Party. In addition to the DFL's strategy to distance the party from controversial alignments, attacks on the Popular Front severely increased at the onset of World War Two, further delegitimizing it as a viable party in Minnesota politics.⁴⁷⁰

Although the DFL was a single party, the merger suffered from complications as the Democrats and Farmers struggled to compromise their ideals and strategies. Benson and his supporters represented the old school Farmer-Laborites who resented many of the Democrats who they accused of being out of touch with the foundations of the party. And Democrats resented Benson's radicalism and connections to communism. Described by Haynes as a manipulative relationship, Communists and the Farmer-Laborers tolerated the other party's more extreme views because of their shared support of Benson.⁴⁷¹ Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey greatly benefited from the DFL merger and throughout his career tried to walk a fine line between both Democrats and Farmer-Laborites. But the divisions between the two parties eventually culminated in the "DFL schism of 1948" when Benson and his supporters were ousted

⁴⁶⁹ Lass., 229; Haynes, 6.

⁴⁷⁰ Lass, 229.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 230; Haynes, 21.

from the DFL and Humphrey took control of the party.⁴⁷²

Humphrey was often criticized for taking the party down a more mainstream path, contrary to the legacy of the Farmer-Laborites. Under his leadership, the DFL became a powerful third party contender and several of its politicians gained national recognition. Humphrey was elected mayor of Minneapolis in 1945 and reelected after his push for law and order in the city.⁴⁷³ He later won a U.S. Senate seat as a DFL candidate; Eugene J. McCarthy and two others were elected to the House of Representatives also as DFL members.⁴⁷⁴ In the realm of national politics, where the DFL was not a major party, Humphrey was known as a liberal Democrat. Humphrey's popularity soared when he supported President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society reforms and he was elected vice president in 1964. Humphrey's laudatory reputation has recently come under fire as scholar Jennifer Delton examined Minnesota's liberal political history. Delton argued that the postwar liberalism that largely drove Minnesota politics may have been more motivated by white politicians seeking left-leaning supporters.⁴⁷⁵

Minnesotan Eugene McCarthy was also considered for the vice presidential position in 1964 and both Humphrey and McCarthy became critics of the war in Vietnam. McCarthy had been a member of the House for five terms and elected to the Senate in 1958. At the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, McCarthy publically denounced the war and garnered support from many young, educated Democrats. Humphrey earned the Democratic presidential

⁴⁷² Ibid., 230-231. The creation of the DFL has been a major point of research for Minnesota political scholars. An excellent and detailed work on the merger and its association with communism is the focus of John Earl Haynes's work, *Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota's DFL Party*. Jennifer Delton's recent work on the DFL highlighted the complexity of race within the party and Humphrey's support of civil rights.

⁴⁷³ An interesting article on Humphrey's strategy as a liberal mayor and his influences on subsequent mayors is detailed in Jeffrey T. Manuel and Andrew Urban, "You Can't Legislate from the Heart: Minneapolis Mayor Charles Stenvig and the Politics of Law in Order," *American Studies* 49 (fall-winter 2008): 196-219.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 231.

⁴⁷⁵ Delton, xxv.

nomination in 1968 and McCarthy ceremoniously supported him after dropping out of the race in the final weeks before the election. Richard Nixon won the presidential election and Humphrey was elected to the U.S. Senate again in 1970.

Minnesota's DFL Party continued to produce viable national politicians such as Walter Mondale. In the 1974 presidential race, Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter selected Mondale for his running mate. McCarthy ran as an Independent candidate in the election and his efforts narrowed the votes between the Carter-Mondale and the Ford-Dole tickets. Mondale made another national appearance as a presidential candidate in 1984 and although Mondale lost the election, he remained in the political realm and was named ambassador to Japan in 1993 by President Bill Clinton.⁴⁷⁶

