BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Barbara Ginsburg Shaw

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Barbara Ginsburg Shaw conducted by Carla Ricci on September 10, 2015. This interview is part of the Barnard Class of 1971 Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project

Interviewee: Barbara Ginsburg Shaw

Location: Falmouth, Maine
Interviewer: Carla Ricci

Date: September 10, 2015

00:00:00 Q: (??)

Shaw: I can. I'm Barbara Shaw, Barbara Ginsberg Shaw, my address here is 7 Heron Point Road, in Falmouth, Maine. You wanted the phone number, Carla? (207)775-7429. egshaw jd@gmail.com is probably the best.

Shaw: I'll start with where I was born. I was born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, a small town in North Central Pennsylvania, best known probably, and mostly by men, as "The Birthplace of Little League Baseball." It was a town that my parents arrived at in the 1940's from New York City, from Brooklyn, and my father was brought out there to manage a factory for an uncle in New York. This was—particularly for my mother who had grown up in a very parochial Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn—a huge change, and Williamsport was

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a just quintessential small town, rural life, and a pretty part of Pennsylvania. Williamsport is

along the Susquehanna River, and it was a pretty nice place to grow up.

I am the youngest of the three children in our family; an older sister was almost ten years

older than me, a brother seven years older than me. And I had a, you could say, a pretty easy

time growing up there; I was the baby of the family, I didn't give my parents much grief, and

I was a good student, didn't make a lot of waves.

I was, by the time I was an adolescent, I think very eager to leave Williamsport. We would

travel to New York to visit family because that's where both the sides of the extended family

were, and I was very impressed and turned on by the idea that I could leave this little town

where nothing much was happening from my perspective and go to the big city. So going to

New York for college was a big goal, and it's where I really thought life would start—I had

been missing out living in this little town and now life would really start for me. That was

certainly something that attracted me to Barnard. We were a family of Jews in a town that

was overwhelmingly non-Jewish, so I think I grew up with kind of a sense of being part of

"the other," and I think that was probably also a reason that going to a big city in a place that

was a lot more diverse was very attractive to me. (laughs)

00:05:43 Q: <u>(??)</u> homogenous.

Shaw: And where was that?

00:05:48 Q: (??)

Shaw: Homogenous in a different way.

00:05:51 Q: Yes. (??) there must be <u>four</u> (??). Did you consider other colleges?

Shaw: Yes, I went to a large high school, because it was the one high school for all of that whole area, maybe seven or eight hundred students. And I did well, I was a pretty academic kid, and I was highly motivated to do well so that I could have choices. A large percentage of my class went to places like Penn State, local colleges, but I had my eye on bigger cities. So I think my choices came down to Barnard largely because it was in New York, and University of Pennsylvania, which was also at that point a place that smart kids went and it was a known entity. I was not really versed enough to even think too much about schools in New England because it was not part of our universe.

So when I got into both Penn and Barnard I had a big choice to make, and my parents were not particularly in favor, ironically, of my going to New York. They felt it was a dangerous place to be, despite the fact that in many ways my mother remained very much you know comparing most things in her world to New York, the idea that I would go—I think she felt that it was quite perilous. So they tried to discourage me away from that; we visited the University of Pennsylvania and I recall well my reaction to the weekend I visited there. Penn was very— appeared at least to my seventeen-year-old eyes—a very social place. There were a lot of parties going on, there was obviously a lot of sorority and fraternity activity, which was a real turnoff to me, and I remember thinking that if I go here I'm probably going to feel like I need to be part of that and I'm not sure that's what I want.

Visiting Barnard was kind of a 180 degree difference that at that point I guess I was looking for It was made very clear to me that being a serious student was totally okay, going out on

the weekends if you wanted but plenty of girls stayed in, no big deal. And I think for whatever reason I really responded to that notion that this is where I could go and be a serious student and that was going to be just fine. *And*, the other big piece of it is I would be let loose in New York, which to me was a real Mecca. So it didn't come down to being that hard a decision for me—looking back on it now I really have to sort of give my parents credit because I think it was more advantageous financially for me to have attended Penn. I don't recall now, but I think I had a scholarship or something, and we were not people of means, but nonetheless they let me make the choice about it.

Shaw: What are the things of my childhood?

00:10:32 Q: Well I have many questions here. Let's stay on the straight and narrow. Tell me a story about your parents, about who they were. Also, where did your family originate from? Was there ever a time or experience where you felt different from your friends, and tell me about that. So tell me family origins, we touched on some of that, but maybe even earlier, an experience _____(??)

Shaw: We're talking about experiences as a child or about my parents' origins. I think I alluded to, and I think that probably did color a lot of my childhood and sense of myself in the early years—my parents both came from New York, they were born in this country, their parents all came to the United States from various places in Eastern Europe at the end of the twentieth century, but their experiences living in New York I think were even by the time they met quite different.

My father was in a large family that appeared to have assimilated rather quickly, so although they were Jews and identified as Jews they were out and about in the world, and enjoying, I'd say, the non-Jewish cultural world as much as the Jewish one, and they liked theatre a lot, singing, they were kind of a dramatic bunch.

My mother's family was still far more sort of shaped I guess by their sort of roots, and so my mother grew up in a family that kept kosher. Her grandfather—my great-grandfather, her father's father—lived with them and I think was extremely observant, so her world was very much defined by the neighborhood, and I'm not sure that probably they even had that much interaction with people who were not Jewish. And I think she brought that world view even moving out of New York into not even Williamsport because my parents moved to the small town of Montgomery, which is only a few thousand people where this factory was.

So I imagine my mother moving from a place where everybody is her ethnicity to a place where virtually nobody was, and how abrupt and how probably difficult that was. And they ultimately moved to Williamsport in part because that was a place where there was a Jewish community, there was a synagogue. I think they moved so that my older brother and sister could go to religious school, but I think in many respects my mother continued to see the world as those who were Jewish and those who aren't. And her social life largely remained connected to that congregation, she was always very active with that, and I'm sure that that influenced my sense of self, so there was always a—I remember Christmas for example being a challenging time of year because that was really the time when you were aware that your family life and your celebrations had nothing to do with the mainstream. And I remember as a kid always kind of worrying about what I was going to say when we came back from Christmas vacation because the talk was always about what I got for Christmas.

