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Ruth Tringham Interview, Paula Fass and Christina Maslach, "Academic Pioneers: Women at Berkeley in the 1970s and 1980s."

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Ruth Tringham Interview: Paula Fass and Christina Maslach, "Academic Pioneers: Women at Berkeley in the 1970s and 1980s." Interviews with Berkeley's pioneering women professors, Berkeley, CA. Conducted 2019-2023.

Christina Maslach:

Okay. So, we just want to start with some basic demographics -- name, date, place of birth, where you went to college, graduate school.

Ruth Tringham:

Okay. So, my name is Ruth Tringham. I was born in a place called Aspley Guise, which is north of London, near Bletchley Park, where the spies were trained in the Second World War. And I was born during that period on 14th of October, 1940.

Christina Maslach:

Wow, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

Are you saying "wow" because of the long time ago that was?

Christina Maslach:

No, but just thinking about interesting time to be growing up in Britain.

Ruth Tringham:

I grew up all my first five years outside of London, until the end of the war...

Christina Maslach:

Until the end of the war, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

So we were basically evacuated out there. What was your next question?

Christina Maslach:

Education.

Ruth Tringham:

I went to a girl's school in London for high school. It was one of the so-called Girls Public Day School Trust (GPDST) schools, which were started in the 1870s by the Women's Education Union whose aim was to provide good and cheap day schools for all classes of girls, to be as well educated as boys. So they focused on education rather than sports (although I did do sports as well). So that was a really formative education medium. And from there I went to Edinburgh University to get quite a long way away from my home in London. And I think most people would do that same kind of thing. Also, it had a very good archaeology department. I knew I wanted to be an archeologist by that time.

Christina Maslach:

Really? Oh my goodness, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

If you're interested in my early history, one of the really formative things in my education was not just that particular high school, but, the fact that my mother dragged me along one Saturday morning to be part of the Junior Naturalists Club in the Museum of Natural History in London. They taught you how to do research in the field. And I loved that. I would go every Saturday and sometimes every now and then they would do a summer camp for all the children. This was a club for children from 11 to 18. And so, for example, everybody went on a field camp to Alderney in the Channel Islands, where we would do research in different topics. It could be Geology, Marine Biology, or there was even Archaeology. At that time (age 13), I wasn't that interested in archaeology. I was with this boy, whom I sort of fancied, and geology. Almost everyone who was a member of that club went on to research careers of some kind. The woman who started it died at about 40 of cancer, which was very sad, but they continued on with the program. So anyway, that was part of how I got into archaeology.

Christina Maslach:

Wow.

Ruth Tringham:

I got more interested in archaeology when I was about 16. I wanted to be an explorer before, but that didn't work. So, I went to Edinburgh University, where there was a program in prehistoric archaeology. There were only eight archaeology students at that time, my cohort; we ended up being two, or maybe three of those that survived the four years of the program. In Scotland we didn't do BAs. We went straight to an MA degree, whereas mostly in UK it was a three-year program ending in a BA. But in our fourth year we had the opportunity to do a senior thesis. It was an unusual program, in that it focused on European archeology. The previous chair of the department was a very famous archaeologist of Europe called Gordon Childe; you may not have heard of him, but we make all our students learn about him.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah, the name sounds familiar...

Ruth Tringham:

Stuart Piggott became the Professor of Archaeology (there was only one per department) after Gordon Childe, and he was my professor. In my fourth year, I started doing research on my senior thesis at a pan-European scale, actually an Eastern European scale. I would never dream of doing such a thing anymore, but I did it both for my MA thesis and for my PhD thesis. Stuart Piggott was very interested in Eastern Europe as was Gordon Childe. And so, I was travelling to Eastern Europe to take part in field projects, at first in Czechoslovakia, which at that time (1963) was behind the Iron Curtain.

Christina Maslach:

Right.

Ruth Tringham:

I was what they call a red diaper baby. But nobody had ever been behind the Iron Curtain in my family, and I wanted to be the first to do that. So, I wrote to an archaeologist who was my professor's contact in Czechoslovakia, in Prague. He was in the National Museum there and said, "Oh yes, I can put you in the care of an archaeologist on a big field project outside Prague." So that's how my whole East European research focus started.

Christina Maslach:

Wow.

Ruth Tringham:

I stayed in Edinburgh for a PhD -- you know, in Britain you don't have any coursework, or we didn't then. I think you still maybe can get away with not doing coursework, but I'm not sure. You could do a PhD in two years if you wanted. I did mine in three.

Christina Maslach:

Wow, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

Because you don't have any coursework, you go straight into doing your research project. So, I did that. I went back to this excavation outside Prague. I went for a year to Charles University in Prague, right after I graduated, with a British Council scholarship. This was the first year of my PhD program. I became very familiar with all of the archaeology of central Europe and of Eastern Europe, focusing on the beginning of agriculture because that was the focus of the excavation outside Prague that I was participating in. And that was the focus of my professor (Piggot's) research. In fact, that was what Gordon Childe had been interested in as well. So, I did this whole East European-wide PhD dissertation, on the relations between Southeast Europe (the Balkans) and Central Europe (Czechoslovakia and other countries behind the Iron Curtain). During that time, I became very used to male chauvinism. I just used to laugh it off, but I'd got a huge amount of support as well from the director of the excavation outside Prague, Bobik Soudsky, who was gay, and a very famous archaeologist, and he became the de facto supervisor of my Ph.D.

