

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Linda Parnes Kahn

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Linda Parnes Kahn conducted by Michelle Patrick on April 11, and April 21, 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: Linda Parnes Kahn

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Michelle Patrick

Date: April 11, 2015

PART 1, TAPE 001

[00:00:00.00] Kahn: Yeah, it is difficult. You know, he reads the paper now on his phone because the screen is small—

[00:00:05.08] Q: Oh, right.

[00:00:05.08] Kahn: —enough and there's backlight, but it's—he's kind of thinking, Okay, in a couple of years I'll be blind.

[00:00:13.09] Q: But maybe not.

[00:00:14.09] Kahn: Maybe not.

[00:00:16.11] Q: Maybe not, you know.

[00:00:16.11] Kahn: But this is kind of morbid. But, um, one of the things we've been going through this winter is that, you know, we've had some death in the family, you know this.

[00:00:26.26] Q: Yeah

[00:00:26.26] Kahn: So his brother, his older brother, died suddenly in January; he was—

[00:00:32.01] Q: Oh, I'm sorry.

[00:00:33.26] Kahn: Thank you. He was seventy-nine; two years older than Alan [Kahn]. So now Alan isn't so fixated on going blind in two years because he thinks he's going to be dead in two years.

[00:00:43.04] Q: Oh, God! (laughs)

[00:00:44.04] Kahn: So, anyway.

[00:00:49.16] Q: You never—you know, my grandmother outlived six siblings, all of whom died in their sixties and she lived to be ninety-five and a half. There is no—

[00:00:57.12] Kahn: It's true. It's true. But with Alan's family it's kind of the opposite because, you know, there is such longevity in his family—

[00:01:04.05] Q: Really?

[00:01:05.20] Kahn: —and that people—they were doing longevity studies, genetic studies, using his family.

[00:01:12.21] Q: Really?

[00:01:13.21] Kahn: Yeah, his father died at 109.

[00:01:15.22] Q: Oh my God!

[00:01:16.06] Kahn: Just recently, he had an older sister who died just short of her 110th birthday.

[00:01:21.19] Q: Oh my God!

[00:01:22.19] Kahn: Then, it was Uncle Pete who died last year at 103. Aunt Lee died young; she was 101.

[00:01:30.03] Q: Unbelievable! What is his background? Where is he from?

[00:01:32.27] Kahn: Russian, Jewish, you know.

[00:01:36.02] Q: Did they discover?

[00:01:38.00] Kahn: Well, the one thing—and they don't know whether—you know, correlation doesn't prove causation, but what they discovered is that they have very high levels of HDL

[high-density lipoprotein] and the molecule is enlarged; it's a different shape. So however that's related, that seems to be the common denominator.

[00:02:02.10] Q: That's amazing.

[00:02:04.02] Kahn: But, so for this sibling to just up and die at seventy-nine—

[00:02:09.04] Q: Of what?

[00:02:09.06] Kahn: Well, we think it was a pulmonary embolism. So he had had some surgery for a broken leg and for kidney stones and he was immobile for a long time. So they think that there was a, you know, blood clot that travelled to the lung and but we don't know—

[00:02:25.21] Q: I'm going to get some water. (third person talking) No? You're going to get me some water? (third person responds yes) Are you sure you don't want water, juice?

[00:02:32.23] Kahn: Maybe I'd like to have a little water, is that ok? (third person responds sure) Just to— (third person asks, "Do you want cold club soda?") No, no, no.

[00:02:39.27] Q: I'll have a cold club soda. I was just going to tell you how I was going to proceed and then in the end, but—I was going to talk about your background, your parents, your family, um, what schools you applied to, what made you go to Barnard [College]. Now you started out as a commuter—

[00:02:58.03] Kahn: Yeah, I did.

[00:02:58.21] Q: You're right, were you the—

[00:02:59.14] Kahn: For three years.

[00:03:01.12] Q: Three years?

[00:03:01.12] Kahn: Yeah. Well, you know, my parents lived on 86th Street and Riverside Drive.

[00:03:05.12] Q: Oh. So there was no way.

[00:03:07.05] Kahn: Right, so—

[00:03:08.28] Q: But then, in a way, you were kind of right in the middle of it. It wasn't as if you lived in Queens.

[00:03:14.06] Kahn: Off campus. Oh yeah, when I moved overseas to Queens (both laugh) that was to get married.

[00:03:21.25] Q: Oh, right out of school.

[00:03:23.18] Kahn: Oh, no, no, no, no. Oh, decades later.

[00:03:26.17] Q: Oh, oh, oh.

[00:03:27.05] Kahn: Yeah, I really kind of—

[00:03:28.15] Q: Well, _____(??) got married her sophomore year!

[00:03:31.00] Kahn: You know, and we had another classmate; she was—my fourth year I took Plimpton [Hall] so one of my—Thank you—One of my Plimpton suitemates got married senior year, but we were shocked. You know?

[00:03:46.22] Q: Was it Ester?