And at that point—I think Chanukah has now over the years been marketed and elevated to take some kind of Jewish equivalent of Christmas, but back then it really wasn't. So I'm sure that sort of informed my sense of being part of this minority in a town that was overwhelmingly white and non-Jewish.

My father on the other hand was a far more easy going guy who used to enjoy being part of Rotary [non-sectarian community service group of business leaders], which was a weekly dinner, and he was a person who made friends easily. He I think had a world view in which the world was not really just about those who were Jewish and those who weren't, fortunately for him because his job was managing local workers and within a manufacturing facility, and I think he did that well, and had a personality that allowed him to do that with ease. So those are my parents' stories.

I remember fondly the stories that my mother used to tell about her growing up, in which I heard about a young girl that was nothing like the pretty serious and kind of strict woman she became. She liked talking about any time on the boardwalk in Brighton Beach, which is where they lived, and a crowd of friends that played sports together. And in her heyday she was a fairly tall woman and I think she was kind of athletic, so this was nothing like the mother I knew, and it always struck me when she would talk about those years.

The family was a large extended family and her parents were the ones who had a home that sounded like it functioned often as a boarding house where an aunt or an uncle were always coming to live with them. And again she spoke about that with a lot of affection, which was, "This was how it was." I think my parents had—my mother really ruled the home, my father

was somebody who probably was a more easy-going, affectionate personality, he was the one I would hang out with after school. [long silence]

00:19:30 Q: Who was the most influential person in your life and could you tell me stories about this person? And can you start with restating the question?

Shaw: I think the most influential person in my life prior to college probably was my mother. She was a pretty dominating personality, and the one I had the most interaction with. A story about her—well, in thinking about this interview and many stories one can think about ones involving a daughter and her mother, and I was thinking about things that kind of had stuck with me, and I remember I was—it must have been in Junior High School—I was trying some kind of pre-professional experience, or we were asked to think about what careers we might be interested in, and at the time I thought that I would like to be a doctor.

Probably at this time I'm not sure I may have known any women in medicine; my mother's brother was a surgeon and I know I looked up to and admired him. But I remember having a conversation with my mother about this, and not in a scolding way but in a kind of, "This is sort of the way life is, Barbara," I think she tried to explain to me that it would be very difficult for me to be a doctor and also to have a family, and that maybe I ought to rethink that because certainly I wanted to get married and have children and that probably would not be possible if I was going to pursue medicine.

So being the kid I was I guess I really did take her advice to heart, and I thought, Well, I like science, and somehow I came up with the idea that medical technology would be a good compromise. So I remember just pulling that out of my hat with really no reflection of what that job was but it seemed close enough without jeopardizing this whole other part of my life.

So I think I was probably fairly influenced by her, I think that's an indication. I guess the other person that I was very influenced by in my adolescence particularly was my brother, who I think had a whole lot to do with what I thought about, and in terms of his introducing me to music and art and film he played a big role in my life that way.

00:24:00 Q: ______(??)

Shaw: Do we have to do all the questions, is there a (laughs)

00:24:09 Q: We could try, and I think we'll be able to. _____(??) You feeling comfortable?

Shaw: Yup.

Q: Do you want to _____(??)

Shaw: Nope.

00:24:27 Q: Describe the street you grew up on: what did you see, hear and smell there, and maybe you can apply the same to your elementary school.

Shaw: Describing the street I grew up on and the elementary school I attended, I lived at 354 Lincoln Avenue, and it was a nice residential street, a Dutch colonial house on the corner, kids in the neighborhood—it was the kind of neighborhood where after school we roller-skated, we biked, we hung out. I don't know how you feel about it having raised two children but I see that now particularly how much of that sort of neighborhood life has really changed over time. I walked to the elementary school which was probably about a mile away, and it was a small elementary school, there was no cafeteria there so actually we walked home for lunch.

So much of what I remember about elementary school took place on the walks, the four walks back and forth. There were a group of kids and kids we picked up along the way, and I think I enjoyed that sort of element of independence, the little store you stopped after school to get a bag or candy or pretzels, those were I think big deals as a kid. I *skipped* a grade, that was probably the big thing that happened to me in the first few years of school. I was a tall kid as—six or seven years old, and in second grade they got me this sort of taller desk because [laughs] I needed it, I mean I was tall but I don't know. Anyway, I ended up skipping the third grade and going from second to fourth grade, which I think was done more frequently in those years. I was probably fairly mature. I don't remember having any big problems as a result of a year skipped.

Shaw: You know the question is whether I ever bullied anyone or felt bullied, and I can't say that I experienced that, at least in what I would—what I conceive of as bullying, I think the definition of that term has broadened greatly over the last couple of years. But, no, I don't really remember having those kinds of interactions with kids.

00:28:17 Q: You touched on ______(??) the school, how they treat you differently cause of your race or your economic background, like Christmas.

Shaw: Yeah, and I think that was really all throughout my education; the high school that I attended started the day with The Lord's Prayer and a hymn. And so we're talking now about 1964, and after that, a period during which this kind of conduct hadn't been determined by the courts [laughs] to be a violation [laughs)] of free exercise. And I remember it being

bothersome to me, I didn't like it, but it was clear to me that nobody was going to stand up and say anything about it.

00:29:27 Q: Teenage years? What do you remember?

Shaw: Teenage years—well I think I had—I think I had a lot of interest in boys, I think I had a very kind of limited sense of an experience with boys, probably started some dating in junior high and high school, but pretty innocent stuff. So again the question of whether you stayed within your own group, this Jewish group or was the world larger, was kind of a big issue, and I think my parents realized that the pool of boys that were Jewish was quite small and so they didn't give me any trouble when I started going out with boys who I met at school.

00:30:50 Q: Who were not Jewish.

Shaw: Who were not Jewish.