Christina Maslach:

Were you the only woman there?

Ruth Tringham:

Oh yeah, I was in Soudsky's little group of acolytes, who later on all became quite important people in European archaeology. One of them in particular did not like me and referred to me as such things as "that stupid English girl." I could hear that, and I knew the language by then. But I knew I was Soudsky's favorite in our group because I had a guitar, and I sang all the folk songs correctly. So that was my entree. Anyway, so the PhD involved going around Eastern

Europe a lot. For a whole six months. I was traveling around the Balkans, to museums, and *that* was a real learning experience.

So, when I came back to Edinburgh, I wrote up the dissertation the third year (1966). Immediately after my Ph.D. graduation, I went as a postdoc, with another year-long scholarship from the British Council to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). I wanted to expand my research on the transition from hunting-gathering to farming into the Soviet Union. So that's what I did there. While I was there, I learned this whole technique of Contact Trace research. It means that when anything touches something else, it leaves a trace - mark, abrasion, dent, polish; think auto crash, or Crime Scene Investigation techs in streaming mysteries on TV. It was actually very useful that I did that. I had no idea how useful it would be until I came back to the UK. I got a job down in London because of that research with the contact traces, which was being pioneered in the Soviet Union.

The idea is that you experiment with contact situations, for example flaked stone edges scraping on bone; then you look under the microscope or you can sometimes see it with your naked eye, to see what trace, - damage the flaked stone edge has sustained as the result of that contact; and then you look at the edges of your prehistoric flaked stone tools, to see if they have damage (eg. microflakes) that is the same as your experimental stone tool edges. From that you can say by what material and through what actions the prehistoric tools were damaged, and from that you can suggest in what tasks the prehistoric tools were being used.

Christina Maslach:
Okay.

Ruth Tringham:
You can't say it unambiguously, but you can get much closer to certainty than you could otherwise. And nobody was bothering to look at how the tools we used, they were all interested in how they were made.

Christina Maslach:
Oh, that's interesting. Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:
And the use of things led into an interest in the whole use-lives of archaeological materials, from their manufacture, through their use, distribution, all the way to their consumption and final disposal, loss, chucked away. This use-life path is actually something that I used in my research and still do. I've now enriched the use-life concept into the life history of archaeological remains which link the inanimate objects such as houses and artifacts to the life history of people and places - it's more humanistic. I'm kind of jumping your questions here, but...

Christina Maslach:
That's okay, that's fine!

Ruth Tringham:

Anyway, so I came back, and was hired, not just for the Contact Trace research, but also on the basis of my Senior (M.A.) Thesis, which was about figurines, human figurines. I was hired to come and teach in a new part of the Anthropology Department at University College London. The guy who hired me (1969) - Peter Ucko - a social anthropologist with interests in archaeology became my mentor. He taught me some ways of teaching that are very detailed and making students be responsible for their own learning.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah, yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

He would tell the students that you can't just wait to be told what I tell you, you've got to participate as well; you've got to think for yourself; you've got to explore and so on. I had never been taught like that. So, I watched him teaching, and he was making me do the same active thinking and making me teach the students like that. And so, I learned and coached all at the same time. During this time (1969-71), I was writing a book on my research up until then, which included the Soviet Union stuff. And this was all new material that was not known in the West. I knew the material and had seen original collections (although not collected myself). There was one other person - Marija Gimbutas - who always seemed to be one step ahead of me in the early agriculturalists of Eastern Europe. She was originally from Lithuania and had then emigrated to America. She was already writing books on the subject and was now teaching at UCLA. She was a very different kind of archaeologist from me and had ideas about European prehistory that I didn't agree with. Anyway, she was writing about the same material, and I tried not to let that put me off. Anyway, she did not have the great mentors that I had. I was younger than she was but I'm not sure that was an advantage in the hierarchical context of European archaeology. The book I was writing was called *Hunters, Fishers and Farmers of Eastern Europe. 6000-3000BC*.

When I was writing this book, my colleague at UCL, Peter Ucko, was very critical of it and that really helped. He was doing the same thing on my book that he would do to a student paper. I thought what I had written was wonderful, and he would tell me, you know, this is crap. I would end in tears and so on. But it was a tremendous learning experience. And I also learned about how to use ethnographic material archeologically to learn about how people might have used the same hunting methods or agricultural methods in the past by looking at how they do it now, which is a tricky thing to apply. While I was doing that job, which I loved and paid miserably (I was paid like, I don't know, perhaps £2,000 a year), Harvard sent word to people in Britain that they wanted recommendations of some names of people who might be interested in teaching European archaeology in Harvard.

Christina Maslach:

Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

They were looking for somebody to replace an archaeologist who had retired suddenly. So, they were head-hunting for somebody to fill this position. They'd got my name and also the name of one of the graduate students in University College, London and (I assume) many others. Later, they sent over a very conventional archaeologist who worked in France to interview possible candidates. They asked me for a CV, but I had never written a CV, which tells you something about how I kind of floated along unofficially. So, I wrote one on my faithful Olivetti (this was 1970, I think). I went for my interview in a hotel in London, which lasted about two hours. I thought this person was really unpleasant, and not someone I would want to work with - very bow tie, very Harvard-like...