Other notable Minnesotans included Supreme Court justices Warren E. Burger and Harry A. Blackmun. Both were appointed by President Nixon with the intent of stifling judicial activism; however, Burger and Blackmun transformed the court by supporting women's rights, among taking other liberal stances. Burger "expanded women's protections against sexual discrimination," and Blackmun wrote the majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*.⁴⁷⁷ Senator Paul Wellstone was another prominent figure in Minnesota politics that identified with the roots of the Farmer-Labor Party and worked diligently to meet face to face with Minnesotans and champion their causes for a responsible and accountable government. His life was cut short when he died in a plane crash, along with his wife, daughter and three campaign assistants while he was running for his third Congressional term. Wellstone's life reflected the history of Minnesota progressivism and is another example of a political figure that left academia for a life of politics. In addition to his reputation as a common man, he and his wife, Sheila, worked to eradicate

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 274-280.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 281-283.

domestic violence.⁴⁷⁸

Minnesotans on the national political stage inspired one political scientist to remark in 1972 that, “man for man, it would be hard to name a state which has contributed as many men of stature and depth to national political life in the postwar era as Minnesota.”⁴⁷⁹ This was certainly the case and historian William Lass suggested that potential reasons for their prominence included that it was “a natural byproduct of the long era of agrarian discontent; perhaps Scandinavians, the state’s most politically active ethnic group, were more inclined than others to seek solutions to life’s problems through politics and government.”⁴⁸⁰

Scholars Daniel Elazar, Virginia Gray, and Wyman Spano collaborated in an examination of Minnesota’s political culture and categorized the state as having a strong *moralistic political culture*. Characteristics of this culture include trusting the governmental system to work for the people, political figures working for the common good, and the use of “communal power” in the private sector for the sake of the community’s well-being.⁴⁸¹ Elazar, Gray, and Spano argued that Minnesota’s political culture legitimized the political process, thus creating a sense of trust among Minnesotans as well as an acceptance of social action which “in a democratic society must, by its very nature, be political action.”⁴⁸² Politicians in Minnesota are not necessarily career politicians; for example, former teachers and college professors like Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy and Wellstone became publically active in the political process.⁴⁸³ Third parties have also played a large role in Minnesota’s political history, especially the creation of the DFL.

⁴⁷⁸ Daniel J. McGrath and Dane Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington: The Inside Story of a Grassroots U.S. Senate Campaign* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

⁴⁷⁹ Lass, 283.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Daniel J. Elazar, Virginia Gray, and Wyman Spano, *Minnesota Politics and Government* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), xxiv.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 27.

⁴⁸³ Jesse Ventura is another example, although not linked to the academic world prior to his stint as governor. Ibid., 20.

Minnesota's political structure also allows for local governments to "extend their control over matters involving public morality," such as setting liquor store and gambling laws.⁴⁸⁴

Minnesota has a history of passing a "myriad of innovative legislation," such as the first anti-smoking laws in the U.S. which is reflected in their "innovative" public policies. Overall, Minnesotans support the state's spending on public programs, despite its reputation as a "high-tax state," which Elazar, Gray, and Spano attributed to the state's affluence and "because its citizens believe in public services."⁴⁸⁵ Domestic Violence legislation is not discussed in this work or any of the others but is another example of progressive legislation that started in Minnesota with Women's Advocates.

Minnesota was a leader in the effort for fair wages for women, a major issue in the late-1970s and 1980s. It was the first state to call for and apply comparable worth regulations for government workers. The State Employees Pay Equity Act passed in 1982 and in 1984 the policy was extended to municipal governments. Scholars Sara Evans and Barbara Nelson produced a thorough account of the Minnesota policy and concurred with Elazar's argument that Minnesota's political culture is partially based on communal activism for social justice issues.⁴⁸⁶ In 1965, Governor Rolvaag created the Minnesota Commission on the Status of Women which found "widespread discrimination against women in areas such as employment, equal pay, maternity benefits, and admission to professional schools at the University of Minnesota."⁴⁸⁷ Minnesota as a state was generally receptive to the Equal Rights Amendment, which it ratified in 1973.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁸⁶ Sara M. Evans and Barbara J. Nelson, *Wage Justice: Comparable Worth and the Paradox of Technocratic Reform* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 72.