00:30:55 Q: And your graduating class _______ Jewish(??)

Shaw: Well, the graduating class was seven or eight hundred students, so it took in the whole area there. The Jewish population was probably only a few hundred in the whole area, so I had—there was a handful of Jewish kids in each class, there were a handful of African Americans, they were even more invisible than the Jews. And so I remember—well, I remember two episodes. I was asked to a dance at the Williamsport Country Club by a boy I was seeing whose family belonged to the country club; it was well-known that Williamsport Country Club did not admit Jewish members, and I remember going to the dance and feeling very uncomfortable and thinking to myself, I won't do this again, I won't come to someplace

where I'm not wanted. Not that anything was ever said or indicated but the feeling I brought to it I'm sure myself.

00:34:15 Q: Did you have a best friend at school?

Shaw: I had a number of very good friends. The best friend whose name was Sue Hersenberg, we spent a lot of time together, we, you know, rode bikes together. I was at her home one day and she had a dog who I was—I really loved dogs, the dog I think was frightened for some reason and jumped up and bit me in the face. It was a bad enough bite, and I needed stitches, and it was on my face and I remember—our parents were good friends, and I was probably ten years old, something like that so I don't recall, and was certainly not part of whatever my discussion my parents would have had with her parents about it, but they didn't get rid of the dog, and after a couple of weeks I went back there, and it was sort of like nothing had happened. I had had a friend who had a very bad scar on her face and I

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remember being very worried that I would look like that. But we remained good friends after

that time.

[Pause for break]

00:36:14 [Static in recording, resumes at 00:45:04]

Shaw: The second event that changed my life was a very sad one. We had three children and

lost our son in a car accident when he was nearly six years old. With him in the car was a

nanny who was taking care of him, so it was an accident in—a January day, when there was

bad black ice on the road. He was our third child, our youngest child, that was 1989. And I

would say that that event changed the rest of our family's life, certainly changed my life, so

those were highs and lows I guess.

00:46:13 Q: [Unclear]

Shaw: She died as well. She was a lovely, lovely young woman from California who had just

turned up at our door one day, sent by a friend we knew who knew we were looking for

somebody to help us with childcare. And she was really trying I think to create her own

independent life and so had left California and her family—we really embraced her. She was

a lovely young woman in her mid-twenties, she had probably limited experience of winter

driving, and—you know, I don't really even know the details, it was a single car accident,

and both of them died right away.

00:47:24 (??)

Shaw: Yes.

00:47:40 Q: Are you the same person who walked through the gates of Barnard as a freshman? If not, what happened that changed you?

Shaw: Well, I think we're all—I think the answer to that question of whether I'm the same person who walked through Barnard or not, or how changed, is maybe a big yes and no. I believe that we all have sort of core personalities that are shaped per family by the experiences of our childhood and early years. And I think I also believe that we have great power to evolve and change and respond to what happens to us in our lives. So am I the same person? Yeah, I'm the same person. Am I changed by life? Who isn't changed by life? And I think that experiences at Barnard and certainly the decades afterwards have just sort of added layers on to that little girl that I was in 1967.

00:49:13 Q: Let's give ourselves a five-minute break.

Shaw: Sounds good!

[Pause]

Shaw: Well, I think the most profoundly joyous days have been around the birth of our children in terms of just the life that one can't quite put into words. I think I've been joyful at accomplishing other goals in life. Most recently I started doing triathlons and the first

triathlon I did I felt quite joyous, exhausted but quite joyous! But, no, I think bringing children into the world was probably right up there on the joy meter.

00:50:44 Q: Have you had any obstacle that was placed in your path and how did you deal with it?

Shaw: An obstacle placed on my path and how did I deal with it? You know I have a hard time with that question, I'm not sure how to answer it. I think obstacles happen all the time. Some are pretty minor and insignificant. I don't think I have a good answer for that question.

00:51:24 Q: ______(??) Let's skip that one, we can go to that later. Anything you've done or not done in your life that you ______(??)

Shaw: I would say, no. And that's not to suggest that my life has been perfect or that there haven't been things that maybe I wish had gone another way. But I don't think the answer is that I wish my life were different. I think my life has been a good expression of who I am and I guess the choices that I've made along the way I'm okay with.

00:52:26 Q: What are you most afraid of? (??)

Shaw: Yeah—the question of what am I most afraid of? I think I'm probably afraid of ill health. I have had lymphoma, and had a recurrence of that, so I guess that's probably in terms of physical fears, what I am most afraid of.

00:53:19 Q: When you were a student what did you most want out of life?

Shaw: It's a little hard to recall what I most wanted when I was seventeen or eighteen years old, but trying to cast myself back to that, I probably wanted to be successful in a career. I

remember many times thinking about that. I'm not sure I exactly knew what I wanted to be,		
but I think being able to launch myself in a career was important.		
00:54:07 Q: Did your friends (??) career?		
Shaw: I think that everybody that I was friendly with at school saw themselves as either		
going onto graduate school or working in a profession, it seems to me. I mean my circle of		
close friends all had their eye on that.		
00:54:34 Q: <u>(??)</u>		
Shaw: Yes, yes. Did you find that to be so among your contemporaries?		
00:54:43 Q: No.		
Shaw: Really?		
00:54:50 Q: The girls(??) never ever talked about that		
(??) [Shaw laughs] This is great, this is what life is all		
about(??)		
Shaw: Yeah, so I don't think I had quite figured in my head how this was all going to work,		
especially given my mother in my head, and work, have a career that was meaningful and be		
married and have children, and that I wasn't focusing on at eighteen or nineteen. But		
certainly the idea of contributing meaningfully, that was important, and that remains		
important.		
00:56:09 Q: And so you wanted to		

Shaw: Yes.

00:56:12 Q: At the age of seventeen, when did you come to Barnard, seventeen?

Shaw: Seventeen.

00:56:20 Q: So now we're entering your Barnard years, tell me about something that happened which confirmed that your decision to attend Barnard was the right one.

