

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Candace Howes

2014

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Candace Howes conducted by Michelle Patrick and Robert Solomon on March 5, 2011. 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 Class of 1971 Oral History Collection Session One

Interviewee: Candace Howes

Location: New York, New York

Interviewers: Michelle Patrick and Robert
Solomon

Date: March 5, 2011

[Mid-chat]

Q: I didn't care about anybody's father or what they did. It wasn't interesting to me. But I found it strange that Josie, who was the most radical person I'd ever met, and even in the fall of '67 was giving me for my birthday Mao's Little Red Book [*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*—so I found it anomalous that she put on a Christian Dior gown and went out to a film premiere, and the film was, of all things, *The Happiest Millionaire* with Walter Brennan. I said, "Josie, why are you going to that film?" And she said, "Oh, it's for my grandfather." That's how I knew. No other way. But she got in serious trouble because she got very, very linked up with the people who became the Weathermen [underground organization], and she had to flee them. Their tentacles would not come loose from her, and she had the money.

[Crosstalk]

Howes: So she didn't actually go underground, did she?

Q: I'm not sure. She had to kind of disappear for a long time. She lives in Oregon now, and she and her husband run a farmer's collective and a progressive school and stuff like that. She's still

very service-oriented. She's still into the same stuff, but not in an "up against the wall, motherfucker" way that she was.

Howes: —that she was, absolutely. She was extremely disruptive in that class, in that political science—

Q: Oh, I bet she was. Her family cut her off because she threw a piece of fruit at the limousine of the ambassador to Spain, who just happened to be her uncle. He got a look at her and he didn't tolerate it in the spirit of family fun. [Laughs]

Howes: So who else have you interviewed?

Q: Let me see who I've got in here.

Solomon: So you teach economics?

Q: She does more than teach economics. She's got her own whole field that she does. She's renowned.

[Laughter]

Solomon: I assume you're not a supply-sider.

Howes: No, I'm a liberal economist. I'm a progressive labor economist. I do work on low-wage workers.

Solomon: Of which there are fewer and fewer, though, now.

Q: No, more and more!

Howes: More and more.

Solomon: No, but I guess—

Q: The people who used to run the foundry at Ford [Motor Company] are now saying, “Fries with that?”

[Laughter]

Howes: Yes, actually, those people are just not working at all, right?

[Crosstalk]

Q: There are people who will vote for Sarah McCain—Sarah, whatever, Palin, who's got an IQ in the double digits. They're going to vote for her anyway, so if you're really, really Republican, you'll vote for any kind of creature or stuffed animal that they put in a—she's at least capable of reason.

Howes: I wouldn't go that far.

Q: No?

Howes: No.

Q: All right, so here, we're going to start. All this is going to be typed up for posterity, all this bantering. You know that this is going to be part of a permanent archive at Barnard [College] and another copy at Columbia [University]. Years from now, in the future, it'll be indexed and researchers will go in and look for whatever they're looking for and find it, no doubt, because you can find anything in two thousand pages. But I'm sitting with Candace Howes. Barnard College class of '71, who entered Barnard College with the class of '71.

Howes: Correct.

Q: You realize that I'm interviewing some people who never graduated at all.

Howes: Do they come to the reunion?

Q: Yes.

Howes: Oh, that's really interesting. Okay.

Q: Okay, so—

Howes: I'm proud to have graduated.

Q: Yes, yes. No. [Laughter] Well, I'll tell you later. I have a friend who has an M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration], Katherine Brewster, but no B.A. [Bachelor of Arts]. So Candy—Candace—where did you grow up, and what was your family like, and siblings and your parents and all that?

Howes: So I grew up in Birmingham, Michigan. It was an automotive suburb of Detroit, and I think it was kind of known as the Ford suburb as opposed to the General Motors [GM] suburb. My father worked for Ford. He was an engineer for Ford. There were four girls in the family. I had a twin sister and then two younger sisters who were separated from me in age by a year and a half and five years. Yes, and it was a very homogeneous suburb. I knew who the Jews were in the suburb, and there was one black family.

Q: Really? One black family, really? I'm impressed.

Howes: That there was one?

Q: Yes.

Howes: Okay [laughs]. We had moved there from New England. We had moved there from Hartford [Connecticut], and it was actually in the early, mid-1950s. It was kind of a cultural shock for me to move to a Midwestern town.

Q: How so?

Howes: Well, literally, people from New England at that point had accents. There were a few words that made you sound different, and it was really problematic to be different in that suburb. That was an unbelievably homogeneous environment, which was really pretty stifling. Part of the way in which it was stifling was that it was really torture for smart kids. In the junior high school, for example, they would post grades in our homerooms, and it was really, really uncool to be smart.

Q: What were the repercussions?

Howes: My parents sent us away to boarding school.

Q: But what did your parents send you away to boarding school to avoid?

Howes: Oh, I think that they sent us away to boarding school so they could avoid parenting us. But [laughs] the argument was that we weren't being adequately intellectually stimulated in this homogeneous suburb, and we weren't working up to our potential. My family has this history of intellectual—it's like a kind of intellectual bourgeoisie. My grandmother had a Ph.D. in philosophy from Radcliffe [College]. My father was brought up in this quite intellectual family, and all. My grandmother, his mother, had three sisters and they had all gone to college, and they were all professionals. They went to college at the turn of the century and actually, they all went to Smith College. They went before 1900, and then they were all professionals and they were all feminists, and they were all very liberal. So culturally, the Midwest was very, very different for us. Also, the town was Republican, and although my father was Republican, my mother was a Democrat, a real Democrat. So we just kind of stood out a little bit.

Q: Were you shunned and mocked?