⁴⁸⁷ Lass, 294.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

None of the above mentioned secondary literature on Minnesota's state history mentioned the state's role in the battered women's shelter movement; however, the activism that facilitated the creation of Women's Advocates certainly contributes to the analysis of Minnesota's political culture. As a grassroots based organization, Women's Advocates worked for the greater good of the St. Paul community. Whether or not the abovementioned theories and history inspired these women's activism, the shelter certainly evidenced a continuation of political activism that reflected the women's movement motto, "the personal is political."

The literature on women in Minnesota revealed that there was a strong movement of women who worked for the suffrage and temperance movements; however, the literature is dated and only scratches the surface of women in the mid-to-late twentieth century. All of the women are worthy of note, but one in particular provided a link to the women of Women's Advocates. Interviewee Betsy Raasch-Gilman wrote an account of her grandmother, Catheryne Cooke Gilman, a social worker during the Progressive Era.⁴⁸⁹ The elder Gilman completed graduate work at the University of Chicago in 1912 and studied with social work trailblazers, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge and Jane Addams.⁴⁹⁰ After she married in 1914, she was determined not to terminate her work and proceeded to advocate for woman suffrage, child welfare—including work with juvenile law in Minnesota—and sex education.⁴⁹¹ Catheryne Cooke Gilman's life is an example of the confluence of Progressive Era politics, the progressive political culture of Minnesota, and women's activism for social justice. Betsy Raasch-Gilman's work provided evidence of a continuum of feminist activism that she parlayed into significant work at Women's

⁴⁸⁹ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

⁴⁹⁰ Robyn Muncy, "Gender and Professionalization in the Origins of the U.S. Welfare State: The Careers of Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, 1890-1935," *Journal of Policy History* 2 (1990): 290-315.

⁴⁹¹ Elizabeth Gilman, "Catheryne Cooke Gilman: Social Worker," in *Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays*, revised ed., ed. Barbara Stuhler and Gretchen Kreuter (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998), 190-207.

Advocates.

Minnesota scholar Cheri Register called Minnesota a “national proving ground for feminist reforms” and highlighted women’s accomplishments in areas of domestic violence, political, educational, and employment opportunities. In her 1994 article, she identified the issue of rape as a precursor to activism surrounding the problem of wife battering in the Twin Cities. In 1971, the first rape crisis center opened in Minneapolis and its advocacy program included assisting women through the judicial system. Women’s activists petitioned for legal remedies too. Starting in 1974, state laws changed to help women who were raped. Passed in an all-male Senate, the bill allocated monies for rape crisis programs, education for law enforcement and prosecutors. A subsequent law passed in 1975 defined varying degrees of sexual assault charges and excluded a woman’s sexual history from possible evidence.⁴⁹² This article is the source that connects the anti-rape and wife battering movements in Minnesota. However, Sharon Vaughan stated in her interview that she believes there is a connection between the two movements, but scholars have yet to make a direct link between them.⁴⁹³ Register also claimed that “Minnesota worked hard for women in part because feminist reforms fit liberal concepts of the role of government in social change.” In addition, the DFL majority in the state legislature during this activism in the 1970s, facilitated the passage of laws to help abused women and support advocacy programs.⁴⁹⁴

By using the lens of local history, Women’s Advocates is part of the larger movement to raise awareness of domestic violence that started in St. Paul and spread across Minnesota and the

⁴⁹² Cheri Register, “When Women Went Public: Feminist Reforms in the 1970s,” *Minnesota History* 61 (Summer 2008), 69. For more information about the origins of the anti-rape movement, see Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975); Janet C. Gornick and David S. Meyer, “Changing Political Opportunity: The Anti-Rape Movement and Public Policy,” *Journal of Policy History* 10 (1998): 367-398.

⁴⁹³ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁴⁹⁴ Register, 74.

United States. As Amato reasoned, “Local history . . . provides the natural link between immediate experience and general history.”⁴⁹⁵ Perhaps the broader historical context of Progressive reform efforts by Governor John Lind, Floyd B. Olsen, and Paul Wellstone continued the legacy of the civic compact from the late nineteenth century. Although the civic compact did not promote equality, it acknowledged the existence of cooperation across socio-economic lines, as well as the empathetic nature of St. Paulites.