Christina Maslach:

Yeah, yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

Not at all sympathetic. In spite of that, I and the graduate student from UCL were asked to come over to America for an interview. I said to myself, "Oh yeah, I'll go, but I don't intend to stay in America and I've no interest in teaching in America. I'm much too much enjoying myself here in London." But I came over to Cambridge, Mass and I was kind of seduced by the whole thing. I'll tell you why -- because here, for the first time, people actually seemed enthusiastic about what I was doing.

Christina Maslach:

Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

Maybe they were pretending. But in Britain it still is not cool to show your enthusiasm for what people do. It is not academically cool. People obviously show enthusiasm in different parts of life, but not in academic work. But here in America everybody was effusing over my contact trace research, and my European archeology stuff, and I was just bowled over. This is wonderful. I'm really enjoying myself and I did have a really good time. So they actually offered me the job, I accepted, and went to Harvard as an assistant professor, one of those seven or eight-year things. Do you know about those in Ivy League schools?

Christina Maslach: Yeah, yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

And the union said you have to be offered tenure if they keep you over eight years. And so I went through that whole thing. It was very hierarchical, and that for me was the difference when I came to Berkeley.

Christina Maslach: So, what year was it that you were hired at Harvard?

Ruth Tringham:

At Harvard, 1971.

Christina Maslach:

'71, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

I was hired as the first and only female academic archaeology professor...

Christina Maslach:

Really?

Ruth Tringham:

Yes. It was the same in London. There were other anthropologists, there were social anthropologists in that anthropology department in London who were female. And there were other female anthropologists in the anthropology department at Harvard. But I was in each case, the only female doing archeology.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah, wow.

Ruth Tringham:

I kind of got used to that. There weren't that many women doing archeology academically at that time in British universities. I was hired at Harvard along with a couple of other young male archaeologists. We were three new assistant professors, and we were all denied tenure when it came to the seventh year. That's when they do it. You can then stay on for another eighth year. I don't know about the other two, but constantly along the way I was promised, "Oh, you'll be the first to get tenure." As you may know, they had (maybe still have) a huge break between tenure and not tenure at Harvard.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

Tenure at Harvard was associated (I don't know if it still is) with full professorship. So to get tenure you would have to be a star. They would always hire them from outside, even though they kept promising "Oh, you'll be the first one to be hired from the inside." Of course, it wasn't true.

Christina Maslach:

No, because I was an undergraduate in the '60s there and I remember that everybody thought "I'm going to be the one who will make it."

Ruth Tringham:

Yes. Right.

Christina Maslach:

Then the bitterness when, but it was in a way, it was like nobody's getting it. You know, nobody's getting tenure. It's a star system. You're doing all the work.

Ruth Tringham:

Yes, it was, and you don't know it. I was completely naive about it.

Christina Maslach:

Well, I didn't, you know, really think about until much later, but I remember seeing some of the people just...

Ruth Tringham:

By this time it was 1977, when I knew that I was not going to get tenure. For six or seven years I lived in one of the colleges, Quincy House, where I was a tutor. That was fun. You don't get much privacy. But I enjoyed being with the students and I played volleyball with them, and so on. There were nice people in the department. I enjoyed that part of it, but I didn't like this whole business of the hierarchy. So one of your questions was how did you find out about the job...

Christina Maslach:

At Berkeley?

Ruth Tringham:

So in the seventh year, in the fall, in December it must've been because that's when they always hold the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, were held in Boston. And I remember it so vividly. These two guys were in a line that I was also in and we all sort of hugged and so on. Desmond Clark and Glynn Isaac who were both faculty members here at Berkeley. They were early hominid archaeologists working in Africa.

Christina Maslach:

Right.

Ruth Tringham:

I knew them from their work and from their participating in two conferences that my mentor, Peter Ucko, at University College, London and I had organized in London; one was about early farming and agriculture and economics, and the other was about urbanization. And these two guys - they were both what we who do later prehistory call "early men." That means they're studying Early Man; we call them early men, because at that time the people who studied the origins of humans were always men. And for a long time, they kept it that way even though Mary Leakey tried to get into the field. I hadn't seen them since the second of those conferences. So, we had lots of hugs and catching up. They said they had been wanting to get in touch with me. Was I interested? There was an opening at Berkeley because the previous European archeology faculty person, called Bob Rodden, had just given up on archaeology. He

decided he didn't want to do it anymore and was going to just go back. He was British or an American who loved Britain and he was going to go and garden in Cambridge (UK) or something like that.

He had just upped and left his work, his students and they needed to hire his replacement. So, I was of course very interested, and I thought how lovely it would be to work with these great guys because I did like them a lot, especially Glynn Isaac. He was more my age and was a really lovely person from South Africa originally, though trained in Cambridge UK. Desmond was from England originally. They were part of Sherry Washburn's group studying early human behavior. That whole year, fall 77 to Spring 78, I interviewed at several other places, Santa Barbara and University of New Mexico, who had said they were interested in me. I did that anyway, although I was pretty sure that if I went anywhere, it would be Berkeley. I'd been to San Francisco once before for a meeting of archaeologists. I found it a very confusing place, but it seemed lovely. I had also actually visited LA many times with a friend who was also interested in the microwear (contact trace) research that I was doing at the time.