Howes: Well, I wasn't one of the nerdiest kids, but in junior high school you work really, really hard to not be one of the nerdiest kids. My twin sister, on the other hand, was one of the nerdiest kids. One of the biggest burdens that both of us carried was that we were really in sort of different hierarchical positions in junior high school, so she was like a huge social burden for me.

She also always wanted me to include her, and it was tough. So our parents sent us away to the same boarding school, which didn't help at all [laughs].

Q: Did you want to go to boarding school?

Howes: I don't remember having a choice. I don't remember thinking that it was something you did or didn't do. It was just something we were doing. But in some ways I really liked it, because it really was okay to be smart, and I learned a lot. I joined the challenging environment and I did well in it.

Q: Despite your sister's presence?

Howes: Well, sometimes that was a real burden. We would have these knock-down, drag-out public fights. There have been periods in my life when we didn't speak to each other for, say, five years at a time.

Q: That's a long time not to speak. Are you on good terms now?

Howes: Yes.

Q: Decent terms?

Howes: Yes, yes, yes. Not that we enjoyed spending a lot of time with her, because we're just such different people, but there's no animosity between us now, at this point.

Q: So when you hit Barnard, September 1967.

Howes: Yes.

Q: What did you take with you, and I mean what did you pack, what did you take, what attitudes and expectations did you carry with you? You know, what baggage, what fears, what hopes?

Who were you?

Howes: Yes, yes. Okay, so this is one of the things that really stands out for me, that I arrived with this winter coat that was this orange wool winter coat, that was so '50s. It was so early '60s or '50s, and then nylon stockings and patent leather shoes. I think it was the first semester that I was there, I met some guy and he was already a hippie, and he asked me to go down to Fillmore East [rock venue] to see a band with him. I'm pretty sure that Leslie helped me dress for this occasion. Now that I'm reminded of this, she helped me dress for this occasion, and I put on this—I think I had like a Lanz [unclear] dress [laughs] and this orange coat and nylons and these shoes, like was stepping out of 1963. I may have even put on gloves, white church gloves, the kind of gloves you would wear to church. And we went down to the Fillmore East, and I felt like I was from Mars.

Q: What were people wearing?

Howes: Well, they were in bell-bottoms and beads. Already, in '67, they were wearing bell-bottoms and beads—bell-bottoms and beads, right? [Laughs] And long hair and, yes, oh, and joupe mini [unclear] and miniskirts. I don't remember that, but it was cold. It was just a different world. Before we got to the concert, we ran into some friend of his, some woman who had just been—I think she'd been sexually assaulted or something like that, and he went off to help her and I went home in great relief to get out of this situation where I just felt completely out of my element. It was like a sort of identity crisis. I had no idea who I was there.

[Interruption]

Q: We're talking about how your date had to go off and help a woman who'd been sexually assaulted, and you were—

Howes: And I went home—not enormously relieved, obviously, that this woman had been sexually assaulted, but enormously relieved to get out of this environment in which I felt like I was from Mars. I felt like a complete foreigner. It was like I was having this small identity crisis, because I just had no idea who I was. And then I remember, maybe within the next week or so, going on an expedition with Maggie Wilde over to the East Side. I don't know why it was on the East Side, but we went to get bell-bottoms. Were you on this expedition? I think Leslie was on it.

We went over to the East Side. There was someplace where you got bell-bottoms, and I got my first pair. [Laughs]

Q: I know that place. I went there, but considerably later.

Howes: Yes.

Solomon: Is that the East Village?

Howes: No, it was on the Upper East Side.

Solomon: Oh, really.

Q: My concession was that every week I hemmed my skirt a little shorter.

Howes: Is that right? [Laughter]

Q: Did you have political leanings when you hit Barnard?

Howes: Absolutely not, except that I knew somehow, I was instinctively a person of the left. Not too many months after I got there, I was living on a floor in a double. There were two African-American women living in the room next to me, and then I think there were two more down the

hall on the other side. I got to be friends with them, and sometime in the fall, I got a letter from the Black Panther Party. It was this hand-typed letter, and the Black Panther Party apparently had this insignia, they had a panther that they stamped on the top of the letter. This letter was inviting me to become a friend of the Panthers. It had been brought to their attention that I was somebody who would be sympathetic, and that I was to keep this letter absolutely confidential and not tell anyone I had gotten this letter, and that I should respond to it directly and let them know what my interest was.

I might have gotten it in the second semester. I really didn't have any idea what to do with this letter and I was intimidated by the fact that I couldn't talk to anyone about it, because I kind of needed to talk to somebody about it. But it was not too long after that that Martin Luther King was assassinated, and then any conversation between black students and white students, at least of that nature, stopped. I think over the course of my freshman year, I had gotten increasingly interested in politics, but not in a—I mean, mainly I got interested in drugs.

Q: Which drugs were you interested in?

Howes: Well, here's this kid in the orange coat [laughs] and the black patent leather shoes, but within the first week that I was there, I was up on the roof of one of the buildings, one of the apartment buildings on Riverside at 116th Street. One of the kids that I knew had a parent who was actually a professor at Columbia, and this was probably F.W. Dupee's apartment that we were on the top of. We'd gone up to the roof to smoke marijuana, so I immediately got

introduced to marijuana. That was the only—no, that's not true [laughs]. Marijuana, speed, alcohol. The drinking age was eighteen, and I turned eighteen in December, and we did an enormous amount of drinking.

[Interruption]

Q: So you were talking about the drugs, the drinking—

Howes: If you think about the beginning of 1967, coming to school at the beginning of 1967, it's like we went through sort of ten years of history in one year. We moved into dorms where there were parietals. You could only have men in your room Sunday afternoons from two to five and have the door open, a book in the door. By the end of the year, I think that they had given up parietals altogether, and within the next two years, men and women were living on the same floors over at Columbia. I had a friend, a woman who was a floor counselor at Columbia on a floor that was primarily men, and all the bathrooms were same-sex. I have to say, I still have never gotten comfortable with same-sex bathrooms.