In the spirit of early twentieth-century progressive reformers, Women’s Advocates continued the region’s tradition of grassroots activism. Marjorie Bingham, a Women’s Studies scholar, argued that Minnesota’s history of women’s activism is largely centered on group involvement.⁴⁹⁶ Attributing this tradition to four factors—A Christian emphasis on motherhood and “subordinate service” in church activities; few women faculty in higher education; an emphasis on group issues, rather than “individual visibility;” and finally, a strong Scandinavian heritage that stressed cooperation in order to survive—were all reasons why Minnesota’s history is rich with activism but lacks national recognition.⁴⁹⁷

The women of Women’s Advocates were particularly inspired by Minnesota’s progressive, activist past. Betsy Raasch-Gilman clearly drew connections between her grandmother’s work in Minneapolis as a social worker and her past and present work on social justice issues.⁴⁹⁸ Bernice Sisson and Monica Erler recalled how they were especially enlightened when Dorothy Day spoke to their college class while they were at St. Catherine University. Following Day’s tradition of helping the poor and needy—congruous with St. Paul’s liberal Catholicism—Sisson became a nurse and advocate and Erler worked full-time at Women’s

⁴⁹⁵ Amato, 4.

⁴⁹⁶ Marjorie Bingham, “Keeping at It: Minnesota Women,” in Clark, ed., *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, 1989, 433.

⁴⁹⁷ Bingham, 433.

⁴⁹⁸ Raasch-Gilman, interview with author.

Advocates.⁴⁹⁹ Lois Severson also had forward-thinking experiences while in college and through her activism, she joined Women's Advocates. The St. Paul Legal Services of Ramsey County furthered the community's left-leaning tradition by first recognizing women's needs for information about divorce and name changes and then with the hire of Sharon Rice Vaughan and Susan Ryan as VISTA workers. In many ways, Vaughan's work at Women's Advocates was a continuation of her activist nature.⁵⁰⁰ As a result, women's problems with abuse came to light and hence the grassroots organizing to raise awareness of wife abuse. Each of these women had individual experiences with the region's left-leaning, social reform environments and collectively, they worked to create one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States. Sisson succinctly and appropriately summarized all of their paths to Women's Advocates as: "Once you are interested in one thing it gets you in contact with all the other things that are going on," hence, the creation of grassroots organizing and the foundation for community coalitions.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Sisson, Erler, Severson, interview with author.

⁵⁰⁰ Vaughan, interview with author.

⁵⁰¹ Erler, Sisson, Severson, interview with author.

CHAPTER V. LEGACIES OF WOMEN'S ADVOCATES

Kate Millet, Minnesota native and feminist writer, spoke at a women's conference in 1976 and proclaimed: "The women's liberation movement has expanded from the demand for equal pay to the fight against rape and wife beating."⁵⁰² Most notably, Millet argued, "We're becoming increasingly absorbed with the use of force against women. I think we're getting, finally, to the real nitty gritty, to the real ugliness of oppression."⁵⁰³ The mid-to-late 1970s was a period of time that witnessed the raising of awareness of wife abuse, referred to in the present day as domestic violence. Grassroots organizing by Women's Advocates helped to create awareness of wife abuse in the St. Paul community. Over the course of my research and writing about Women's Advocates, I have mentioned my project topic to countless individuals, including both scholars and non-academics. People's reactions to my research topic differed and included varying degrees of shying away from further discussion to opening up about their own experiences with domestic violence. However, nearly everyone I talked with about my project was surprised by two fundamental facts: That Women's Advocates opened as recently as 1974 and it is located in St. Paul. People were mostly in disbelief that assistance for domestic violence survivors formally started in the 1970s, as many of them assumed it started earlier in the twentieth century. Regarding the location, most people I spoke with guessed that one of the first shelters would have been located in a larger city like New York City or San Francisco, rather than a mid-sized city in the Midwest. These discrepancies in the traditional thinking about the issue of domestic violence reinforce the need to uncover grassroots organizing in women's history.