Christina Maslach:
Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

I had really thought that I would end up in LA. But, looking back on it, I can't imagine why I would have liked that. I would not have liked that. I don't like the climate down there I applied for the Berkeley job. I gave a talk and I met (was interviewed by) several people: David Hooson, a geographer (from UK) who was the Dean of Social Sciences. Also Rod Park, who was the Vice-Provost and Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences. I was offered the job after a few days, as an associate professor with tenure.

Christina Maslach:
Wow. Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

What was the deciding factor for me was Bill Simmons, then chair of the Dept of Anthropology, who interviewed me in the cafe, what was then called Cafe Roma became Cafe Strada. And I thought, Oh, this is wonderful! Here is this place right next to where I would be working. And, I loved that whole coffee scene. You could not get good coffee at that time in LA.

Christina Maslach:
No.

Ruth Tringham:

Coffee was awful down there, and it still is not so good. But here, at Cafe Strada or Roma or whatever the coffee was amazing. I was not offered a job anywhere else; they stalled all of that. UC Berkeley got in early and offered me the job. Must've been April 1978, something like that. And, I only had one condition. I was so naive, I didn't even bother to negotiate salary; I said I'd

be interested in some lab space to do my experiments, my contact trace experiments. But I really wanted to bring my two graduate students who I'd been working with at Harvard, and I'd worked with in the field, to Berkeley to have them continue their graduate program.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

I didn't even do anything about money. Can you believe it? I didn't have a mentor. Nobody really suggested that. And Glynn and Desmond didn't. So, I think I started with something like \$23,000. Sounds awful in '78.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah. Okay. I don't even remember it.

Ruth Tringham:

No, you don't remember what you got? I was trying to look it up and I can't because it's all pre digital. I had tenure. It was Associate Professor three with tenure.

Christina Maslach:

Perfect. Oh my God.

Ruth Tringham:

Oh my God. I mean, that's why I didn't care about anything. I had security...

Christina Maslach:

That you had. Yeah. Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

I learned later that there was a lot of discussion about whether that should happen, because there was somebody else who the other group of them wanted; he was more famous. I think he was more famous, probably still is more famous than me. I also knew him from those same conferences.

Christina Maslach:

That you were talking about before? Yeah. Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

And I liked him. He was a very sort of outgoing person and they were very interested in having him plus the other person that they were hiring at that time called Jim Deetz, who you might have heard of. He was a historical archeologist; he was not my competitor. Apparently, this Kent Flannery who does Mesoamerican archeology was my competitor. I didn't know this at the time. I had no idea.

Christina Maslach:
Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:
But anyway, they got me. I don't know if because I was a woman, whether that had something to do with my being able to overcome that, and he had published much more than I had. Kent Flannery had. I had the book, but he had books, you know, and I had a field program, but then I think he did as well. I had a field program going, which was definitely to my advantage. And, that's the problem with a lot of women archeologists, that they were not actively directing a field program. And for the archeologists, especially the ones here, that was very important. They were very field-oriented. Not all archeologists were at that time. So anyway, I was in the middle of a field program and had graduate students, the two that I wanted to bring and another one in the offing. She was just finishing her undergraduate and I wanted her to come as well as a graduate student. So, the three of them came.

Christina Maslach:
So they all came? Well, that was good.

Ruth Tringham:
Yeah. They all came, and they all finished. Barbara Voytek became the executive director of the East European center here. And then at Stanford.

Christina Maslach:
Oh my gosh, wow.

Ruth Tringham:
Yeah. I know that was good. They continue to work in the field, in the area and I later worked with one of them. Anyway, so my field project was in the then Yugoslavia. So I had that going for me, this sort of exotic place....

Ruth Tringham:
So, I started here. I had no idea that there were people who didn't want me here. I still never identified who those were, although I had a good guess. There were a couple of the archeologists who never did warm to me, but I didn't warm to them either. And being a Libra, I only warm to people who are warm to me. So anyway, that was how I came to be here.

Christina Maslach:
Okay. That's an interesting story.

Ruth Tringham:
So I think it really depends on the whole thing that archeologists work in the field, and they use that as their judgment of what somebody is like from how successful or how they've been in the field; you've got something tangible.

Christina Maslach:
Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

I mean, throughout the '80s, there was a lack of trust. I did not trust the archeologists, especially once Glynn Isaac left. He left in 1984 and went to Harvard, as a star. And I was really sad at that; it really changed things for me at Berkeley. Because then I didn't really have a friend, a real friend who I would trust. I mean the women who were there by then, Laura was always very supportive. But I never really warmed very much to Nancy, because she was her own person, Nancy Scheper Hughes. But there were others who were there during the '80s and I warmed to them, but I just didn't really bond with them. With Glynn, I had really bonded. It's hard to describe. But anyway, I really wanted Meg Conkey to come.

Christina Maslach:
Did you know her from before?

Ruth Tringham:

I knew her from when I was at Harvard. She would have these conferences and we'd go to Binghamton, where she was teaching. And we bonded, you know, I really liked her, and her husband, Les. And we really got on well together, and I knew that the stuff she was writing was really good, really interesting. And she was already then in the 1980s, early eighties, writing about feminism and archaeology in a very different way from how it had ever been tackled before. Before it was women in the past, whereas Meg was interested in a feminist practice of archeology.