Solomon: You mean bisexual bathrooms?

Howes: Yes, that's what I mean [laughs]. Bisexual bathrooms, yes. Men and women using the same bathrooms. [Laughs]

Q: Stepping into this time machine that was the fall of '67, at which point did you think you'd finally arrived at the appropriate time in history? That your clothes—

Howes: By the time of the strike, yes. I don't know, there was something about the strike that really worked for me in the sense of kind of liberating me to—I was actually a very studious participant in the strike. I went to all the teach-ins. I was seriously thinking about all the issues that were raised. I really loved the community of the thing. I was out there all the time. I loved being engaged in it. I loved being part of the crowds and following the development of the strike. And I think that by then I was a person of the '60s. I was definitely a person of the '60s.

Q: You did not occupy a building.

Howes: No.

Q: But you felt the sense of belonging and sympathy with the general zeitgeist.

Howes: Right, right. I had this boyfriend, at that time I guess I thought of him as a boyfriend briefly, but he was occupying Hamilton Hall, so I was part of a brigade who would get bread and throw it into Hamilton. Then I spent an enormous amount of time going to these teach-ins, which were extremely time-consuming. I hadn't gone to class very much, but when it came to the teach-ins, I was really a dedicated student.

Q: Did you have academic aspirations at the time?

Howes: [Laughs] My aspirations had been to not flunk out of school, which I didn't achieve. I flunked out of school in my first year of college.

Q: Because?

Howes: Well, I flunked out of school because I had failed a number of my classes in my first semester, and then they canceled classes right when the strike started. They canceled classes I think effective April something—April 3rd or something like that—so whatever grade you had at that point in the classes that you were taking was the grade you got. I was not doing well in a number of the classes that I was taking, so I ended up flunking out of school. I went back in the fall semester. They let me back in because I pleaded to come back in, but I had no academic aspirations at that point whatsoever. I was really in the middle of an extended, multi-year identity crisis. I was just kind of trying to figure it out just putting one foot in front of the other. No aspirations whatsoever.

Q: Do you remember some of the identity—

Howes: But I do remember having aspirations when I first came, because I came thinking that I was going to be a doctor. I started out my first semester. I was on a track for medical school, and I think I was taking calculus. They didn't teach calculus at Barnard, so we'd take calculus over at

Columbia. And me and Marley Weiss were the only two girls in the class of fifty people. I was also taking chemistry that semester, and I had this very clear plan, this very clear professional plan, which honestly in retrospect I wish I had become a doctor. But it all fell apart before the end of the first semester, and certainly fell apart by the end of the second semester.

Q: Because?

Howes: Because there was no guidance, it was just chaos. Everything was chaos, including me. I'm not going to blame the times entirely, but I just I think of myself as a student. I am now a college professor, and I do an awful lot of mentoring for kids, and we never got anything like that. There was no support whatsoever. There was no sense that we might be going through something that was challenging or troubling, and there were all these kind of serious life decisions we were in fact being asked to make as freshmen. I think it must have been really different to be at Columbia in 1968 as a senior or a junior, when you're much more of an adult, you're a much more developed person. To be a freshman there and to have not thought about ninety percent of the questions that were being addressed at that point. It was just chaos.

Q: Did you have romantic aspirations? Were you looking for the man you were going to marry?

Howes: Oh, no. [Laughs] You know, I don't know how I escaped that. But I never had an aspiration to get married at an early age for some reason. My grandmother and all my great-aunts, none of them got married until they were in their forties, and some of them never got

married, so there were models in my family for women who didn't get married. Then if you go to a prep school, a women's prep school, you're surrounded by unmarried women. So I don't know if that's why I didn't have such aspirations, but I never had aspirations like that. And my first boyfriend in college was this African-American guy from L.A. [Los Angeles]. I mean, it would have been in the structure, in the context of my family, it would have been so insane that—you know, obviously I wasn't looking for a husband.

Q: Were you looking for a boyfriend?

Howes: Yes.

Q: Was that something that was important to you?

Howes: I don't think so. I really don't think so. I just don't remember being desperate to have a boyfriend at all.

Q: Did your mother have a career?

Howes: No. Well, my mother was a secretary, and then when she got married she was a full-time housewife.

Q: So you did not want to pattern yourself on your mother's life choices.

Howes: Yes, but I didn't think about that until years later. From the time I was eight years old, I was going to be a doctor. So my father nurtured that idea. It was completely acceptable in my family, so there was no pressure to—well, my mother did used to say that every young woman should have a good game of bridge and a good hand of tennis, and I fell short [laughs] on both of these fronts, so I was probably not marriageable [laughs] from her perspective. But there was an alternative path in my family. I was the only one who seemed to be assiduously following it, but there really was an alternative path.

Q: So sometimes you were at Barnard and sometimes you were not at Barnard, and during the times that you had flunked out or taken time off, what were you doing?

Howes: Okay. The first year that I was out of Barnard, I think I was in school for about a month—so this would have been my sophomore year, and I just realized, I can't do this. So I dropped out and I went and got a job in a boutique on Broadway. Well, actually, that wasn't the first job I got. The first job I got was working in the Doubleday bookstore on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. It was a job where you had to stand eight hours a day. I went to work maybe three or four days, and on the fourth day—it was a Friday—I was feeling really ill and really miserable. And this woman who reminded me greatly of my mother, obviously coming into the Doubleday bookstore before getting on the train to go back to Scarsdale or something like that—she said to me, “You look really sick. If you were my kid, I'd take you home and make you some chicken soup.” [Laughs] Which is exactly what I needed. It was this gray November day in New York. It

was cold and I was miserable and I really had no place to live at that point, since I had dropped out and I had been thrown out of the dorms and I was living in this apartment with these guys, these four guys. They had offered to let me live in the apartment and be the maid. [Laughs]

Q: For rent? Instead of rent?