Shaw: Well, I think that finding a group of friends who were like-minded, and had some of the same thoughts and ambitions, was kind of a revelation for me. I was a smart kid and there were certainly other smart kids growing up, but I think being academically inclined and being—not having to put any kind of shadow over that was a very liberating feeling.

00:57:22 Q: Did you feel that somewhere in your high school years you had to hide some of those.

Shaw: Yeah, I did. And I academically excelled, but I also was aware that being too smart was probably putting a damper on my social life. It didn't terribly bother me because I think I was just looking ahead, you know—I didn't see my life as peaking in high school—this was something to get through and get on to the next.

00:58:02 Q: Describe this ______ (??) you set foot on the Barnard campus, what did you see, feel and smell, how did it feel physically and _____ (??)

Shaw: I have no recollection of this at all [laughs] of when I first moved onto the Barnard campus! I think I was I'm sure quite overwhelmed—I mean I was your quintessential small town girl, thrust in New York City, and I think I probably felt very out of my element, and aware that there was around me a lot of young women who appeared to be much more with it and able to swim in a much bigger pond than I was used to.

Shaw: I had real doubts about my ability to perform and achieve I think my first semester. I think the academic preparation that I had going to Barnard was probably not at the level of a lot of the other students in our class, and it took some catching up that first semester, maybe first year, to get to a place where I felt like I was able to write papers, respond in class where I felt at ease. So I'm sure that I had a lot of moments in that first year where I wondered why, why had I done this rather than gone to Penn State [laughs].

01:00:42 Q: Tell me about the moment you decided to attend Barnard.

Shaw: The moment I decided to attend Barnard was, I think I alluded to earlier in the interview, when I realized that this is a place where I could be a serious student and where social pressures were not going to interfere with that, *and* it was in New York.

Shaw: Well, I have—in terms of describing myself on my first day at Barnard, I wonder whether I was wearing what I probably wanted to wear which would have been maybe pants or jeans, because up until that point those things were never allowed as part of the school wardrobe—but I suspect I did not, I suspect I wore something that I thought was more proper like a skirt, but I have no real recollection of what I looked like. I remember being just very in awe particularly of the Columbia campus and its grandeur and the buildings, and I was in

love, mad love with New York City that first year or two. And I remember just getting up, and thinking, Can you believe that you're in New York, and you're living in New York!

So what that meant for me was that often I would cut class and go downtown, go to a museum, go to a movie, and as far as I was concerned this was part of my college experience. Because I think obviously to a great extent it was about the freedom and independence of being in college and at college at a place like Barnard that really wasn't looking over my shoulder too much. And I think coming from the childhood experience I had that was quite exhilarating to be my own boss for a while, I think I certainly the first year or two I got quite a kick out of that.

01:03:47 Q: When you were out exploring in the city did you go on your own, go with friends, girls, boys?

Shaw: Usually I went myself. And I'd sometimes go out at night and go places, and you know I doubt that I told my parents about it because I think they would have been fearful for me. But I found it thrilling, you know, I enjoyed it, I liked the exploration. This was really for me a large part of why I wanted to leave the kind of environment I had grown up in.

01:04:27 Q: When you go back to New York do you gravitate to some of the places you used to go?

Shaw: Not so much. I mean I think years ago, a lot of those places like the Thalia [Art Deco film house on the Upper West Side], a lot of the little restaurants are no longer there, but I certainly think about my Barnard years as being much more about living in New York than being that focused on those buildings at 116th Street.

01:05:04 Q: Did you find yourself atypical	(??) in the city, did you
(??)	

Shaw: Well, a number of my friends were New Yorkers, so for them if they were commuters or whatnot this was no new experience for them. For other students like me who were coming from away, yeah, I think I did find that some of my close friends, we would do things together.

01:05:48 Q: And when you entered Barnard who did you expect you would	become
(??), we have the expectations that we'd do something	(??) some
kind of career, did you know what career, or (??)	

Shaw: Well I think I had settled in my—I think I was always interested in writing, and in some part of my—sense of the future—I think I imagined that I would be writing in some way, that I would study English. I had a brief flirtation with anthropology for the first year, it was a brand new discipline, a subject I knew nothing about and I found it fascinating. And then, you know I think I probably moved away from that because I did not see that as being my life, I somehow couldn't quite conjure up a notion of, What's my life as an anthropologist going to be like—I can't see that. So I became an English major, and I think I assumed that I would go on to graduate school and teach in college.

01:07:30 Q: While you were at Barnard who was your mentor?

Shaw: Who was my mentor at Barnard? I had a very warm relationship with Ruth Kivic, who I don't know if you remember her, she was English faculty, and I think I was assigned to her as an advisee. And she was a very bright woman, but also, I thought, somebody who was one of the few people at Barnard who really talked to me as a person and I felt very comfortable

coming to her with problems or issues that I was having. I was in a couple of her classes, enjoyed her teaching a great deal. I'm not sure that—I mean, I think she was a good counselor, a mentor professionally probably not, but she was probably one of the few people I felt I could go to and get good advice and direction from.

01:09:05 Q: Who inspires or influences you most now?

Shaw: Well, I think that probably my husband and my daughters do in obviously different ways. I think they—watching them lead their own lives and make choices inspires me.

Certainly I think my husband does. He's a huge cheerleader in my life and—it is the most grounded relationship that I think gives my life great purpose.

01:10:31 Q: Here comes a goodie, we are not the average person here.

Shaw: Yes.

01:10:31 So, the question is, tell me about the moment you heard about something happening in the Spring of '68, _______(??) Maybe I should rephrase, maybe that sense of something wrong??

Shaw: The question is, when did I first become aware of something happening in the spring of '68? My memories are surprisingly sort of scattered and kind of impressionistic I would say of the whole time. I wish that I could locate some of the writings that I had done during that time to refresh my memory, but I remember suddenly being aware of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], SAS [Student Afro Society], of meetings, of discovery of what was happening in Morningside Park, but I have no—there was no sort of "aha" moment for me around that.