In 1987, she ran this conference, in which she got these women, about 12 or 10 of us, who had been working as professionals in archeology directing excavations and had made our name in the science of archeology. And she and her colleague Joan Gero wanted to bring us all together with Henrietta Moore, who is a social anthropologist who had written a book called *Feminism and Anthropology*, and a historian and some others. And I think three men were invited but didn't do too well in this same conference. It was held in this place called The Wedge in South Carolina. It was NSF-funded, and its aim was to get these women thinking about feminist archaeology who had never thought about feminist archaeology before. So we were all asked to write these papers before the conference, in which we would try and introduce gender in some way or another into our scientific research. I was writing by then about household archeology.

Christina Maslach:
Okay. Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

So you think, Oh, well that's easy. It wasn't; because I had always explicitly said, I am not going to think about who was in the households because we can't do that. I was very much steeped in the processual, hypothetico-deductive, scientific, New archaeology, as it was called, which was

predominant in the United States throughout the 60s, 70s and 80s.

Christina Maslach:

Oh, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

It still is very much at the basis of mainstream archaeology where you're dealing with the tangibles, what you can prove. And so, I was always doing it from that point of view. Even though I'd been talking about figurines, which we found in the settlements that I was digging, it was still very difficult for me to introduce gender into households. So I had this aha moment, or Eureka, at the conference. I wrote about the moment, and people have quoted it again and again. I was presenting my paper and Henrietta Moore said, "Okay, so you talked about these households. Well, who do you see? What do you see when you think about these households?" And I said, "Well, I see some cows and some houses and so on." She asked "Well, what about the people? Who do you see?" "Well, I see, I see some sort of faceless blobs. They're moving around the animals and so on." I suddenly realized what I'd said, that I don't see the people. And oh, my goodness, that's what this is all about. It's not about finding women in archeology. It's actually being able to see people in prehistory, to think about people as individuals, or people with personalities and characters and hopes, and this and that. And so that was for me, such a revolutionary conference. I mean, it changed the whole thing for me. My household archeology became more what we call post-processual. So it's getting into the intangibles that we can't prove, but we must think about.

Christina Maslach:

Ah, okay.

Ruth Tringham:

The people are the intangibles because you don't know what they're doing, I mean, you find them as graves, as bodies, but you still don't know. You don't see them alive.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

This all happened just at the time when we were trying to hire a new archeologist. And they all, especially Desmond Clark, who by that time had become quite cantankerous. I shouldn't say that. But anyway, Desmond and a group of them who really liked and admired archaeology in the field, wanted one of the other candidates who had a lot of field experience. They argued that Meg did not have this, that she wasn't, therefore, a real archaeologist because she had never directed her own excavation, even though she had done survey. But they argued that was not the same. And that most of her research was working in the museum with materials that others had excavated. You know, she'd participated in excavations, but that wasn't enough. She did not have her own project.

Bill Simmons, who was the Chair at that time, and was the closest I had to a friend, I think then at that point and Jim Deetz and some others, we all stuck up for her, argued that she was a real archaeologist. She was a very important archaeologist. She was in the middle of doing some stuff that was really significant. So that won the other social anthropologists over. Because they were all interested in the kind of research that she was doing.

This was maybe the first time that we had really argued that you didn't have to be working in the field to be an archeologist. And in fact, when Meg was hired, she did start a field excavation project very soon afterwards.

But, so we hired her and then everything changed. That was in 1988, I think right after the conference.

Christina Maslach:
Okay. So Meg came...

Ruth Tringham:
So Meg came, yeah. And so that doesn't count as everything, all the history you want to know because all of the stuff that came afterwards was all very different. We hired other women, Meg was only the second archeology woman to...

Christina Maslach:
Oh, okay.

Ruth Tringham:
So I'd been the only one throughout the seventies and eighties almost.

Ruth Tringham:
So Meg came, and then in the 1990s we hired Rosemary Joyce and Christine Hastorf, and Laurie Wilkie and Junko Habu, and in the 2000s, Sabrina Agarwal and Lisa Maher. So during the '90s and much of the 2000s, the UC Berkeley Anthropology department was considered the strongest archaeology contingent in the country.

Christina Maslach:
Right.

Ruth Tringham:
We were getting a lot of women graduate students and there were more women by that time in the field doing research. Our group of archaeologists was considered the leaders in the feminist practice of archaeology; if anybody wanted to study feminist archeology, they would come to Berkeley.

Christina Maslach:
This was the place.

Ruth Tringham:

Yeah, Meg did the same thing with developing indigenous archaeology, getting Native American students to come and study archaeology. And during this we were developing a very different archaeology from the empiricist archaeology that characterized Berkeley during the 60s, 70s and 80s, It was a more reflexive style of archaeological practice that was originally called post processual archaeology when it was first developed in UK. In Post processual archaeology, the archaeologist is a more transparently subjective player in the construction of the past; they base their research in the scientific method of retrieving and analyzing empirical data but are less bound by the restrictions of hypothetico-deductive procedures and reasoning.

Christina Maslach:

Right.