[00:03:48.01] Kahn: No, I think her name was Linda Smith, with red hair.

[00:03:54.21] Q: Yeah, I think I vaguely remember. I remember being envious because I wanted to get married. If I could have gotten married freshman year, I would have.

[00:04:0.23] Kahn: I wanted to get married. I mean, I saw myself getting married, but first get situated in the career and, you know, I mean, I didn't realize it would take me as long as it did, but—(laughs)

[00:04:12.15] Q: Your first marriage was later in your thirties, forties?

[00:04:15.16] Kahn: Yeah, no, my late thir—I met Alan when I was thirty-five and he was in the process of getting a divorce and it just took a long—I didn't cause it—

[00:04:28.22] Q: Yeah, I was going to—home wrecker! (laughs)

[00:04:32.00] Kahn: Yeah, she had filed more than a year before I ever even met him but things sort of ground to a halt for a while. You know, not on his account but he was amazing about it. He even—I didn't ask him to prove, you know, that there's really a divorce in the works, but he insisted on showing me her complaint.

[00:04:49.04] Q: Oh yeah, he didn't want to leave any doubt. Right.

[00:04:50.23] Kahn: No, yeah and I guess he also, by way of disclosure, wanted me to know what she—you know, why she was dumping him but—

[00:04:59.29] Q: You know, that's very unusual to find a man that forthcoming.

[00:05:06.19] Kahn: Because you know he doesn't want to invest a whole lot if I'm, you know, going to discover something that's a deal breaker for me. So just get everything upfront and then—

[00:05:17.11] Q: I like that attitude.

[00:05:19.04] Kahn: So, yeah.

[00:05:20.07] Q: And then, you know, the first day, the first surprise, what your expectations were academically, romantically, socially. Um, your first friends, if you remember them, if they were important, first dates, first disappointment. Um, were you sad ever and why, um, angry, scared? Um, belly laughs that you can remember? Political stuff, what you thought in '68, what your background was in terms of diversity. Did you go to a diverse high school or was it pretty much all white? Was Barnard diverse compared to where you went to high school?

[00:06:07.17] Kahn: You're going to ask me these one at a time, right?

[00:06:10.20] Q: No, you have to memorize them.

[00:06:12.10] Kahn: I have to just narrate now and give you—

[00:06:15.08] Q: That's right. I am going to put out a clock on the table and it's the honor system. (third person says, "Try not to—I'm here but try to look at her, not at me.)

[00:06:27.07] Kahn: Okay.

[00:06:25.07] Q: If any of these are off-putting to you—I'm just going through it so nothing come as a—

[00:06:30.22] Kahn: Right, right. So—

[00:06:31.21] Q: If anything is off-putting—

[00:06:33.23] Kahn: If anything is off-putting I'll tell you now, and—

[00:06:34.08] Q: Right or when I get there—

[00:06:35.27] Kahn: And you could ask it three times.

[00:06:37.01] Q: (laughs) The '68 thing, what you were thinking, whether you were in a building, how you reacted if at all. Were you on the sidelines? Later political things, the '70 strike. The women's movement was *just* getting, *just* getting going. I didn't get it at all. Um, I remember in our senior year, there was a women's movement conference and that part of it was an all-women dance at somewhere, you know, McIntosh [The McIntosh Center] and I thought, Gee, isn't that just kind of going really far to make a point, to have an all-women dance. And it never occurred to me that these women were a couple; it never even—you know, it was like, Okay. I mean, I see the point but, gee, isn't that kind of going far?

[00:07:32.11] Kahn: This was the beginning also of the transgender—

[00:07:38.24] Q: Right. But that was very—I mean—Or maybe I was just—

[00:07:44.18] Kahn: You know, I don't know. I struggle with that now. I mean—

[00:07:47.02] Q: The transgender stuff?

[00:07:49.05] Kahn: Yeah. I mean, not that I don't want to include these people but—

[00:07:51.10] Q: I think everybody does.

[00:07:51.23] Kahn: —at what point do you have to be in your “trans” to go to Barnard?

[00:07:56.20] Q: Oh, oh.

[00:07:58.12] Kahn: Is it enough just to think you are a woman? You know?

[00:08:04.14] Q: Fortunately, we don't have to decide. You know, just the idea that—I mean, I just never even thought that women would be couples with each other. I was from Detroit, you know.

[00:08:13.12] Kahn: Okay.

[00:08:13.12] Q: But isn't it going a bit far to have an all-women dance to prove that you don't need boys to have fun? (making blubbering sound)

[00:08:24.21] Kahn: (both laughing) Okay.

[00:08:25.04] Q: And whatever—your career, what your goals were, whether you had any or it sounds like you did, whether they changed, you know, over the course you were at Barnard, whether being at Barnard redirected you at all. And anything else that comes up. You know, it's a—I'm not going to just sit here and ask you 1, 2, 3, because we'll go down a path and sometimes never come back. (laughs) But, so are we—?