Howes: Yes. [Laughs] It was not the maid with benefits. They really just wanted me to be the maid.

Q: It must have been a pretty hard job.

Howes: They were disgusting. [Laughter] It was a very nice apartment on, I think, 97th and Broadway. It was on 97th Street. It was a nice, big apartment in which there were four, or three times as many people living as there should have been. The kitchen had just piles of stuff all over the place, and you could barely see the dishes in the sink for the cockroaches. [Laughs] But they actually gave me the nicest room. They gave me a private room with sun, and they were very kind to me.

Q: What did you think that you were doing? I mean, did you think, “Well, now I’m just taking time off to discover myself,” or did you think at all?

Howes: I didn’t think at all.

Q: Were you still doing a lot of drugs and drinking?

Howes: Yes, yes. So, from that job, the next job I went to was working in a boutique on Broadway. That lasted through the Christmas season, but it was this little boutique that was attached to a designer in Brooklyn, and she was developing these very 60s-appropriate clothes. They were clothes—there were a lot of things that matched, pieces that matched, and you would put together an ensemble. But they were all made of jersey so they were stretchy, and it was kind of like early—I can't remember the designer's name. It was like Donna Karen for low-income people—or, not low-income people, but for—

Q: Kiki's Things.

Howes: Yes. Yes, something like that.

Q: I worked there too.

Howes: You did?

Q: Yes. [Laughter] And wore all the clothing.

Howes: Oh, yes.

Q: I'm not supposed to be talking. Now, you were saying that when you entered college, you believed that in order to sleep with someone, it should be the person you were going to marry.

Howes: I wouldn't sleep with somebody before you get married. You'd get married and then sleep with them.

Q: What changed this?

Howes: About two months. [Laughs]

Q: Two months of?

Howes: By the spring of our senior year, they had abolished the parietals—or no, no, it was not until the end of our freshman year. But by the middle of my freshman year, I had, with a group of other students—Columbia students and Barnard students, and I think there were people from Yale—rented an apartment on 105th between West End and Riverside as a crash pad. The place was just wall-to-wall futons or mattresses or something like that. There was absolutely no furniture, and we had brownie pans so that we could make hash brownies. [Laughs] We would go down there on Friday or Saturday nights and we'd just get stoned out of our brains, and everybody was sleeping together, so it was kind of hard to hold on to the idea that somehow you should wait until you got married to have sex.

Q: Do you wish that you had waited longer before you had your first sexual experience? Was it at a comfortable point for you?

Howes: My first sexual experience was in the summer after my freshman year. I was working in a summer camp. During that freshman year, other people were having sex, but I wasn't. In the summer after my freshman year, I had this boyfriend I was working with in the summer camp, and it was a very nice introduction. Prior to going to that summer camp, sometime during the spring of my freshman year, I had gone down to Margaret Sanger and I got the pill. Oh, I must have gone to Planned Parenthood first and got the pill, and then later I went down to Margaret Sanger and got an IUD [intrauterine device].

Q: You were prepared.

Howes: Yes, yes.

Q: I was going to ask you who your first friend was, but you had like a bunch that you had come in with as a cadre from Abbot. Do you remember the first friend you made that wasn't from—

Howes: —from Abbot? Probably Dana Lindsey. Maybe Leslie. Dana was from Minneapolis, St. Paul actually, she was from St. Paul, and she was way more sophisticated than I was.

Q: In what regard?

Howes: I didn't have the faintest idea how to buy a pair of shoes. I didn't know how to buy clothes at all and she taught me that if you find a pair of shoes that fits, buy two pairs. [Laughs] I didn't even know how to buy a pair of shoes, so this was extremely useful information. There was something about her that was kind of elegant, and she was interestingly beautiful, and we were very tight. My roommate was somebody I knew from Abbot, but she hadn't been my friend at Abbot. We were close, except it was a pretty bad dynamic in the sense that I think we fed off of each other's craziness.

Q: In what way?

Howes: Well, I think that we did a lot of drugs together and went into kind of dark places, and in fact, both of us were in deep trouble. This really became evident one night when I was down at that apartment. I was down at that apartment one Wednesday night or something like that to get out of the room, to get away from the place, from Barnard, from the dorm. I went down and spent the night there by myself, and I actually used to go down there by myself quite a bit because nobody was there during the week. When I came back, all hell had broken loose because she had made an indifferent effort to kill herself, she had taken a bottle of aspirin. So she had made a trip to the emergency room and shortly after that, the decision was made that we would be separated and that I would get a single. She actually, I believe, moved in with Dana. She was

not permitted to live alone, but she was supposed to live with somebody who seemed to be more in control, which, by the way, Dana was not more in control. [Laughs]

Q: She appeared to be.

Howes: She appeared to be, yes. [Laughs] Yes. And so I would say that Maggie [the roommate] was a close but dangerous friend. Dana was a close friend who continued to be my close friend all the way through college. Leslie was a close friend, and she was somebody I hadn't known before. She was from Philadelphia or Pittsburgh? Pittsburgh. I didn't know the difference between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. But she was a rather exotic, elegant person, and I think I was attracted to these people who knew how to hold things together, or seemed to know how to have it all held together. They knew how to put on makeup and do their hair and I was just clueless about a lot of that stuff.