But I remember as the days and weeks went on how all-encompassing this all became and became sort of "our life." It was the one period when the rest of New York sort of disappeared; I remember never leaving campus then because that world was just so all-encompassing, and we could have been anywhere in the universe because this drama was being played out right in front of us. I can't say that I was at all in any leadership role; I did not occupy any of the buildings. I attended the marches and meetings, I remember multi-hour meetings on the strategy of how this group was going to interact with that group. But it all seemed so clear-cut then, the wrongness and the rightness of students' position, how could the university not get this? You know, it would be nice to cast yourself back into your eighteen-year-old head to be able to look through those eyes.

01:14:03 Q: What do you remember visually, and also how did this turmoil (??)

Shaw: Well, it's interesting, what I remember visually most was the culmination with the police coming in and dragging people out. And I must have been in a Barnard building because I remember looking down on Broadway and seeing the police and seeing them with clubs and seeing students out in the street. I certainly remember being among great crowds of people listening to speakers, and listening—going mostly over on the Columbia side of the campus in front of Low Library. And the level of passion that I remember being just struck by, how important this all seemed to me, far more important than anything else happening in the world. And I remember trying to communicate that to a relative of mine and really not getting anywhere.

I remember also the impact on my classes; I remember the turmoil both freshman year and junior year when the semester was abbreviated. I remember the big decision about whether

you would attend a class, or whether a teacher or a professor would hold the class inside a building or outside basically, that that was itself a political decision of how you were going to show what side you were on. It was for somebody who had grown up in a pretty quiet rural town a huge politicization, a huge education for me that freshman year.

01:17:09 Q: <u>(??)</u>

Shaw: Yes.

01:17:12 Q: Or a huge gust of confusion.

Shaw: It was, and you know what's mixed in my mind were the sort of parochial problems dealing with Morningside Heights, and the gym and all of that. And then all the things that were involved with the Vietnam War, and to what extent the university was complicit with research or work around the war.

01:17:53 Q: Did you have a sense you were actively involved?

Shaw: Yes, I did. You know I had friends who had decided to occupy buildings, but I don't think any of my close friends were student leaders or in SDS. I think we as a group of friends were pretty much trying to muddle our way through.

Shaw: The question was, was there a time when the sexual revolution seemed real to me? I think coming to Barnard and seeing young women leave for the weekend with their lovers was a pretty overwhelming kind of statement for young Barbara, and I think the fact that in that—I don't know if it's exactly '67 or '68 when "the pill" [oral contraceptive] really

became on the market and very well distributed, and it was a huge change. I grew up in an environment in which I didn't know any high school girls who had sex with boys. Or I did, and those were "bad" girls, who if things happened to them got sent away, and that was pretty much the end of it. So the idea that I could be who I was and have a sexual life, and not be categorized in that way was a big breakthrough, and certainly I think coming to Barnard and meeting a lot of women who were more sexually experienced, had different sexual orientations, that was quite new to me as well.

01:21:04 Q: Without being too forward here [Shaw laughs], was there a point in which you decided to add some birth control, and how would you go about doing that?

Shaw: The question is, when did I think about birth control, and I must have thought about it because I was starting to have sex—you know I can't remember how it was that I obtained birth control pills, that's interesting. I guess I must have gone—was there a clinic at Barnard? I don't remember that. No. I have no idea. I'm certain that I did not share this with my mother, so I must have taken care of it myself in New York, and gone to see somebody and gotten the pill.

01:22:14 Q: Was there a moment when you did something and thought, Who am I? Who have I turned into? What am I doing? I would never have done this then—

Shaw: Gee, the question is, was there a moment when I thought, Who am I, I can't believe I'm doing this. I don't think so!

Shaw: In terms of impactful events in the late '60's, I guess it's '68 when both [Rev. Dr. Martin Luther] King [Jr.] and [Robert F.] Kennedy—and then [Richard M.] Nixon was elected in '68, is that right, do I have my dates right?

Shaw: Oh, I'm sorry, that would have been much earlier, that would have been—

Shaw: Well, '60–'64 would have been [President Lyndon B.] Johnson, so yes, I think it is '68, and Kent State [Massacre], and a particularly tumultuous time, when you would sort of sit back and say, What's happening in our world? What is this coming to that every leader that we have is struck down?' And the fact that we were getting deeper and deeper into this war in Southeast Asia was profoundly disturbing to me.

01:24:51 Q: (??) know people from Columbia who went to Vietnam?

Shaw: I did not.

01:25:00 Q: Did you know any back home?

Shaw: Yes, I did know people, and I did know young men who didn't come back from Vietnam, because in Williamsport there were a lot of guys who went over. Just about everybody I knew at Columbia was protected in some way or another. I mean I didn't know anybody at Columbia who was drafted.

01:25:35 Q: In 1971 to the present, how has your adult life been the life you anticipated the day you left Barnard, and how has it been different?

Shaw: The question is, how has my adult life been since I left Barnard, forty-some years ago [laughs] and how has it been different? Well, I'm not even sure that at that age I knew what my life or could foresee obviously what my life was going to be like. I think my life has had a lot of mostly interesting twists and turns, and I think that probably I would not have predicted that—I think I like most young people had the notion that I would have a career plan, stick to it, accomplish that and that isn't what happened at all. So that I think probably could not have been foreseen.

01:26:56 Q: And the twists and turns?

Shaw: Well, I intended to be a college professor. I was interested in literature and in talking about literature, and I think I assumed those interests wouldn't necessarily translate into a career in teaching. And I went to graduate school at Penn, after college, and was in a doctoral program there for a number of years. We started having—I got married in '71, the year we graduated, and we spent some time in Atlanta; my husband was at CDC [Center for Disease Control and Prevention] for a number of years. I continued on with my graduate work, and taught in Georgia, taught in Atlanta. We returned to Philadelphia where he completed his cardiology work, and we had another child, and I continued teaching part-time, which I didn't necessarily find all that rewarding.

By the time we decided to move here, to Maine, I had completed everything but my dissertation, which I never ultimately completed, and so after a number of years of teaching part-time here in Portland at the University of Southern Maine and several other schools I realized that I wasn't really enjoying this as a career, and I wasn't completing my

dissertation. It was probably the first time that I have quit something, and it was a good decision because I think it then freed me to think about other things that I enjoy doing.