Ruth Tringham:

It was also for me the time of enormous developments in digital technology. This was happening in the early '90s. The World Wide Web, remember, is 1993, it's not that long ago. Before that we had email. But I also had a long history building up into my 1990s fun in digital technology. In the 1970 s when I started digging in Yugoslavia, my US colleagues and I were the first ones in southeast Europe to digitize our materials; it was all done on punch cards. Remember, punch cards? That had to be analyzed in a mainframe (room-sized) computer.

Christina Maslach:

I do remember punch cards.

Ruth Tringham:

So we were doing that on punch cards. I started my project in Yugoslavia while I was still at Harvard in 1976. My first project continued until '79, '80 when I was already at Berkeley. All that stuff at Harvard was on their mainframe computer. But Berkeley Anthropology Department was very fortunate in that they had the Quantitative Anthropology Lab, which was fantastic. It was housed in a small building near where the business school is now or actually next to it.

Christina Maslach:

Oh, okay. Yeah, with those little, all those little houses...

Ruth Tringham:

One of those little, tiny buildings.

Christina Maslach:

Yes.

Ruth Tringham:

And, that's where Professor Gene Hammel, who later founded the Dept of Demography and

who had also worked in Yugoslavia was one of the QAL's directors. He had been trained as an archaeologist at first and then became a social anthropologist and demographer.

Christina Maslach:

Oh, okay, didn't know that.

Ruth Tringham:

Through our mutual interest in Yugoslavia he became a good friend. He was also somebody I trusted. Throughout the 1980s a lot of anthropology graduate students learned quantitative methods in that lab, and many ended up in data-centered jobs in and outside of archaeology. The QAL had a kind of mini mainframe. So that our excavated materials could be entered in their system where the graduate students learned to use it in their dissertations. Gradually we got away from punch cards when my second Yugoslavian project started in Opovo (1983-89). Thanks to the QAL system we were able to enter the data from Fortran sheets straight into the mainframe, from which it would be transferred to those big computer tapes that we can't read any more.

Ruth Tringham:

I threw mine away after I had taken the data off them. But still to write anything digitally, you would have to enter it in a very unfriendly interface in the QAL (or you could use an electric typewriter). Unless, you had one of these Kaypro personal computers. Did you ever have anything like that?

Christina Maslach:

Oh God.

Ruth Tringham:

Then what happened in 1984 was that Apple came out with this thing called the Macintosh. I was teaching in Paris the year before for a semester and had come across a lab full of Apple IIs; they already looked fun, with a mouse and a window that you could see what was happening, but they were very very clunky. Then, this thing called the Macintosh came out, and Gene Hammel somehow secured for free from Apple something like 14 little Macintoshes, the very first ones, little boxes.

Christina Maslach:

Really? Oh my gosh.

Ruth Tringham:

Gene wrote an email to everyone in the department. Now, that's interesting. Was it an email? How did we communicate? One of those blue memo things. Anyway, he asked who would like one of these Macs? And none of the other archeologists wanted one, but I said, yes, immediately. I wanted one because I was dying to get away from having to use the unfriendly QAL system. The Macintosh was mobile (relatively), meaning I could take it home.

Christina Maslach:
Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

I was already living in San Francisco and in order to work on the computer, I would have to come into the QAL to work at night! My other option was to use an electronic keyboard that a friend had given me where I could type at home in SF, but I couldn't see what I was typing. It was a keyboard without a monitor, but it would go straight into the computer. So, of course I was desperate, and I said, yes to Gene's offer, I want one. It was the spring of 1984 and it changed my life, too. That was the first change in my life. I loved it.

Christina Maslach:
Wow.

Ruth Tringham:

And I think he couldn't distribute them amongst the anthropologists. The social anthropologists had their Kaypros that they liked and weren't about to change. I think a couple of them changed. Some of the others maybe, I can't remember, but not very many people wanted one. Why wouldn't they?

Well, Apple were very clever because I remained Apple loyal. Right all the way to now. I've never wavered. I took this little Mac into the field with me on the plane to the excavation in Opovo, Yugoslavia. I have a picture of us entering our data into the Mac. We had a program that we could use to make a little map of what we were excavating.

Christina Maslach:
Oh my gosh.

Ruth Tringham:

And that's where I started really getting into the computer stuff. But, then it really all changed also with the World Wide Web. But it started with Gene. He did me a great service.

Christina Maslach:
Right.

Ruth Tringham:

But I wanted to tell you, during the '80s, one of the things that happened, why Desmond felt, I think, that I had betrayed him in a way. Not in a big way, but intellectually betrayed him. He especially (and maybe Glynn as well) had expected me to continue my research -- microwear on stone tools. That was one of the things that was to my advantage when I was being hired, was my research on Contact Traces - a method that could be used to enrich the information about stone tools from anywhere (including Africa), not just the European archeology that was my specialty. And they were very interested that I develop this at Berkeley.

But I had become very interested in expanding my research on stone tool microwear to contact traces on other materials (bone tools, ceramics, etc.). And now I was thinking of being able to incorporate this research into Middle Range Research in general. In archaeology, Middle Range Research is a way to make a bridge between what we found and how we would like it to be interpreted. But then I thought, well, why just stone tools? Everything touches something. When you break a pot, it bangs on the ground, breaks into certain pieces for a reason, or a building gets traces of damage and modification, so do tools. And so I transferred my experimental research into all materials, and became much less interested in stone tools.