I want to say one thing about the environment of the dorms, which was that despite the fact that it was chaos, that 1967-1968 was chaos, we did have this—I don't know whether she was like a dorm mother or a floor mother—do you remember Hera Cohn-Haft. Hera Cohn-Haft was our floor mother. She was a senior, and I would say she saved my life, you know, in the sense that she got how screwed up we were. She helped me and Maggie, she arranged Maggie's new housing, and she arranged to get me a single, which is what I really wanted, and it was really hard to do that at Barnard at that time. She was a very loving, nurturing person, and it seems to

me as though that was the only adult figure in our entire freshman year who had any sort of oversight over our personal lives, over who was watching out for us, which is not very much.

Q: Despite the fact that we had all these rules. You remember the blue book with the rules, the curfews?

Howes: Yes.

Q: Parietals, the curfews?

Howes: Yes.

Q: So there were documents—

Howes: Yes, yes, there were documents to protect us. But [laughs] first of all, the documents weren't really enforced, because all you had to do was be in before the curfew or stay out. So people just stayed out.

Q: I was going to ask how did you get around the curfews, but you just said that.

Howes: Yes. [Laughter]

Q: Alright. Did you have an attitude toward the [Vietnam] War when you got to Barnard?

Howes: No.

Q: Did you soon develop one? Did you ever develop one?

Howes: Yes, certainly. I absorbed the gestalt of the time, which was to be opposed to the War. I found the whole idea that men could be drafted, that these guys who we were in college with were actually vulnerable to the draft and having to go to war—I found that it put them in such a different place from what we were in that I almost felt like it was my responsibility to think what was in the best interest of the guys. So of course the war was terrible. It was terrible to me, at that point, because of the draft; the idea that people in our freshman and sophomore years had this whole other life where they were trying to figure out ways to evade the draft. It put them in this position of being adults. We didn't have that burden at all as women, so I found that very distancing in a way.

Q: Did you know anybody who actually was drafted?

Howes: No. Not then.

Q: Later?

Howes: Yes.

Q: Much later?

Howes: Much later. I know very few people who were drafted.

Q: And yet the fear of the draft—

Howes: Yes, really motivated people. I didn't know people who went to Canada, but pretty much all the people I knew had figured out some sort of 4-F, or they were conscientious objectors. So I knew a couple of people, like Duncan [N.] Darrow, I think, did two years of alternative service. Is that what you had to do, two years of alternate service to avoid the draft?

Q: And what was 4-F again?

Howes: It was a medical deferral, is that what you call it?

Q: Did you know anyone who went to extreme lengths to achieve a 4-F?

Howes: Yes. I knew people who starved themselves to death. I knew people who took all sorts of drugs to make themselves crazy. I knew people who had perfected the art of acting crazy. And

the one person I know who legitimately got a 4-F, which was Bruce Caplan, got it because he had this vision disorder. He had serious problems with his eyes that weren't correctable.

Q: Do you want to sketch out or just sort of generally lump in the period of time between fall of '67 and when you graduated, which was '78?

Howes: No, '75.

Q: '75.

Howes: I think I graduated in '75. I'm never quite clear on that.

Q: So do you want to sketch that out or define it? Did you go back and forth between working, did you go abroad, did you go home?

Howes: I never went home.

Q: Never?

Howes: Never went home. That was never a consideration.

Q: Why?

Howes: I don't know.

Q: Not attractive?

Howes: No. I lived in New York. This was a white suburb. What would you do if you went home? It was just like a horrifying idea, and possibly my parents weren't particularly parenting [laughs], right? They weren't bad parents, but the idea that somehow I would go home and get taken care of didn't occur to me. Or it didn't occur to me that I needed some taking care of, although I did. So the beginning of my sophomore year, I dropped out and I did these jobs, and ultimately that year I ended up working as an architectural draftsman. We called them draftsmen at that time. But I had decided I wanted to be an architect, and I had this friend, Sarah, whose father was an architect. They lived down on West End Avenue, and he got me a job at his firm. It was a great big engineering firm in what was the Pan Am Building at that point and then became the MetLife Building, and I don't know what it is now.

So I worked for Praeger, Kavanagh & Waterbury Architects and Engineers on the 42nd floor of the Pan Am Building, and [laughs] I worked in this huge room with fifty draftsmen, forty eight of whom were men. They trained me to draft. They gave me considerable structure in my life. I took the A train from my little apartment on 85th between—it wasn't an apartment—it was a studio on 85th Street. I'd take the A train down to 42nd Street and to Grand Central, and I'd go up into this office and I'd work. At that time working hours were 8:30 to 5:30 with a half hour

off for lunch, and women got an extra fifteen minutes because they were “feeble,” especially at a certain time of the month. So [laughs] I never took my extra fifteen minutes off. But it was a really boring job, to say the least. A really, really boring job.

Q: And yet it would have required a certain mastery of something, yes? No?

Howes: You had to draw. You had to draft. I did learn how to draft, and that gave me a skill. I then went back to school. I started studying—I guess at a point where we had to start declaring a major, and I decided to declare a major in Middle Eastern Languages and Literature because I’d taken an anthropology course that I really liked on the Middle East. So I started to study Arabic, and then I went to Egypt for the semester abroad in my junior year, and I ended up staying. I dropped out of school again.

I think I went in the spring of my junior year, but it might have actually been the fall of my sophomore year, except it was spring, you know. So I went to Egypt, and I ended up getting a job working as a draftsman on excavations, and for the next couple of years, I came back and forth to New York. I would come back for a while and then I’d have another gig in the Middle East, and so I worked two excavations in Egypt, and then I worked an excavation in Syria. And these would usually be three or four month-long jobs, and then I would wander around. One year I wandered around in the Middle East for a while and took the Orient Express. I wandered around in Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey, then took the Orient Express up to Paris, where Maggie Wilde

was doing her junior year abroad. I stayed with her for a while in Paris. Then ultimately I came back. I think I finished school after that.