[00:08:58.09] Kahn: Roll 'em..

[00:08:59.02] Q: All right. So, say your name.

[00:09:02.15] Kahn: I'm Linda Parnes Kahn.

[00:09:06.15] Third voice in room: Can you spell it out for us?

[00:09:07.07] Kahn: L-i-n-d-a P-a-r-n-e-s K-a-h-n. No hyphen.

[00:09:16.28] Q: Okay. Barnard Class of '71.

[00:09:20.03] Kahn: Of '71.

[00:09:21.03] Q: And tell me—you grew up in New York City?

[00:09:23.08] Kahn: I did. My early childhood was in the Bronx, on the Grand Concourse, the Champs-Élysées of the Bronx.

[00:09:34.01] Third voice in the room: That's where I am from.

[00:09:34.07] Kahn: Really? And it was—you know, I kind of liked it. I mean, it was my world, it was comfortable, it was insular. The Bronx was—in my neighborhood, it was very Jewish, as were we, but nearby you had your Irish enclave and, you know, and Italian enclave and the further east, you know, blacks but my life was very neighborhood centric at that point. You know, we walked to school, we played in front of the house.

[00:10:13.11] Q: The school you walked to, was it in—

[00:10:14.11] Kahn: Was PS 70.

[00:10:16.20] Q: Was that an integrated school?

[00:10:18.20] Kahn: Well, it's very interesting because a lot of this made no impression on me at the time, but in retrospect I see it. Yes, there were a lot of—there were blacks and Hispanics but

we were very much segregated by, you know, class in the school. You know there were certain classes; there'd be number of classes in a grade and like, you know, two-one, two-two, two-three. You know, two-one, two-two were mostly white, two-six, two-seven were mostly not white and I don't know how that was. I mean, I also know that there were school buses who took some of the children—mostly the children of color—back to their neighborhoods, whereas people who walked to school were mostly, not exclusively, but mostly white.

[00:11:14.19] Q: And was there any intermingling in gym or art or?

[00:11:17.03] Kahn: Everything was pretty much structured. Um, you know, this was elementary school, so you stayed in the same class the whole day.

[00:11:23.14] Q: Right, right.

[00:11:23.14] Kahn: I remember having friends who were not Jewish: Catholic, whites, but also a Hispanic girl, but things really, as I recall, kind of got segregated not by the classes you took, but by the friends you had in junior high school.

[00:11:51.01] Q: Hm. And you were still in the same neighborhood?

[00:11:52.06] Kahn: I was still in the same neighborhood, in junior high school. You know, I walked to a junior high school that was the other side of the Concourse and then I went to Bronx Science [The Bronx High School of Science], but by then we moved to Manhattan so I went to

Bronx—and Bronx Science, I mean, in those days—You know, now it's 90 percent Asian; in those days, it was 90 percent Jewish. You know, it's that first generation of immigrants who go there. And that actually was the first time in my life that I ever genuinely enjoyed school.

[00:12:34.10] Q: Was high school?

[00:12:36.00] Kahn: Was high school. Oh, I was miserable in junior high school. It was just—
You know, I was—

[00:12:41.04] Q: Not challenged enough? Bored?

[00:12:42.01] Kahn: I wasn't challenged; I was, you know, in my own world. I was unhappy socially. It was very cliquey and I wasn't—

[00:12:54.24] Q: You weren't in the clique?

[00:12:55.24] Kahn: No. No. I had friends—

[00:12:56.23] Q: If you had been in a clique, which would it have been? Or was it—

[00:12:59.23] Kahn: Well, it was, you know—in every class, there was just one in-group.

[00:13:06.20] Q: Right.

[00:13:07.20] Kahn: And I was, you know, not a chosen one, and—

[00:13:12.21] Q: The cool kids.

[00:13:12.21] Kahn: The cool kids. Um, I did have a very close friend. We've actually—we lost a few years after college. We didn't go to Barnard together. I went to Barnard; she went to City [College], but so we lost a few years after college, but we connected and we're still friends.

[00:13:33.21] Q: How would the different cliques get along? Just ignoring one another, or was there conflict?

[00:13:37.13] Kahn: Well, there was a little bit of conflict of—I remember this one instance. There were two instances of bullying in my life, but one instance where—You know, Friday night they had these big parties in the neighborhood. I don't know if you paid to go? I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was just where a bunch of kids hung out and danced. So I went there and this one girl who was sort of in the in-group, she looked at me and said, “What are *you* doing here?” And I really just—you know, I didn't leave but I really felt so shitty and I really wanted to just disappear.

[00:14:22.12] Q: Was she Jewish?

[00:14:23.26] Kahn: You know, I don't know.

[00:14:26.16] Q: I just wondered whether that had anything to do with anti-Semitism.

[00:14:29.04] Kahn: I don't know. I don't know.

[00:14:31.10] Q: Were there other Jewish kids at the party?

[00:14:33.10] Kahn: Oh yeah, oh yeah. And there were Jewish kids in the in-group.