From that I took a job offer to do work for the City of Portland creating employee manuals, and I discovered that I liked that kind of writing and the production of a product. That led to a career in desktop publishing. So this was in the early '80's when desktop publishing was—those programs and applications were just coming out. I started a small business doing that, for businesses, so I would be the person who would come in and produce a company newsletter, or something for clients of an accounting firm. And I did that for a number of years, enjoyed it, and then reached a point where it was going either have to grow in certain ways or I was going to have to change my focus.

At that point David's accident had happened, and in the year after that trying to decide what it was that I wanted to do with my life, I decided to go to law school. So I went to law school when I was forty, and graduated and worked in various law firms here in Portland for about seven years. And then decided that I really wanted to work more in the policy arena rather than in private law, and so then made the jump to an academic setting where I remained for the rest of my professional career. And ultimately ended up at the university here doing health policy and teaching health law to students in our graduate programs in public health. And so that was a very rewarding way for me to end my career kind of in law and policy. So would I have thought of that in '71, or have any—I had no interest in law school, never even crossed my mind that I—although there were plenty of other students going to law school so that wasn't a new thing, but it didn't seem like something that I would want. So each of these kind of twists and turns have led me to where I went.

Shaw: The most memorable day in my career? It's really interesting; my career in law I think was satisfying to a certain extent, but obviously not satisfying enough in practice because I segued to an academic career which on the whole I found much more satisfying. But there was a case that I had in law school, in the clinic—there was a law clinic for students to basically practice their clinical skills—and a classmate and I were assigned a case of a man who was appealing a sentence and somehow he was out on appeal. It was a murder case—I had no idea of why we were assigned this being law students, but we were, and he was accused of—it was up on the Western Promenade, a woman died, and he was accused of being involved in her death.

And we were able to find some witnesses—this was a number of years after the fact—that supported his alibi that he couldn't have done this act because he was somewhere else. And we managed to get him off—his appeal was upheld, I'm forgetting a lot of the details, maybe there was going to be a new trial—but whatever it was, was far and away, way beyond what we thought we could achieve. And I remember him saying, "You saved my life," and I thought to myself—and you know I was in my forties by then—that nobody had ever said that to me before [laughs]. And I thought to myself this is probably never going to happen to me again in my legal career, and it didn't, but it was kind of a great moment for an inexperienced lawyer to have had that intersection [laughs].

01:38:02 Q: Okay, moving into a new section, on class, on race, on gender experiences and perspective, did you ever have a friend who was of a different race or class than you? Tell me about that person and offer a story that exemplifies who they were.

Shaw: I've had many friends of a different race. We have spent time in Africa over the years, and I would say that most of the friends I have who are African I met there, which puts it in a somewhat different context. Here in Maine, where we have probably the smallest percentage of non-white population I think in the country, my experiences of knowing people of different ethnicity has been far less. In terms of different class, I don't experience meeting people who've had backgrounds wildly different than my own, and I view myself as someone who grew up very sort of middle class. And I'm not sure that I've had a great number of experiences of close friends anyway who came from—I mean certainly friends from working class, not people who've grown up in sort of abject poverty or—

01:40:17 Q: Or exceedingly wealthy?

Shaw: Yes, I have had experiences with people who have grown up exceedingly wealthy.

And I would say that probably often their world views are quite different.

01:40:49 Q: Were you ever treated differently or discriminated against because you were a woman?

Shaw: Was I ever treated differently or discriminated against because I was a woman? I believe that there was a certain amount of discrimination as I was seeking employment out of law school, and age discrimination. I was forty-three, forty-four years old when I graduated from law school, and I, like the other people in my class was being interviewed; I wasn't really sure what kind of position I wanted but I did well in law school so I was on the interview list for the larger firms in Portland. And it became pretty clear to me that they were not interested in a woman my age. Now whether it was my—I mean they certainly hired women, but I don't think a woman in her forties was of interest to them, and I think probably the fact that I was considerably older often than the interviewers, or the sense they had that probably I would not be willing to work the number of hours, or the assumption that I wouldn't be interested in working those number of hours as the young associate disqualified me in their estimation.

Shaw: I think probably I would not be as malleable as a twenty-five-year-old, yes. And I think my notion that I was mature enough to work smart rather than just to work long hours probably wasn't what they wanted to hear. And I think it would have been a bad fit, I'm not sure that given the culture of a large law firm and the expectations for how young associates, junior associates work, probably would have been good either for them or me.

01:43:50 Q: (??) experience, tell me about a time you decided to become
involved with(??) with your life, and getting involved in a cause.
Shaw: I think I certainly became involved here in Portland with a number of issues around
community relations and have been active over time with our community relations
committees as there have been issues around anti-Semitism, around response to immigration.
We had periods of—for a small area we've had a fair amount of resettlement by Somalis and
Ethiopians, and not in Portland but in places like Lewiston and Malvern there's been less
than the welcome mat put out. And so I've become involved when there's been those kinds of
struggles in organizing protests and groups that would try and mediate. Years ago when there
was a very organized kind of response to Soviet Jews who weren't able to leave the Soviet
Union I became involved in that, and trips to Washington, that sort of thing. I'm very active
with Maine Family Planning, which is our statewide provider of family planning services;
Planned Parenthood is one of the groups that we provide money to here in Portland, so I've
been somebody who gives testimony when there are bills that come up that we view as
detrimental for things that we want to support. When I was in private practice I chaired the
ACLU organization in Maine for a number of years, and because at that time we did not have
a legal director, lawyers would volunteer their services. So I was active with that group and
took on a number of cases that we would file.
01:47:28 Q: (??) did the Women's Movement ever intercept with your life, was
there a special movement that you were particularly (??) about, or would have
been tied to that movement, or a special memory, is there anything you want to add to—

Shaw: No, I think that social justice and civil rights have been sort of key parts of both my professional and personal lives. I think that probably social justice may have been one of the reasons that I was propelled to law school. I think I've always had that sort of frame on a lot of the work that I've done, and a lot of the work that I've done over the last ten years here at the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine which has been around health care, has been around access, and really making sure that health care even though it is a real right is available, and what can be done to insure its access and that we have the outcomes that we're looking for.