Q: And yet, though there was very little guidance at Barnard—

Howes: Yes.

Q: You returned repeatedly to Barnard. Do you know why that was?

Howes: I think I was returning repeatedly to New York, and to people in New York, and it never occurred to me not to finish school. It never occurred to me. I always assumed that I was in the process of going to college.

Q: But did it occur to you to transfer to another college?

Howes: Never.

Q: Do you have any idea in hindsight?

Howes: I lived in New York.

Q: But there were colleges—you know, there was NYU [New York University]. Sarah Lawrence [College] was very close.

Howes: I loved Barnard.

Q: Okay. Tell me why you loved Barnard.

Howes: I was an Upper West Sider. I had this life on the Upper West Side. It was this unbelievably rich environment. Now, I have to say that because of my major, Barnard wasn't really where I went to school most of the time, because all of the Middle Eastern Languages and Literature stuff was at Columbia. Since I started in math at Barnard [and math] also was at Columbia, the only thing that really I did at Barnard was English and art history. I did a chemistry course, which I failed, and some history, but most of my education was at Columbia. But I just felt like this was my neighborhood, this was my world, there was this tremendous freedom. I never lived in the dorms after that first semester of my sophomore year. I always had an apartment, and I just felt really, really at home on the Upper West Side. And still do. I wish I could live there.

Q: Do you remember the night of the bust?

Howes: No. Why don't I? Was it April 4th? What was the date?

Q: It was like April 30th.

Howes: April 30th.

Q: Yes, the strike started like April 23rd.

Howes: So were the TPF around—they were around for a long time before the bust, is that right?

Q: TPF?

Howes: The Tactical Patrol Force.

Q: Oh, they were around, yes, but they weren't really doing anything. They had not been given leave yet to do anything—

Howes: Yes.

Q: —until the night of the bust.

Howes: Yes.

Q: Okay.

Howes: I have a photograph of myself walking up Broadway, walking by a TPF officer.

Q: I'd love to see that.

Howes: It's an interesting photograph.

Q: If you could get that to me, I'd love that. Did you or anyone you know ever have to endure any illegal abortions?

Howes: An illegal abortion? Yes. I knew at least two people who did. It was always very secretive. It was another one of those things that seemed so foreign. It was amazing to me how people figured out how to get it done, given who we were. We were these girls, we were these kids that didn't have connections to stuff like that, and yet there seemed to be some sort of underground network that people found their way into when it was necessary. But it was always kept secret.

Q: Did these people that you knew who had to endure illegal abortions, were there physical or emotional repercussions from having to go through the underground network?

Howes: I believe one of my close friends did this, but I never knew about it, which I learned from you. I never knew about it, so the other person who went through it that I knew was a kind

of close friend. She was in our group. But it was all done so secretly. There was this one person who would be helping this person, and no one else was really allowed to talk to them. It just seemed to me like it wasn't a thing that was vetted. So you couldn't tell whether somebody was going through emotional distress or not. In other words, there was probably no way for people who were going through that to actually work through their responses to it. They certainly couldn't go to the Columbia psych services and talk about it. [Laughs]

Q: Not a good idea.

Howes: Which, by the way, the whole psychology infrastructure, mental health infrastructure, was pathetic at Barnard and Columbia. Pathetic.

Solomon: I'm sorry, we have to change the tape.

Q: Oh, okay. Great, you're doing great, really great.

[END OF SESSION]

Barnard Class of 1971 Oral History Collection Session Two

Interviewee: Candace Howes

Location: New York, NY

Interviewers: Michelle Patrick and Robert
Solomon

Date: March 5, 2011

[Mid-chat]

Q: Diana Ross.

Howes: Yes, that's what it was.

Q: Diana Ross, yes. Oh, yes.

Solomon: Okay, we're going.

Q: Okay. At what point, and I'm thinking this is probably early in your life, but at what point did you become aware of the women's movement, A) and at what point, B) did you become aware of the fact that it had relevance to your life?

Howes: I was certainly aware of the women's movement by my junior year. I was actually living in an apartment with a woman named Liz Weiner who was very involved with the women's movement. She would take me to consciousness-raising groups, which, again, I was not ready for. [Laughs]

Q: What was your reaction to these groups?

Howes: It was scary!

Q: Tell me what was scary.

Howes: So this goes on for years, but the early stages of the women's movement felt to me very compulsive and—not compulsive, but that either you were with us or you were against us. There was not a whole lot of room for questioning.

Q: So you mean strident.

Howes: Yes, yes. It felt to me like there wasn't room for exploration. On the other hand, the women that I knew who were involved in the women's movement were really powerful, exciting, and interesting people, so I think I was just not ready for it. I kind of shied away from it, and it was really years before—now in a sense I teach women's studies. I teach a course on women and work and all my work is on women. I have a class full of boys right now who I'm teaching, young men who I'm teaching about the gender division of labor and sexually segregated jobs and wage inequality and stuff like that.

At that time, it was such an affront to everything that we'd been brought up believing. Even though I believed I could be a professional, it was just such an affront, and in some ways it got very much in the way of your relationship with men. At the time that I started going to these consciousness-raising groups, I had a serious boyfriend. It was a serious boyfriend in the context of a community of friends who were very close. We had a really great crowd of people. And I remember the comments how is this going to—consciousness-raising groups like this were going to be a problem. [Laughs] It's going to be a problem.

Q: Was it a problem?

Howes: No, because I was too scared of it. I didn't do it. I didn't go. I was scared of it.