[00:14:38.04] Q: So it wasn't that.

[00:14:39.10] Kahn: It wasn't that. It wasn't that. I don't know. I mean, I was a shy girl. I think it was more of a social and personal thing. I can't really put my—

[00:14:51.29] Q: But you stayed.

[00:14:53.19] Kahn: I did.

[00:14:54.07] Q: Good for you –

[00:14:55.07] Kahn: I did.

[00:14:55.10] Q: Did you go alone?

[00:14:56.10] Kahn: Yeah, yeah, I showed up alone. Yeah.

[00:15:00.26] Q: You are a brave girl.

[00:15:00.26] Kahn: You didn't go—Well that's how you—Yeah, because my friend didn't go to these things. But you either went with a friend—I mean, you didn't go with a date.

[00:15:11.24] Q: No, but a pal.

[00:15:13.05] Kahn: Yeah. No, I went alone. Well, I was an only child, you know, so that wasn't off my radar screen.

[00:15:21.05] Q: Me too.

[00:15:21.00] Kahn: Really?

[00:15:20.25] Q: Yeah.

[00:15:22.22] Kahn: *That* is really, for me—it's something I think about a lot, you know. Um, I remember once when I was—this is the friend I had from junior high school but this is probably a little later on—I was with her and she had an aunt who was just a few years—it was her

mother's very much younger sister and she was, I don't know, I think a social worker—one of those professions that—

[00:15:54.18] Q: Helping professions.

[00:15:55.08] Kahn: —make you feel entitled to tell people about themselves. (Patrick laughs)
So I remember we're sitting and talking. This is the first time she met me. Um, she's asking me if I had brothers and sisters and I said no, I was an only child, and she told me right off the bat—not by way of critiquing my behavior; we were just talking, this was her observation—“Oh, you don't know how to share.”

[00:16:20.25] Q: Oh, that's such a—That's so wrong.

[00:16:24.20] Kahn: I think that's true. I mean, the only thing I don't know how to do is share my parents with another child but, you know, I went to school. You probably shouldn't homeschool an only child but I had friends; I had to learn to share with them. You know, aren't those in fact the greater, better templates for your relationships later on? In the final analysis, your boss is not your father, and your girlfriend or your boyfriend are not your sibling. So I just thought it was incredibly stupid and it made me angry, but I don't think I said anything. At least I hope I didn't.

[00:17:05.09] Q: I remember being so happy to have a playmate; and everything I owned was mine and I was really grateful to share because I didn't have to cut off my own turf.

[00:17:16.12] Kahn: Well, exactly. I didn't come from a perspective of somebody could take something away from me.

[00:17:27.14] Q: Right, so you didn't have to guard it.

[00:17:27.14] Kahn: Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly, But I did—And there were a few other only children in my life, not many. It's not like today where I think being an only child, or a de facto only child from a later marriage is pretty common. I had a sense of being different from other children and given the choice I would rather have grown up with a sibling, but then came a long stretch of time when I saw the advantage in being an only child, especially in my family which—we were middle class. This was my whole world and if anything I was more affluent than some of my friends. But sending me to Barnard was kind of—

[00:18:20.11] Q: I was about to ask.

[00:18:21.04] Kahn: —a stretch and, you know, would they have done it if they had two children?

[00:18:26.26] Q: Would they have been able to do it?

[00:18:27.22] Kahn: Exactly, and the summer camp, you know. So there were definite advantages. But when my mother died several years ago—and she was the last of my parents to

die and so I was going through her things and readying her apartment for sale and thinking it would nice to be going through this with a sister.

[00:18:55.02] Q: With someone else, yeah.

[00:18:56.02] Kahn: I thought a brother would probably be fairly useless, but (laughter) maybe not.

[00:19:05.04] Q: Was the choice of Barnard, was that—

[00:19:08.23] Kahn: Well that was my mother's. Okay, so in this world of Bronx Science, yeah, you had probably more people than you'd expect going to Harvard [University] and Barnard and Columbia [University], and all of that. But it wasn't really [on] my radar screen. I just sort of assumed that I was going to go City College [of New York] like everybody else, like 80 percent of the class. You know, I just wasn't thinking ambitious like that. But I was a very good student at Bronx Science. That was another thing that I loved about the place, that it was okay to be smart.

[00:19:40.01] Q: Then you were a science person.

[00:19:42.20] Kahn: Well, the curriculum was very much weighted toward that. I kind of remember after the Russians launched Sputnik all of a sudden I had homework. So they taught us a lot of science and a lot of math and I was good at math and, you know, it's a competitive place

but not the way people think of it. Students didn't sabotage each other; nobody was angry with you for getting a good grade—

[00:20:17.06] Q: It was considered a normal—

[00:20:18.00] Kahn: —like the clique in junior high school. Yeah, it's what you wanted to do. And it was a happy place. Teachers loved teaching there and there were no cliques. I mean, yes, it was a big enough school so you couldn't be friends with everyone, but you could be friends with anyone.