01:49:00 Q: Gender relations—how have you construed of yourself as a woman? Has it changed over time? Tell me an experience of _______(??)_change, and/or when you confirmed your sense of self as a woman?

Shaw: These questions about gender relations and conceiving myself as a woman—I don't think I ever had much of a quandary of myself as a woman. I think that I probably struggled particularly when our children were small in terms of being able to have the professional career that I wanted. We have had an interesting experience in our family in which gender identity has really kind of come to the fore, and that experience has made me think more about what it is to be a woman. My husband's older brother who is now seventy-five—at the age of sixty, John, the oldest of three boys, a surgeon, who was living in Florida and divorced from his wife after thirty years of marriage, announced to the family that he really had gender dysphoria, that he sensed himself as a woman, and was going to explore this and intended to become a woman. So this was a huge shock to the entire family including his ex-wife, including all of those intimate with him, because to our knowledge, or really to his knowledge, he had really not expressed this before in any kind of behaviors, no cross-

dressing or anything else. So this was now fifteen years ago, when there was no Caitlin

Jenner, or any shows on TV; it was extraordinarily difficult to get our head around what this

meant, even to find language for it. I bring it up because watching John become Jennifer, and
how she frequently turned to me for tips and I think advice about how to first of all, not
behave but you know, just appear as a woman, really made me think hard about what it is that
we put out there that demonstrates or tells people that we're female. So for Jennifer, watching
me get in and out of a car was something that she wanted to mimic. Watching her become a
woman over a number of years was really kind of an interesting way to chronicle in a way
what it is that—how we define femininity. When I saw this category of gender relations, that
was really what came to mind.

Shaw: Well—

01:54:15 Q: Does it mean you're going to do it differently?

Shaw: Apparently, apparently. I mean watching someone become female includes both—she had all the surgery, but there's a lot of this that is not about body parts, a lot of this is how to use your hands, or how she speaks. And where she's taken cues from has just been very interesting. So—

01:55:04 Q: How is she doing?

Shaw: Well, she's a much happier Jennifer than she ever was a Jonathan. I think she's happy with the decisions that she's made, I don't think that she has any regret. It's been very, very

difficult, and I don't think that she's—I think any wishes about any kind of romantic life or associations haven't come to pass, but I think she's happy with who she is.

01:55:57 Q: ______ (??) between men and women, and women and men. Tell me about a special sexual relationship.

Shaw: Well, I'm pretty boring in this category. I've had a number of relationships in college, I don't think any of them were particularly serious or life changing really until I met the person who I married, and so we've been married since [laughs] 1971. I have been faithful in that relationship, so the sexual relationships that I had before were nothing to write home about. [laughs] So, no, I think we've—I think that was the one, and in terms of a relationship that changed the trajectory of my life I would probably say that meeting Peter and marrying him, that probably changed—obviously changed the trajectory of my life. Sorry about that, this is not your sex, drugs and rock n roll interview! [laughs]

01:57:38 Q: I guess not. (Shaw is still laughing) How about the story of your first romantic relationship, it sounds like _____ (??)

Shaw: Yeah, yeah, I think it was. I mean I think I had—it was not like love at first sight either, cause he was somebody who was very committed to medical school, and it was all he —you know, "Well, I can maybe go out once a week but that's really all I can—" I said, "Fine," and I had people to spend time with, and there were one or two guys I was seeing the rest of the week. But then by the following spring it was pretty clear that we were getting more serious, and suddenly his schedule became much more flexible [laughs] and we were able to spend more time together, and then we spent the summer traveling to Mexico that summer, and by the next fall I think we were in a serious relationship.

01:59:14 Q: (??) were choices that you've made, difficult choices when you
found that career, any special difficult choices (??)
Shaw: Yes, I do.
01:59:41 Q:(??)

Shaw: Well in terms of—I certainly talked about—[long pause] Actually I'd like to go back to gender relations, because I realize I haven't talked about being a mother of daughters, and what that kind of has done to my sense of myself as a woman and looking at them as women, and being so really *pleased* at how they view themselves as women. I mean, I think we had choices, but I think it was just at the threshold of choices, and I see both of our daughters now and also in the relationships they're in and their marriages as really being truly equal partners, and their own expectations for themselves as having careers is just a given. And I think that although I have created career paths for myself, clearly in our marriage Peter had a career in medicine and I worked around that career. [Shaw's phone receives an automated call; long pause as they wait for it to finish.] What was I saying? So I see what has changed over those twenty or thirty years really has been a really profound difference in how I think and hope that women view their careers, their sense of self, what their expectations are, and their marriages. I think I accepted that my husband's career was the dominant one and I worked around it, and for the most part that's worked out well and also allowed me to take risks and chances in areas where had I been the one and only breadwinner I could not have.

02:03:30 Q: ______ (??) in your daughters' lives?

Shaw: Yes, my older daughter is the breadwinner in her family and sought somebody who would be the person who would stay at home with a child, and that's what my son-in-law has

done. He is only now—my grandson is eight-years-old—in the last year or two he has gotten back into the workforce teaching, but until then his major job was taking care of his son. And my younger daughter has I would say a career as a social worker, as a therapist, that is comparable to her husband's career in neuroscience in terms of—I mean I see the way they work together to make their schedules work, and I do not get the sense that one career is viewed as more important than the other, so that I think is progress.

02:04:53 Q: Okay, family life, we got that ______ (??)

Shaw: Well, I talked about my religious—the importance of I guess my ethnicity growing up in a small town, and my membership in this Jewish community which has continued to be important, more important I guess when our children were little I'd say [when] I had a much greater sense of being part of that community here. I think once they got older that became less important, and I think of myself as somebody who probably feels—I'm Jewish but not as tied to observance and dogma, and [its] more about how I am acting as a person in this life and trying to live a moral life, more about the spirit of Judaism than attending services, I guess.