Q: If you had done what you were supposed to do after having gone to the consciousness-raising courses, how would you have changed? How were you supposed to have changed your life?

Howes: Well, I certainly wouldn't be doing the dishes. [Laughs]

Q: Okay, well, that's one example—other stuff like that?

Howes: I didn't wear a bra, so that wasn't a problem. You know, I don't know. I probably would have been a lesbian. I wouldn't have had the kinds of relationships that I had with men, in which the men were quite dominant in the relationship. I should not have had those relationships. And

the alternative really ended up being same-sex relationships. So I probably would have followed that path for a while. But I didn't.

Q: It's very interesting. Speaking of which, at what point did you become aware of a gay and lesbian community?

Howes: I think that I really became aware of it in 1975, which is pretty late.

[Crosstalk]

By that time, I was in graduate school at [University of California] Berkeley, so I was in San Francisco. A very close friend of mine there, who had been a friend at Barnard; she was a year behind us, a woman named Torie Osborn—she had transferred out of Barnard to Middlebury [College] for a lot of the reasons that I think you imagine people like her transferred out [laughs] when we didn't. Also, she had gotten pregnant and had an abortion. So she went to Middlebury and she was very involved in politics there, and then she came out and she moved to San Francisco to work for Holly Near. And so she was the promoter for Holly Near—do you remember Holly Near? Holly Near was *the* lesbian singer-songwriter. She was very, very famous in the lesbian community.

So Torie was out there promoting her, and she was living in the Mission, which is where the lesbian community was in San Francisco, because they couldn't afford to live in—what's the

name of the gay men's neighborhood, the Castro? They couldn't afford to live in the Castro, so they're living in the Mission. I used to go to lesbian bars with Torie, and so she introduced me to the gay and lesbian community. Then I was also very involved in politics at that point. I was working—so this is in graduate school—I was working on a magazine that was called—had been, when I joined it, called *Socialist Revolution*. But it changed its name to *Socialist Review*. It did a lot of gay and lesbian politics. We wrote a lot about gay and lesbian politics, so I really got much more familiar with the gay and lesbian community and spent a lot of time in it at that point, and a number of my friends at that point were gay men as well.

Q: Did you at any point consider living a gay life?

Howes: No. Which is not to say I didn't have relationships, but I never considered living a gay life, no.

Q: At the point that you've left Barnard and you're in graduate school, what was your concept of what your adult life would consist of?

Howes: When you go to graduate school in economics, you're on a track. Part of the reason I went to graduate school in economics was after I came back from Egypt, I started reading Marx, and I thought that Marx was synonymous with economics. If I'd read the young Marx, I probably would have been a sociologist, but I started reading *Capital*, I think, and I thought that it was synonymous with being an economist. Then I went down to The New School and I started taking

courses with David [M.] Gordon, who was a radical economist at The New School. He was a very, very compelling teacher and a very talented scholar, who unfortunately died at the age of fifty, and he pretty much talked me into going to graduate school in economics.

The other person who talked me into it was Sylvia Ann Hewlett, who was a professor of economics at Barnard, and Sylvia came right to Barnard in 1973, the last two years that I was there. I met her; she was my neighbor. She wasn't that much older than me. And we got to be friends, and she had been trained at Cambridge, England, which was very dominated by the left wing at the time, coming out of the Keynesian tradition. So she really got me thinking in terms of economics as a left wing or progressive path, and David Gordon really reinforced that.

So then I went to Berkeley to graduate school, and in 1975, when I came, we had a very large class of graduate students. There were fifty people, five of whom were women, and a lot of them had come out of the left. It was a very, very progressive group, and we had the largest chapter in the country of an organization called the Union for Radical Political Economics. So I saw myself as being a radical political economist, but working in an academic environment. In fact, what I ended up doing was being a progressive economist, and I went to work for the labor movement right after graduate school.

Q: What did you do for the labor movement?

Howes: I went to work for the United Auto Workers. I was in the auto industry. I was the auto industry analyst for the United Auto Workers [UAW] for five years between 1984 and 1989 in Detroit. And I loved it.

Q: You loved Detroit, or you loved the job?

Howes: I loved Detroit and I loved the job.

Q: Tell me what you loved about Detroit.

Howes: Well, I was living downtown. I was living in a building, ultimately; I started out in Royal Oak, but I moved downtown. I was living in this wonderful old building. It was a Louis Sullivan building, I think, and it was this elegant old apartment house that was full of really different people. It was a really diverse environment. My next-door neighbor was an African-American man and his family, and he was the head of traffic engineering for the city of Detroit, or something like that.

There was a lot going on in Detroit. Certainly, it was the beginning of the real decline of the auto industry. It wasn't the beginning of the decline of the city, because the city had been in decline since 1967, but it was the beginning of the decline of the auto industry. I was, unfortunately, the person who was sort of reporting on this to the autoworkers. You know, "I'm very sorry to tell you that you're about to lose your job." But there was a lot of music, there was a lot of sort of

underground stuff. One of the things that I found really interesting was, I had this friend who was the restaurant critic for the *Detroit Free Press* at the time, so every time a new restaurant opened, we'd go. We'd take a bunch of people and we'd go to these restaurants. There was this phenomenon that a restaurant would open in downtown and you didn't know whether it was going to be a white restaurant or a black restaurant for a few months.

Q: It could not be both?

Howes: It could not be both. That was not what was going on in Detroit, really. What would happen for a while, it would be a black and a white restaurant. Then after a while it would go one way or the other. It didn't mean that white people didn't go to black restaurants and vice versa, but there really were dominantly black restaurants and dominantly white restaurants. In other places in the city, there was a lot more integration. I think it's that I was with a group of people—because my friends were mixed-race friends—so we would spend a lot of time in black nightclubs listening to jazz. There weren't very many white people, but there were always some white people, and they were elegant. It was an extraordinarily beautiful culture. I loved that Detroit was a city run by black people. I really loved that.