[00:20:40.24] Q: Yes, yes.

[00:20:42.24] Kahn: So it was just—socially there were no extremes of wealth or poverty. We were all kind of nerds. There wasn't any pressure to have sex.

[00:21:00.24] Q: Oh, sex in high school. (laughter)

[00:21:03.02] Kahn: Yeah, really. There was very little drug use. So my years were '64 to '67. I knew one kid who smoked marijuana with his girlfriend. And he was a poet, not a punk. You know, the rest of us—It was fine to save yourself for college. (both laugh)

[00:21:24.01] Q: As I recall, these things were just—First of all, the pill came out around the time that we would have been sixteen, seventeen.

[00:21:32.14] Kahn: Yeah, but I wasn't taking it then.

[00:21:34.19] Q: No, but you knew it was there. I don't know about—

[00:21:38.29] Kahn: Well, I don't think I was thinking about it. I wasn't—

[00:21:43.09] Q: I used to read these old romance novels and the worst thing that could happen to you is that you'd get pregnant out of wedlock.

[00:21:50.04] Kahn: Oh, yeah.

[00:21:51.04] Q: Then you'd be a pariah for the rest of your life and this pill removed this.

[00:21:59.11] Kahn: But I think that for me, was more—

[00:22:01.05] Q: Theoretical?

[00:22:02.05] Kahn: —in my consciousness when I was going to college.

[00:22:06.10] Q: Right.

[00:22:07.10] Kahn: In some ways in Bronx Science I was still a kid. And if there was any awakening, it was the beginnings of the anti-war movement and going to demonstrations and things like that.

[00:22:21.22] Q: So you were political in high school.

[00:22:25.06] Kahn: Oh, a little bit. A little bit. I wasn't radical, but definitely—I don't know. I mean, I'd have to more honestly categorize myself as Phil Ochs would put it, “Wishy-washy liberal, ten degrees to the left of center in good times. Ten degrees to the right of center if it affects them personally.” Not quite that, but—

[00:22:52.09] Q: Well, of course, you would have been aware of the civil rights movement, which was really—

[00:22:55.24] Kahn: Yes, and that was well within my comfort zone.

[00:23:03.19] Q: The *Nightly News*, [Michael Henry] Schwerner, [Andrew] Goodman, [James] Cheney—All that was very—the zeitgeist.

[00:23:11.26] Kahn: The aspirations, yeah, that of course there should be equality here. I identified the real enemy as the life of the South, the Jim Crow South, meaning the Bronx didn't seem so terrible to me or Manhattan. But in fact it was. No, it wasn't as bad. You know, I never saw growing up a “Whites Only” sign—

[00:23:42.19] Q: Right.

[00:23:43.19] Kahn: —but clearly, as I said earlier—

[00:23:47.21] Q: And we later learned—

[00:23:48.06] Kahn: I saw segregation; you know, I just didn't see it for what it was.

[00:23:53.21] Q: So you would have been a liberal Democrat.

[00:23:56.17] Kahn: Yeah.

[00:23:58.01] Q: Okay, and so Barnard. Your mother said to you: Barnard.

[00:24:01.21] Kahn: Oh, so how I got to Barnard. I was doing really, really well and my mother she sort of talked to her friends about me, and they said, She should really be applying to schools like Radcliffe [College] and Barnard. And my mother knew of Barnard and she was absolutely determined that I should apply to some of these schools. So at Bronx Science, because we were 860 people in the class, you could apply to three schools plus the City University [of New York]. You had to apply to City because you were guaranteed getting in and they want 100 percent acceptance. (Patrick laughs) So I applied to Stony Brook [University] just to have a safe, out-of-town school, in case I needed to leave home.

[00:24:50.03] Q: Needed to leave home?

[00:24:51.03] Kahn: You know, I was a teenager after all, stuck raising parents by myself. (both laugh) So then it was Radcliffe and Barnard, and Radcliffe said no and Barnard said yes, so there was no question. I went to Barnard and the fact that it was a female, women's college was not at all a factor in my choosing it. But it was definitely a tremendous value.

[00:25:33.18] Q: Did you realize it at the time or later?

[00:25:38.15] Kahn: I think so. There were all these smart women in the class. You didn't have to worry about the guys—I mean, it's not that I didn't think of guys. They were right across the street. But, you know, I didn't have to worry about what they thought of me in class.

[00:25:58.20] Q: And they were right across the street so—Did you in high school think about what guys thought of you in class?

[00:26:06.22] Kahn: It's an interesting question. Obviously, I wasn't too—I think so. There were guys I was trying to attract, but it actually didn't keep me from performing well.

[00:26:24.21] Q: You were expressing yourself in class.

[00:26:25.27] Kahn: Well, maybe in some classes I might have been a little quiet, but in fact it turned out, just as a fluke of scheduling in my calculus class my senior year, I was the only girl in my class and the teacher used to send home exams with me to grade for him.