Desmond Clark wanted me to stick with stone tools because he was a Paleolithic archaeologist. And, actually he was also interested in later stuff in Africa, but it was always stone tools were very important materials that they found. And I was not going to do that. Not only that, but I really became interested in the incorporation of the contact trace information of all archaeological materials into Middle Range Theory, and from that into a way of understanding and analysis of people, places and things as having a use-life and a life history.

This means using the contact traces (as well as other observations) to construct the whole sequence of the life of a thing or a place from its being made to how it had been used and thrown away by the traces. You could tell that by the traces, how it had been made, how it had ended up being moved from one place to another, and in what sort of state it was traded or exchanged or whatever. And in what sorts of state was it thrown away? Could it still have been used? Was it re-used? Was it maintained? All of these questions are very much at the heart of marxist anthropology and their whole understanding of the means of production and the social relations of production.

Christina Maslach:
Right, right.

Ruth Tringham:
At least, that's how I saw it in the 1980s. So actually, that became my main research focus during the '80s. And that's how I came to work on social inequality as being manifested in those archaeological materials so that some households had greater access than others to resources. And I became interested in topics like the intensification of production stuff that did not sit well with Desmond's more, traditional cultural historical understanding of archaeology's role. So in the 1980s there was a big theoretical difference between Desmond (and most - but not all - of the other archaeologists) and me as to what I was expected to be doing. Jim Deetz and Glynn Isaac were the exceptions. I went ahead, did the research and taught this stuff anyway. I went to Paris for six months in 1983 because the archaeologists there wanted me to teach this material at the Sorbonne.

So this was very interesting. It certainly antagonized some of my colleagues at Berkeley. I'm not sure to what extent their respect for me grew (or not) as a result of those changes in me, but I was pretty sure that I was growing. I saw that what I was doing was a sort of cumulative knowledge-building from looking at stone tools into this other focus, including household

archaeology.

Christina Maslach:

Wow.

Ruth Tringham:

Did I change my research after I was hired? Yes, I did. But it was not to conform, it was quite the opposite. I didn't do it deliberately to un-conform. I would love it if I could tell that they were interested, but I felt that mostly I did not have their real engagement with what I was doing.

Christina Maslach:

Not in the same way.

Ruth Tringham:

That showed itself when my full professorship promotion came up. Yeah. So it had been fine. I would be promoted via merit reviews every three years to associate prof four, associate prof five, etc. I never leaped over any steps. Either that was because I was a woman, but I think it was also not just that, I was not doing what they were really interested in. The social anthropologists might've been, but they weren't writing the cases. It was the archaeologists writing the cases. I don't know who wrote them, but there were never any problems; I published, I taught, and I had a field project all through the 1980s in Yugoslavia (now Serbia). Just as my project there finished in '89, the Yugoslav civil war started.

Christina Maslach:

Oh yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

So my full professor promotion was being prepared in 1987. It was during the time that Meg was being hired. The fallout happened during her first year.

Christina Maslach:

Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

A big part of the case was the book, at that time in manuscript (in press) form, comprising the report of the Selevac, Yugoslavia archaeological excavation project. So, it wasn't actually a published book yet. It was a big thick book, with lots of chapters that I had edited alone. Well, with a Yugoslav colleague who wrote nothing, did nothing, one of those sleeping partners. It contained a big theoretical chapter at the beginning and at the end, written by me, with my application of Middle Range Theory, my new household and sedentism causality theorizing, and quite a lot of marxist (with a small M) stuff. There were also chapters by all my graduate students who had participated in the project and written their PhDs on those materials. I encouraged graduates to work on an established project, in contrast to the person who was actually writing my case, who encouraged graduate students to have their own site project. I

always thought that it's really not helpful in a student's career-building to have your own site project. You need to piggy-back on somebody who will do all the administration stuff for you. You know, especially in a foreign country, take advantage of a senior figure who sets up all the logistics. And then you can focus on your research...

I had promised my students a publication chapter. So, they focused on their bone and stone tools and ceramics and so on. And so, it was a big enterprise and a big fat book. It was my first book since that "*Hunters, Fishers, and Farmers*," for which I was hired at Harvard. I've never been a big writer. I will admit that on tape. I don't like writing very much. I think the world has too many books, but anyway.

So this book was the main basis of the case, and the person writing the case, who was supposed to be my advocate, tore it apart. He tore it apart, can you believe it!

Christina Maslach:

Really? Writing your case. Oh my God.

Ruth Tringham:

Yes. I have all the evidence for it. But it was so blatantly torn apart, not even thinking about specific details that were not really relevant to the whole part, or grammatic errors, or maybe some typos. Rather, he went through every single table and added them up to see they were correct, and he came across a couple of mistakes there. Oh, heaven forbid. He concluded she's not a scientist. She's not a proper archaeologist. She can't add up properly - that sort of thing. And it was just torn apart in that sort of detail. And there was other stuff too; he was just not going to have me promoted to be a full professor.

It was because what I was writing was so different from what he had ever done. It was not Desmond. And it was not John Graham. It was not Jim Deetz. It was somebody whose work and interests absolutely did not overlap with mine at all. Except that he had written about things like working with multiple hypotheses, which is what ambiguity is all about. But he'd never put it in those terms.