I loved the politics of Detroit. There was a whole lot of really progressive politics. A lot of the blacks that were around the UAW that I knew—also, the UAW had a whole lot of people in leadership, more than had been the case twenty years earlier. But a lot of people in leadership or in professional positions at the UAW who were black, and it was—So I just really got to know

the city from lots of different angles that I never would have known it if I'd been living in a white suburb like I had been when I was brought up.

There's a lot of things happening in the city in the summer. There are all these festivals and I love old factory buildings. I really love old factory buildings and I loved driving around the city and looking at these old factory buildings, and it was like there are these wonderful neighborhoods that nobody knew about that were kind of hidden. It was this declining elegance, you know? So there was this neighborhood on the east side that had all these canals. Have you ever been to that neighborhood? It had once been this wonderful sort of elegant place, and there was this mansion down there that had been bought by the Hare Krishna.

Q: By the '70s, I'm gone.

Howes: Okay, so there was this mansion down there, that had been a Chrysler mansion, that had been built in the 1920s, probably, and it had this moat around it, and it had these boats. It was just gorgeous. But you would come upon this thing driving through this slum, where half of the houses have been burned down, and all of a sudden you arrive at this place which had been bought by the Hare Krishna from one of the Chrysler children who had become Hare Krishna, and they ran this restaurant called Govindas. It was a macrobiotic restaurant, and we would go down there to this restaurant sometimes, and it was bizarre. Here we are on the Detroit River in the middle of a slum, and there are these peacocks wandering all over the place.

Q: You're talking about Belle Isle, aren't you?

Howes: No, it's not Belle Isle.

Q: It's not, okay.

Howes: It's right across from Belle Isle.

Q: Okay.

Howes: Yes, yes. There were just all of these hidden things about Detroit you could only know if you lived in Detroit. I loved it.

Q: So what took you away from Detroit?

Howes: Although I loved my job at the UAW, the guy who I worked for directly was really, really difficult to work for, and if you weren't a member, if you hadn't come up through the ranks of the UAW, there was really very little mobility. So as a professional, I would have been working for this guy forever. Now, he eventually got pushed out of the UAW, but I decided I had to get out of there because I really couldn't work for him anymore. I also had this boyfriend at the time. I had this relationship that had been developing for a year or two with this guy who was an academic, and he taught at Notre Dame. I hadn't finished my dissertation, actually, by then; I

had left graduate school and worked for the UAW for five years, and didn't do my dissertation. So a friend of mine gave me a post-doc at Rutgers for a year so I could finish my dissertation. I got a job at Notre Dame, so that's why I left.

Q: That was the beginning of your academic career?

Howes: Yes, that was the beginning of my academic career.

Q: Is religion a factor in your life?

Howes: No.

Q: Your current political leanings?

Howes: Very progressive, left wing.

Q: Best time you ever had in your life?

Howes: Right now.

Q: Right now?

Howes: Yes.

Q: So then, let's talk about now. What's wonderful about your life now?

Howes: I'm in a really good relationship—probably the best relationship I've ever had. I'm happy in my work. The work that I'm doing now is very different from what I've done in the past, and I love it. It deeply engages me. I haven't been all that keen on teaching. I teach in a small liberal arts college and the student body is dominated by upper middle class white people, and since I teach economics, it's really upper middle class white boys who are planning to go into finance. I'm just not that interested in their stuff.

But in the last couple of years, I've been doing this other job, mentoring these students who are coming to Connecticut College under the auspices of the Posse Foundation, which is an organization that identifies students exclusively in central cities who might be overlooked in the college admissions process. They arrange for them to get full scholarships and to be admitted to elite colleges. Then they provide them with eight months of training, pre-collegiate training prior to coming to the college, and then they bring them into these colleges in groups, in posses of ten to twelve students. The idea is that they're much more likely to survive if they're there with their posse.

Connecticut College got its first posse two years ago, and I have been the mentor for this group, and that involves working with them very closely. I do training with them for two hours every

week and then I meet with them one-on-one for an hour every other week. Then we go through big retreats and stuff like that, so I know these kids really well, and it has just been a transformative experience working with them. It's changed my whole attitude towards teaching. It's changed my attitude and it's really helped me to understand the challenges these kids are facing, but also to have a sense that they really can overcome those challenges. I think until this point, I had really thought that students who came into colleges like Connecticut College that didn't have the kind of background or preparation that most students had, that it was just going to be impossible for them, and it's not. They just need a particular kind of support to get through the first couple of years. I love them. I love them all. Every one of them, I care deeply about. So it's been a really wonderful experience for me.

Q: What are you hoping for—for the future?

Howes: Even though I'm 61 years old, I don't see myself as a person who's retiring. In some ways my career is really coming together now. So I guess I see myself in some way or another working on the stuff that I'm working on now for five, ten years until it spins itself out. And then I want to keep being intellectually engaged, but do it from a kind of retirement.

Q: More leisurely?

Howes: Yes. Yes, where I have more control over my time.

Q: Is there any fear that you have?

Howes: Fear? Disabling old age. No, I don't really have many fears.

Q: If you could go back to that first September day with your orange coat and patent leather shoes and your suitcases, walking through those gates, and tell that girl one bit of wisdom, what would it be?

Howes: When you're in trouble, get help.

Q: Good advice. Anything that I haven't touched on that you want to talk about, or anything that I've only touched on briefly that you'd like to expand on?

Howes: I don't think so. I feel pretty good about it.

Q: Good, me too! [Laughter] Good job.

Howes: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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