[00:26:48.01] Q: Really? Oh, you were stellar!

[00:26:51.24] Kahn: So, well, not exactly, but—although I remember one instance when I gave a guy a credit for some proof and the teacher looked at me and said, “You gave him credit for this?” and then he looked at it further and said, “You're right.” So, I peaked way too soon, let me just put it that way. So was I trying to impress the boys? You know, not—

[00:27:29.25] Q: Did you have a crush?

[00:27:30.25] Kahn: Several. Several. In different times. But at Bronx Science it was just so okay to be smart that it didn't really occur to me that the way to impress a guy was not to be smart.

[00:27:55.11] Q: It occurred to the whole rest of the world.

[00:27:56.22] Kahn: I know and it probably did, I'm sure, in junior high school and maybe it would have again in college had I gone to a big co-ed school. I don't know.

[00:28:10.12] Q: Do you remember how you felt about staying in the city? It was fine with you.

[00:28:15.19] Kahn: Well, yeah. I mean, it was. There were a lot of other commuters at Barnard; it definitely made for a—Oh, I derailed my train of thought. It made for a—

[00:28:36.12] Q: Comfort area? More options about living?

[00:28:44.21] Kahn: It didn't make me feel like an outsider, but I definitely sensed that there was something missing, that the people who lived on campus were having an experience that I didn't.

[00:28:58.25] Q: And how would you define that experience and what do you think—what at the time did you feel that you were missing?

[00:29:04.12] Kahn: Well I thought probably it would have been a whole lot easier to make friends, to know people, and then, you know, the whole life in the dorms. I probably would see it as sort of analogous to having siblings.

[00:29:17.25] Q: Yes, yes.

[00:29:18.27] Kahn: And I think, too, that I probably would have learned to work better and manage time better. That was a big struggle for me at Barnard. I mean, the sheer weight of the work we had to do was kind of a baptism of fire. The amount of reading we had to do. Barnard had requirements that really Bronx Science didn't. I wouldn't say that my education was lacking

at Bronx Science, but in the humanities—Freshman English was a baptism of fire for me, in no small way because my instructor was Kate [Katherine Murray] Millett. I was terrified of her.

[00:30:10.25] Q: Were you?

[00:30:12.05] Kahn: I think we pretty much all were. She was an überfeminist, and she would tell us about her sister who lived in Afghanistan and, you know, went to public executions and said they were thrilling. I don't know whether it was Kate or her sister who had as a coffee table a tombstone.

[00:30:33.18] Q: Thrilling?

[00:30:33.18] Kahn: Yeah, so yeah.

[00:30:37.26] Q: Well, that's terrifying in and of itself.

[00:30:39.23] Kahn: So my first paper I didn't know what to do. I mean, it was horrible; I got a D and so I'm sitting there in her office, trying not to cry, and she tells me, you know, “Why don't you get a paper from somebody who got a good grade so you can see what she wants [I want]?” So I happened to notice that—just because I could see; it was in my line of sight—that Susan Mailer was—

[00:31:14.22] Q: Yes, yes.

[00:31:14.22] Kahn: —Susan Mailer was in our class—she got an A-. So I read her paper and I said, “Okay. I can do this.” And then the next paper I got an A-. So did Kate Millett teach me to write or did Susan Mailer?

[00:31:34.00] Q: I have to say Susan Mailer. You already knew how to write; you didn't know just how to write in that class, right?

[00:31:40.08] Kahn: Yeah, maybe, maybe.

[00:31:43.13] Q: Was the paper that much better than yours?

[00:31:45.21] Kahn: Oh yeah. The secret, I think, is to get that idea and write around it. You had to show me that.

[00:32:06.03] Q: Yeah, But once seen—

[00:32:08.26] Kahn: Or one theme, or—

[00:32:12.18] Q: Yeah, but once you saw it, it didn't take you any time to learn to do it. “Oh I can do this.”

[00:32:19.17] Kahn: Yeah. It wasn't all that much smooth sailing after that because—and this had nothing to do with Barnard: I had a relationship with a guy that ended sort of disappointingly, so I was sort of into myself and unhappy for a while and didn't work the way I should have. So, you know, I had other episodes of not doing—

[00:32:52.07] Q: As well as you might?

[00:32:53.07] Kahn: Yeah.

[00:32:54.21] Q: Was this a Columbia guy?

[00:32:57.19] Kahn: He was actually, he was Columbia Law. He probably turned out to be a prosecutor.

[00:33:07.09] Q: You think? (Kahn laughs) So that's one of the questions: When you walked into Barnard for the first time to be a student, what were your expectations of what romance was going to be in college? How did you think that would work? Or did you have just no clue?

[00:33:26.12] Kahn: I pretty much had no clue. There were socials—did we call them that?

[00:33:32.26] Q: Mixers.

[00:33:33.17] Kahn: Mixers. Mixers. And also do you remember sometimes on a Friday night they would have a bus to take us to Yale?

[00:33:40.10] Q: I never went on that bus.