02:06:30 Q: When you think back at Barnard how Jewish was it?

Shaw: Well, that's a very interesting angle. I think a lot of my friends at Barnard were Jewish, some of them weren't but a lot were. And during that period of time when I lived in New York I had no association with any Jewish group, so I'm sure there were those groups on campus but I felt no need to affiliate with them because it was kind of all around me. And I found it an interesting consequence of being in a place like New York that I felt less need to identify in the ways that I had when I was in a small minority.

02:07:31 Q: Did you have the connection you	(??) who were not Jewish?
Shaw: No, no, I mean I had lived an entire seventeen o	or eighteen years mostly being in a non
Jewish world so that was very comfortable to me and r	my roommates; most of them were not
Jewish. No. I remember finding it difficult to interact v	with students who were non-white at
Barnard, I remember that being kind of a painful proce	ess there. But I think that was sort of a
self-segregation, so I don't think I had friends at Barna	ard who were not white.
02:08:41 Q: <u>(??)</u>	
Shaw: What I remember in the food halls was that blac	ck students got together, that it was
hard to—the sense I got was that that was a group that	really wanted to stick together.
02:09:10 Q: Have there been changes in your spiritual	lity(??) practice of your
(??)	
Shaw: [laughs]	
02:09:20 Q: Changes in your spirituality, faith or pract	tice of religious traditions?
Shaw: I think that any changes that have taken place ha	ave been looking less at a place of
worship to supply me spiritual comfort. I don't think th	nat's where I derive it, maybe I never
did, but that's not where I derive it.	
02:10:06 Q:	
[Shaw laughs]	
02:10:13	
Shaw: [long pause] No, I think I've talked about them	enough.

02:10:36 Q: The most ______(??)

Shaw: Well, in terms of talking about what's happening in the future, I feel like we are kind of at the threshold of sort of the next chapter in our lives. I retired recently from the university and so right now I feel like I'm just on summer vacation, but I'm just embarking on what is going to be the next stage of, next chapter of my life. And my husband is also retiring at the end of this year from hmm, more than forty years practicing medicine—so that will be a big change.

So I am looking forward to on just the practical level a lot more time to be spontaneous and choices of things that we do, travel that we take; we're planning a big trip this winter to New Zealand and Australia for a couple of months. And I think I'm interested both in going deeper into some of my interest areas now that I have the time for it, and I'm also interested in seeing what else is out there for me in terms of what I'm going to do with the rest of my life. So that's a lot ahead and I'm eager to see what happens.

02:12:49 Q: ______ what are your hopes, dreams and fears for the future, what about the next one.

Shaw: The next one I do have—this is asking about reflecting back on your experiences at Barnard, is there one decision or event you would have done differently? Well, there was—I had planned to go abroad junior year—I think my intention was to spend a semester in England—and at this point I was pretty heavily in this relationship, and although I know it was entirely from within, I decided that I didn't want to leave the U.S. for a semester, I didn't want to leave this relationship. And I don't recall that it was anything that I was pressured to do from Peter or anyone else, I think this was all just generated from within. So I wish I had

had enough confidence in myself or in this relationship or whatever to have been able to say
This will all be here, I can go over, I can do this thing and it will be exciting and worthwhile
That's probably the one choice I made.
02:14:41 Q:(??) the past if you could go back to, is there a piece of advice to
yourself and what would that be?
Shaw: Well, I think I answered that question earlier.
02:14:59 Q: (??) [Shaw laughs] That would have been very helpful to me.
[Shaw laughs] And all the time worrying about what goes on in life—
Shaw: It is, and
02:15:10 Q:
Shaw: Oh, I'm sure you, as somebody who worked in the field—
02:15:20 Q: And we had—I remember I had a workshop with students and administrators
and faculty in the same(??) Okay, is there anything else you'd like to share that we
haven't gotten into(??)

Shaw: My daughter went to Barnard. And I was not in favor of her going, for a couple of reasons. I didn't think it was a good fit for her. Both my husband and I thought that she would probably do well at a school that was a little bit more hands-on than Barnard was or I think is. But like me she really very much wanted to leave Maine [laughs], because wherever you grow up you really need to escape for a while, and she wanted to be in New York, so she went. I wish I had her here to ask her what her real feelings were about it. I think she grew a lot in the experience, but I think she probably would agree that in hindsight it wasn't the best

Shaw—1—41

place for her. I'm not sure if things had changed or not; I think in some ways I liked the

experience of not having anyone hold my hand, that I liked being left on my own. But clearly

I don't think it's for everyone.

02:18:02 Q: Were there a specific with Barnard you got there that you wouldn't have gotten

anywhere else?

Shaw: I thought that some of the teachers I had were terrific. I actually became a good

teacher only in I would say the last five to ten years; I don't think I understood for a very

long time what it took to teach well. You know I still remember to this day some of the

lectures that I attended, and how books opened up for me through professors' way of talking

about and analyzing a book—those things I think I continue to use and apply through the

years. But unfortunately that wasn't a skill that I picked up from being in those classes; I

think that I learned how to be a good teacher much later.

02:19:27 Q: Would you do it again?

Shaw: Teach or go to Barnard?

02:19:30 Q: Go to Barnard.

Shaw: Sure! I mean it was the beginning of the rest of my life [laughs]. And I think that we

were sitting at sort of the fulcrum of so much change and passion and dynamic activity that it

was confusing, it was disruptive, but it was also very exciting, and I think made one feel like

you were really—I think we were quite empowered by it all as well. Good!

02:20:25 Q: Thank you.

Shaw: You are welcome!

Shaw: It did, it did! Well I'm—
02:20:36 Q: (Unclear]
Shaw: No, you know when I saw the questions I thought, geez, do I really want to do this? Is
it too late to turn this down? [laughs] But—
02:20:52
Shaw: Well, I'm glad that we(??)
[End of Interview]

02:20:32 Q: It took a long time to get through all that stuff.

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