In the atmosphere of the mid-twentieth century women's movement, Women's

⁵⁰² Untitled article, *Saint Paul Dispatch*, April 5, 1976, Folder: Articles General Overview, Battered Women Resource Center, St. Paul Records, 1971-1981, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

Advocates evolved from members' work on a telephone referral line in St. Paul. Further conversations with other women in the community inspired the creation of a Women's House. This idea was recorded in 1973 by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* that recognized the formation of Women's Advocates and their desire to purchase a house for a shelter. The article reiterated the collective's intention of designing a "Women's House" that would serve as space for women to obtain counseling, classes, safety, and shelter. Advocate Susan Ryan commented that there was no such place in the Twin Cities area for women who need to escape violence or "get away from home for a while to think about things."⁵⁰⁴ The formation of Women's Advocates and the collective nature of the group promoted agency among members and the women they aided. With their original, self-empowered-centered advocacy program, Women's Advocates overcame numerous obstacles from individuals and groups that did not understand the complexities of wife abuse. Through the 1970s, they become a respected agency in the Twin Cities. The group's efforts in their community propelled them to work in a statewide movement to raise awareness of wife abuse and change laws and policies to help battered women. With the help of their allies, they created coalitions that enhanced their grassroots organizing that began in St. Paul and spread across the state.

This history of Women's Advocates offers a valuable lesson about women in social movements and the formation of public policy. First, by naming a problem—like wife abuse—then organizing to discuss remedies of the issue, and finally persistent demands for change—from funders and local policymakers—grassroots activism succeeds at raising awareness and

⁵⁰⁴ Ann Baker, "Women's House Becoming Reality," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 28, 1973, Box 5, Folder: Publicity, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. The Women's Advocates newsletter explained that the idea for the House emerged as a "response to the many women who 'need to get away right now' and have no place to go" and wanted a space "for shared growth through learning new skills, participating in individual and group discussions, and exchanging information and materials." "Newsletter, March 11, 1973," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1973-74, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

constructing social change. The St. Paul women were extraordinary knowledge-builders who paralleled their contemporaries in the 1970s who also empowered women and educated the public about issues of rape, women's health, abortion, and wage equity. Sharon Vaughan recalled the weekend the collective members spent deciding how to help the women who called them:

So we fought and then in the end we had a vote on Sunday and the vote came out in favor of the woman being her own expert and we being advocates for her to get her needs met through systems that were defined to get her needs met but weren't, which is how we then defined advocacy. And I think once we did that we came back and started working on the phone and we took our time, we asked women to tell their stories and boy, they started pouring out, and I think if we hadn't had that debate and made that decision that it wouldn't have happened.⁵⁰⁵

Collective organizing is not always easy but it paralleled Women's Advocates' mission to empower women who had experienced abuse from their intimate partners.

Another vital lesson learned from Women's Advocates and grassroots coalition building is the sharing of information. They were not alone in their recognition of the problem of wife abuse and as knowledge-creators, they were willing to share their experiences with other organizations and individuals who asked for their guidance and recommendations. Women's Advocates did not operate in isolation. The collective evolved out of the tradition of grassroots organizing in the 1970s, and they were also cognizant of the increasing awareness of wife abuse in the United States and England. There was a sense of urgency to write inquirers back and share helpful information about how the St. Paul group functioned and funding avenues they sought. This bi-directional communication not only aided other groups in their creation of shelters but reminded all of the activists that they were not alone in their quest for social justice. As *The Story of a Shelter* recorded: "Our sense of isolation dissolved with this spontaneous network of women, many of whom we would meet years later through organized networking

⁵⁰⁵ Sharon Rice Vaughan, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 19, 2010.

efforts, incredibly part of a national movement.”⁵⁰⁶

Through the use of primary documentary sources and oral history interviews, my study centered on Women’s Advocates and their perspectives as awareness of wife abuse emerged. The archival collection includes documents from the organization, but also sources produced from members outside of the agency, like national newspapers and magazine articles. While I recognize that broader and more general sources could have been used in this work, I chose to emphasize solely on the perspective of these women in St. Paul—the documents they created and chose to preserve. A broader historical context could certainly be applied in future projects, but this research serves as a solid foundation of grassroots organizing for one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States.