[00:33:41.21] Kahn: Well, I did with one of my friends. She was not in our class. She was a transfer student and she was in the class of 1970. So we did this and that was the first place I smoked marijuana.

[00:33:52.00] Q: Ah.

[00:33:53.11] Kahn: In some dorm room at Yale.

[00:33:57.06] Q: So did you think you'd meet the person that you married at college?

[00:34:01.21] Kahn: It wasn't an expectation or an ambition. Getting married was something I just assumed would happen at the right time.

[00:34:21.27] Q: But you wanted a boyfriend?

[00:34:22.05] Kahn: But I wanted a boyfriend.

[00:34:24.21] Q: And you thought you'd have a boyfriend?

[00:34:26.14] Kahn: Yes.

[00:34:27.06] Q: And it would go well.

[00:34:28.07] Kahn: Don't we always? (laughs)

[00:34:31.11] Q: Of course, and it didn't.

[00:34:32.09] Kahn: It didn't.

[00:34:33.01] Q: Was it possibly because the guy was too old, in Law School already?

[00:34:37.21] Kahn: I don't know what it was. I think actually he was—there was something—he told a lot of lies. Kind of not really a nice guy, but I was so devastated by it and I really wanted to get him back. (whispering) I don't know why. But you know.

[00:35:02.13] Q: I think we've all had that experience. Did you find yourself needing the pill?

[00:35:08.03] Kahn: At some point, not for the first couple of years.

[00:35:11.10] Q: Really?

[00:35:11.12] Kahn: Yeah, although I was probably on it.

[00:35:16.10] Q: Just in case.

[00:35:17.28] Kahn: Yeah, I mean—

[00:35:19.05] Q: Prepared.

[00:35:19.05] Kahn: Right.

[00:35:20.24] Q: Ever prepared.

[00:35:23.20] Kahn: Right. That's the Boy Scout motto, isn't it?

[00:35:25.29] Q: Yes, it is. It should be the Girl Scout motto. (Kahn laughs) Do you remember who your first good friend was?

[00:35:31.28] Kahn: Well, growing up in the Bronx I had a friend, she was actually couple of years younger than me. Bonnie, we were very, very close and then there was this kid David, kids in the building and we played together and our parents were sort of friends. Although my parents were kind of different than David's parents but—

[00:35:54.30] Q: In what way?

[00:35:55.30] Kahn: Well, we haven't talked about this, but my parents were from Europe.

[00:36:02.22] Q: Oh, they weren't born in this country.

[00:36:02.22] Kahn: They were not. My mother was born in Belgium, my father was born in Germany. My mother actually came to this country when she was twelve. Their journey to the United States was because of World War II and because they were Jews. But my father lived in—he was born in Germany; they left Germany very early because they were fortunate to be harassed by the Nazis early on and they made their way to Spain where he lived for ten years and then came to the United States, so he was maybe twenty when he came here. They did a good job of becoming American. My mother's English was almost without accent and my father had a slight German or Spanish accent and it was actually my father who would take us kids in the building to see the Yankees. But, you know, when he would watch a baseball game at home on TV, he'd have the sound muted and an opera playing.

[00:37:16.21] Q: Oh! How very exotic!

[00:37:23.11] Kahn: You know, David's father and my father were both in the jewelry business but they—

[00:37:34.18] Q: Your father was an intellectual and David's father wasn't.

[00:37:36.04] Kahn: I guess you might say that. I guess you might say that. Although I have to say—this is all in retrospect; I was not at all aware of it at the time—but what David's father and another father in the building used to like to do—because this is pre-Castro—they would go down to Havana for weekends, guys having fun and my father fluent in Spanish. He would have loved to go with them but my mother said, “You can do that or stayed married, but not both.”
(both laugh)

[00:38:16.24] Q: Very crystal clear right there.

[00:38:16.24] Kahn: Yeah. You know, it was also wasting a lot of money that we had earmarked for other things. She wasn't going to put up with that. But the Goldbergs were very important to me in my life because as Jews we did not have a Christmas tree. My father's family was actually pretty religious and there was this tug of—I was sort of between two worlds in this respect because my mother's family, they were sentimental Jews; they'd have a seder, but—

[00:38:55.20] Q: Not for religious reasons.

[00:38:55.28] Kahn: —they didn't eat kosher, they never went to—on High Holidays they went to synagogue, whereas in my early years, I used to have to go every Saturday with my father except when it rained because it was a long walk and, you know, you had to walk. So to this day I just love—

[00:39:17.04] Q: You had to walk because you were Orthodox?

[00:39:18.09] Kahn: Yeah. Well, he was Orthodox. So to this day I just love a rainy Saturday morning.

[00:39:26.04] Q: Good, I don't have to do anything.

[00:39:28.15] Kahn: But the Goldbergs had a Christmas tree because they—They actually came by it legitimately; Mr. Goldberg was Catholic. His mother was. So they had a Christmas tree and I was invited to go help them trim it and get that out of my system.