But, you know, in a way we could have had some kind of conversations. But I think that this was a long-term problem that was going on from what I was telling you before, about how I was hired.

Christina Maslach:

Right.

Ruth Tringham:

That this was the last point at which he could do what he had been wanting to do since I was hired, to reject and negate my work. Fortunately, the department chair and faculty committee decided that his statement of my case was over the top with too much personal subjectivity going. So, they asked Meg - in her first semester - to redo the case. I don't know if there was a

precedent for that.

Christina Maslach:

Wow.

Ruth Tringham:

Apparently it was quite unusual.

Christina Maslach:

Well, it must've been, I mean, the evidence of what was there...

Ruth Tringham:

I wrote my own response to his statement, which was almost as long as the personnel case itself. I don't remember who was chair at that point. I don't think it was still Bill Simmons. Anyway, whoever it was decided that the case could not go forward like this. So, they redid it, and thanks to Meg, my promotion went through without a problem (1988). And the book was published at the end of 1989.

Christina Maslach:

Wow. Okay.

Ruth Tringham:

I refused to talk to him anymore. It's the only time I've ever had that kind of animosity towards me in my whole career. I was just befuddled. I couldn't believe it. And you know, it wasn't even constructive criticism. It was destruction. Pure and simple.

Christina Maslach:

Wow.

Ruth Tringham:

I know. So that ends the period of which we are talking. He retired quite soon afterwards through an early retirement scheme.

Christina Maslach:

Oh, Verip is what it was called.

Ruth Tringham:

Yes, and a lot of the department oldies retired. It must've been in the early nineties? About '93, '94.

Because then we started hiring all these other wonderful archaeologists. Kent Lightfoot was hired at the same time as Meg, and those two were just gorgeous people, and I loved them and I still love them. And Pat Kirch came soon after that. I never really bonded with him very much, but I liked him a lot too. And then Rosemary Joyce, who I always had got on well with. And

Laurie Wilkie, too. You know, I've always liked all of them, and Christine.

Ruth Tringham:

You've got some other questions, right?

Christina Maslach:

Well it was about teaching...

Ruth Tringham:

Yeah. So, the teaching, I never got very good reviews when I was teaching large undergraduate classes. It's not my forte but I actually became much better at it in the 2000s after I went on that first Mellon workshop. In 2003.

Christina Maslach:

Yes, I remember!

Ruth Tringham:

That was really fun, working that out and working with a couple of the graduate students on creating this team-oriented way of making the sections into research teams and production teams. I just gave a presentation about that at the Society for American Archaeology meetings. Talking about the MACTiA (Media Authoring Center for Teaching in Anthropology), and how we had been teaching digital skills, but always making the content of what we were teaching have the priority over the technology. So, I did get better at teaching I think in the 2000s.

But I think that when I'm teaching these big introductory classes, it's such a huge topic and I always want to talk about everything; I don't want to leave out the details because it's the details that are really important. That's how I see it. But that means that I have a tendency to move in non-linear directions, like our conversation has been now.

Christina Maslach:

Yeah. Yeah.

Ruth Tringham:

The students don't like nonlinear. They call it disorganization. And there wasn't disorganization, I was telling a story and I was trying to work out for me how it all winds around and comes together like a story. This is completely off the topic, but do you know the books of Kate Atkinson? She's a mystery writer and she recently wrote a book called *Transcription*.

Christina Maslach:

Oh, okay. I'll have to look at it.

Ruth Tringham:

She writes the way I think; she's got many stories coming from different directions, and you wonder how are they all going to fit together? And then they all do by the end.

Christina Maslach:
Right.

Ruth Tringham:
But when I was teaching the big courses, I never had time to get to the end... So, what I learned was to restrain myself, but I didn't learn that until the early 2000s.

Christina Maslach:
Right, right.

Ruth Tringham:
I knew that I should try and do that because that's what you have to do. You have to work to your audience. But it was easier to do that once everything was divided up, with the sections, which is what I learned in that Mellon workshop. I always got really good reviews in the seminars because what I always wanted to encourage the students to do was their own research. When Meg came, we started teaching upper division courses (in the '90s) with teams, we called them panels. We would have the students be in teams of three or four and then make them do their own research projects and present them to the rest of the class, in an inquiry-based format. My best teaching was always inquiry based.

Ruth Tringham:
It started when I first came to Berkeley and I was teaching these experimental lab courses (contact traces - remember?) where the students would be doing their own research but I would set the theme. This kind of teaching was project oriented. I always preferred the students to work in teams as a way of learning collaboration that they'll have to use in real life. So, with the upper division course teaching, I always got much better reviews because I was more comfortable working with graduate students and more motivated undergraduates, in a more apprenticeship mode.

And especially if it was around research that I was interested in. I actually never taught anything that I wasn't interested in. I always had a choice at Berkeley. It was so nice. At Harvard, I didn't really have a choice so much, being a baby professor; they demanded that you must teach this intro class or that European archeology course. I think that when I came to Berkeley, I became more diva-like, and said, no, I'm only going to teach what I'm interested in it.

Christina Maslach:
Yeah. Well, that's great. Ruth, this has been a fascinating story, the way you tell it. It's been really wonderful.

END.