Women’s Advocates was pivotal to the creation of and sustainability of the battered women’s shelter movement. My research does not dwell on the question of whether or not Women’s Advocates was the first battered women’s shelter because claiming recognition as “the first” recycles historiographical flaws of women’s history. Initially, women’s history filled in “gaps” where women were left out of the historical narrative. Many of those stories were about “women’s firsts.” While it is valuable to learn about notable women throughout history, what stories I find more compelling are those about ordinary women who recognized injustices, organized, raised awareness, and fomented change. I believe that stories such as the creation of Women’s Advocates are instrumental in continuing the work to help fight for justice.⁵⁰⁷

Certain gaps in the historiography of the women’s movement have provided me the

⁵⁰⁶ *Women’s Advocates: The Story of a Shelter* (St. Paul, Women’s Advocates, 1980), 1, borrowed from Bernice Sisson Personal Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

⁵⁰⁷ Women’s movement scholarship sometimes recognizes Women’s Advocates as “the first,” whereas separate works denote others as “the first.” “Safe Houses for wives of alcoholics were the only available model of shelters for abused women.; WA was the first to reflect the modern women’s movement;” Pleck, 189; Martin? Mention of the Al-Alon group in California; Del Martin overviews the “firsts” and describes Women’s Advocates as the “best known,” *Battered Wives* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976); Kathleen Tierney, “The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem,” *Social Problems*, 29, Feb. 1982, 208 overviews the firsts.

opportunity to assert my work into these spaces while recognizing the influence of other women's movement scholars. Historian Sara Evans argued that localized histories need to become more prominent in history and sociologists who study the women's movement state a similar case. Nancy Whittier examined the Women's Action Collective in Columbus, Ohio and stated that it is crucial for scholars to focus on cities that were not previously considered part of the mainstream movement as well as smaller communities that have been omitted from the scholarship. She argued that the significance of cities and towns such as these are "where individuals and organizations of the second wave settled in for the long haul."⁵⁰⁸ Activism in the women's movement has mostly centered on the east and west coasts, with little recognition of grassroots mobilizing in other areas of the country.⁵⁰⁹ Examining Women's Advocates not only enriches the women's history scholarship, but also adds to the progressive history of the St. Paul area. Local historian Robert Archibald speaks to the larger significance of Women's Advocates:

Empathy and understanding are two of the better inclinations of our nature, needing only cultivation to become an enduring habit. History is an effective means to stimulate this aptitude. . . . For if we are products of the past, then knowledge of the past is essential to understand and appreciate each other and live together in a society capable of making decisions that incorporate both a long view and the common welfare.⁵¹⁰

Some of the trappings of pioneering studies about women in a field that previously ignored them, women's historians have been guilty of focusing on the "stars" of the movement. In some ways, the battered women's movement has its own "big names." In my advocacy training with Victims Services and The Cocoon, Ellen Pence was identified as the founder of the battered women's shelter programs and she certainly deserves high praise for her groundbreaking work. Pence is from Minnesota and first worked in the department of women and housing which

⁵⁰⁸ Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women's Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changes America at Century's End* (New York: The Free Press, 2003).

⁵¹⁰ Robert R Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1999), 68.

helped the Twin Cities Battered Women's Consortium develop programs and policy changes.⁵¹¹ Pence is most known for her work in the Duluth Project that the agencies I trained with identified as creating victim advocacy. However, in my research, I identified the foundations at Women's Advocates. Along a similar vein to Pence, tensions arose in the Women's Advocates collective when Sharon Vaughan was identified in the media as their leader. In some ways, Vaughan has become the most recognizable figure in Women's Advocates' history, largely because she has been a part of numerous scholarly interviews that highlight the shelter.⁵¹² While Vaughan and Pence both deserve high praise for their accomplishments, it is worthwhile to the study of grassroots organizing to examine the history of the entire collective, including members who are willing to contribute their oral histories.

The battered women's shelter movement ignited other movements to help women who have experienced abuse by their intimate partners. One such group was the self-defense movement that encouraged "victim prevention." This movement emphasized the importance of "victim prevention" by making women more capable of warding off violence and less vulnerable in public areas. The movement advocated for "environmental modifications" that would create safer spaces for women such as better public transportation, emergency phones, and well-lighted sidewalks and parking lots. Activists also offered training courses for women in order to help

⁵¹¹ Pence was identified in the February 1978 Women's Advocates' newsletter as: "Formerly with the HRA in Minneapolis and one of the very hard-working founders of the Harriet Tubman in Minneapolis" and hired as project coordinator of the Minnesota Shelters Program. "Newsletter, Feb. 1978," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters Feb. 1978-Oct. 1978, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁵¹² Evan Stark, "Women and Children at Risk: A Feminist Perspective on Child Abuse," in *Violence Against Women: Classic Papers*, ed., Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Jeffrey L. Edleson, Claire M. Renzetti (Boston: Pearson Education, 2005), 244-265; Bonnie Watkins and Nina Rothchild, *In the Company of Women: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement* (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1996); Del Martin, *Battered Wives*; Cheri Register, "When Women Went Public: Feminist Reforms in the 1970s," *Minnesota History* 61 (Summer 1994): 62-75; Anne Enke, "Taking Over Domestic Space: The Battered Women's Movement and Public Protest" in *The World the Sixties Made*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser, 162-190 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); Evans, *Tidal Wave*; Lois Severson, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 28, 2010.

them develop stronger mental and physical skills.⁵¹³ Women's Advocates announced a self-defense class in their February/March 1976 Newsletter: "Brown-belt karate expert, Bonnie Hennings would like for residents to take the full course of "intensive psychological and physical training."⁵¹⁴ While the intentions of self-defense programs sought to help potential victims, they generally failed to address the root of the problem—individuals who seek power and control over another human being. Slowly, communities, university campuses, and concerned organizations have instigated more awareness of where domestic violence problems arise—within the abuser themselves. Organizations such as No More have recently brought attention to violence against women with their television commercials, strategically airing during professional sporting events with the intent to move viewers outside of their comfort zones and dispel myths about domestic violence.⁵¹⁵ Because of the foundation that Women's Advocates helped create, the issue that was previously hidden away from public discussion is now part of our larger cultural dialogue.⁵¹⁶

In our present day, domestic violence is a socially and legally unacceptable offense; however, myths about victims remain and education is still needed. Although it is unsettling that the problem still exists, the conversations and questions have changed. Women's Advocates was revolutionary because at its inception, organizers had to prove that wife abuse existed and caused long-term harm. Now, it is not a question of whether or not it is reprehensible but how can

⁵¹³ Patricia Searles and Ronald J. Berger, "The Feminist Self-Defense Movement: A Case Study," *Gender and Society* 1 (March 1987): 61-84. The self-defense movement was another offshoot of the larger women's movement of the 1970s that inspired awareness of women's issues.

⁵¹⁴ "Newsletter, Feb./March 1976," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn.

⁵¹⁵ <http://nomore.org>. The judicial system is another important arena that continuously evolves as advocates and supporters educate judges about the complexities of domestic violence. A good overview of this process is: Judith Wittner, "Reconceptualizing Agency in Domestic Violence Court," in Naples, ed., *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 81-104.

⁵¹⁶ Men's groups have also taken an initiative to address the origins of violence against women and demand changes to men's culture. Jackson Katz is an inspirational scholar and activist who shatters male gender norms and identifies ways that men can change their behaviors—such as not assuming the role as "macho." Offender programs are also designed to help men change their actions, albeit these programs are most often court-mandated. Jackson Katz, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help* (Chicago: Sourcebooks, 2006).

society and culture stop the perpetuation of violence against women. Although now domestic violence advocacy is available in most areas of the United States, activists must continue to build bridges and form coalitions with agencies in order to expand services for abused women, children, and men.

Advocates who work with domestic violence survivors could also benefit from knowing their history. Advocate work can feel isolating and overwhelming but advocates can feel empowered by knowing the history of not only their own agency, but also the larger battered women's shelter movement. Through my research, I determined that the current advocacy training that I and others go through is a direct outcome of Women's Advocates grassroots organizing. The way that Women's Advocates listened to and empowered women to make their own decisions is now the formal advocacy training that thousands of domestic violence and sexual assault advocates learn and practice. Throughout my dissertation process, I believe that the conversations I had, and hopefully encouraged, are part of the legacy that Women's Advocates, their allies, and their contemporaries initiated. Conversations about my research also created new connections to other shelters that also formed in the late 1970s. Explorations into the histories of other battered women's shelters will further enhance the significance of women's grassroots organizing and coalition building in order to raise awareness of domestic violence.

Whereas the Women's Advocates collective and shelter evolved throughout the 1970s, this investigation into the organization was made possible largely through the efforts of Monica Eler. I asked the interviewees how Women's Advocates' papers came to be donated to the Minnesota Historical Society and available for public access. Both Sharon Vaughan and Betsy Raasch-Gilman recalled that Monica was instrumental in gathering and donating the

documents.⁵¹⁷ When I met with Monica, Bernice, and Lois, I asked Monica and she recalled: “I made a deal with the collective. I said in October that I want to quit in January and I will if you give me the three months to pull our archives together. And thank goodness they did. And I spent October through December pulling the archives together and they [the Minnesota Historical Society] came out and got it.⁵¹⁸” Bernice also chimed in and remembered taking pictures around the house to include in the archives.⁵¹⁹ Monica acknowledged what inspired her to take the time and ensure that their history was preserved:

I was so tired of everybody saying—it’s like when somebody dies in a family—they say we should all get together sometime when nobody dies, well, that’s what it’s like with the women’s archives. Women never save the record of what they’re doing, that’s why we don’t have history.”⁵²⁰

In the fall of 2012, I trained as an advocate in Summit County, Colorado. One evening before I went to class, I received a call from Lois Severson and she told me that Monica had passed away. That night, I told my fellow advocates about Women’s Advocates and the sad news I received. However, it was an important moment for me to remind them that when we feel overwhelmed by advocate work, we should remember the legacy that we are continuing.

The inclusion of a former resident’s testimony in the Women’s Advocates’ April/May 1975 newsletter reminded the advocates of the importance of their work. An unidentified woman reflected on her experience trying to obtain housing as a single, divorced mother who encountered “sexist” landlords. She described Women’s Advocates as “very helpful” and she was thankful that the advocates “did not pass her along to another agency.” Gratefully, she

⁵¹⁷ Vaughan, interview with author; Elizabeth Raasch-Gilman, interview with author, tape recording, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 22, 2010.

⁵¹⁸ Monica Erler, Lois Severson and Bernice Sisson, interview with author, tape recording, Little Canada, Minn., Sept. 25, 2010. The year was uncertain from the interview; however, it was probably in the early 1980s, as when that is when the MHS stated they received the collection.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

stayed at Women's Advocates until the apartment she found was available.⁵²¹ Another former resident wrote to Women's Advocates and said, "There should be a house like this on every block." The advocates recognized the demand for safe spaces for women as well as the demanding work they were doing: "The challenge for all of us is to infuse the strength gained by working and living together into the life long struggle ahead. We need to think of new ways to make available every opportunity for women to go from a state of catharsis to a state of transformation. Perhaps one answer is a community of shelters."⁵²² Over forty years later, the groundwork that Women's Advocates laid has inspired the creation of countless shelters and programs to help abused women and children. Their legacy of grassroots organizing, knowledge transmission, and coalition activism continues as socially-conscious individuals continue to unite and address injustices in their communities.

⁵²¹ "Newsletter, April/May 1975," Box 1, Folder: Newsletters 1975-April 1976, Women's Advocates, Shelter Records, 1973-1984, Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul, Minn. The inclusion of resident's and former resident's testimonies was commonplace in the monthly or bi-monthly newsletters.

⁵²² "Newsletter, May/June 1976," Women's Advocates, Shelter Collection, St. Paul, Minn.

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APPENDIX A



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

DATE: May 6, 2013

TO: Amanda Dennison

FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [292587-3] Coalition Building in the Battered Women's Shelter Movement

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: May 6, 2013

EXPIRATION DATE: May 5, 2014

REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review
category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue

throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll *10-15* participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on May 5, 2014. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.