[00:39:45.28] Q: Did you long for that normalcy?

[00:39:47.20] Kahn: Oh my goodness, yes, so much, so much. In public school, there was this CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine] classes, some fraternity of Christian doctrine where the Catholic kids would leave at two o'clock to go attend some instruction and I was just so curious: What were they doing?

[00:40:14.26] Q: Yeah, what mysterious thing?

[00:40:18.07] Kahn: So I was sort of ambivalent about our—

[00:40:24.06] Q: Otherness.

[00:40:24.06] Kahn: Otherness, although it wasn't really *otherness* but the degree of observance in my family was a kind of otherness and it was also a little bit restrictive. There was not a small amount of hypocrisy in it because, you know, we watched television in the house. It wasn't a genuine observance.

[00:40:43.18] Q: Oh, I see.

[00:40:43.18] Kahn: It's what people could see. So I was totally contemptuous of this. But it is what it is. In retrospect, I am not sorry that I had to go to Hebrew school. That was something in the balance gained that would not have happened without my father's insisting on it and—

[00:41:14.21] Q: And you were a studious girl so learning something—

[00:41:18.06] Kahn: Well, I wouldn't say that I was really interested. But I was talking earlier about bullying; there was an instance in Hebrew school where I was the bully.

[00:41:31.20] Q: What did you do?

[00:41:32.07] Kahn: I beat up a boy.

[00:41:34.16] Q: You beat up a boy!

[00:41:36.23] Kahn: I don't know whether this was bullying or feminism or—This boy and I were the youngest and smallest in the class so everybody thought that it'd be cute to tease us about being girlfriend and boyfriend. And I just hated this. So I'm not sure exactly how this transpired, but I must have picked a fight with him or something and, you know, it was a real schoolyard brawl. I beat up this guy; people were standing around watching and then one other guy who was watching, somebody that I went to public school with, he mailed this boy's books. He stuck them in the mailbox.

[00:42:20.03] Q: Oh my!

[00:42:21.03] Kahn: You know, the kind that you can't get it out of?

[00:42:21.28] Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:42:25.03] Kahn: Mark, if you ever see this, I'm sorry. (both laugh) But just on the off chance that this wasn't as memorable an experience for you, I won't seek you out and try to remind you.

[00:42:38.10] Q: Books in the mailbox.

[00:42:40.00] Kahn: Well, no, I didn't do that.

[00:42:41.21] Q: You had a cohort, a fan.

[00:42:45.05] Kahn: A fan.

[00:42:46.06] Q: Boxing fan.

[00:42:47.18] Kahn: So that was my real bad girl experience.

[00:42:50.24] Q: I'm impressed.

[00:42:52.03] Kahn: Thank you.

[00:42:53.17] Q: So did you find, as you went to Barnard, that you kept your high school friends or did you phase into another [set]? You said it was easier to make friends if you were in the dorm. Was it hard—

[00:43:07.11] Kahn: I didn't have a lot of friends at Barnard. My high school friends, okay—they were two that were really important to me. They didn't go to Barnard. One actually did go to Barnard. Her freshman year at Barnard, or maybe her sophomore year, because I think she moved into the dorms but then she left to go to Berkeley with her boyfriend. She was very left wing, or she became so, and we completely lost contact; and several years later I ran into her in the city. She was so, I don't know, so radical. I just didn't feel any—I was working on Wall Street already, so I kind of found her—

[00:44:02.01] Q: Oh, this was much later.

[00:44:04.18] Kahn: Much later, yeah. She was kind of a pain in the ass, but then we showed up at a reunion at Bronx Science and we talked and we meant to stay in touch but it didn't happen; and then what happened was when my mother died, I guess she saw the obituary and she wrote me a lovely note to my mother's house, because that's the only address she had, and I wrote back and she told me that her mother had recently died so we sort of re-bonded around that. And then also the experience of having—later on—breast cancer, so she became a friend but I lost her at Barnard. And the other friend went to New England Conservatory [of Music]. The only friend I had from high school, junior high school and high school was Lila and she went to City.

[00:45:06.17] Q: She was available.

[00:45:07.26] Kahn: And we did see each other from time to time but it was after college that— She got married early. And then her husband developed a brain tumor and died within a few years, so the five years of her marriage we were out of touch. But those were the friends I kept or redeveloped. The other friends were from Barnard; there was a friend who was a year ahead of us. There was a friend who was a year behind us. People I met in classes.

[00:45:44.09] Q: Were they like you, from the city or?

[00:45:46.29] Kahn: One was very much like me from the city; one was a girl from Minneapolis or *Minneapolis*.

[00:45:53.06] Q: Was she Jewish?

[00:45:54.29] Kahn: They both were. They both were. Barnard was, for me, an eye-opener in that the majority of the students were not Jewish, although plenty of them were. There were also some examples of wealth that I did not previously encounter. Although where I went to summer camp, there were some kids of really affluent people and it was a little bit uncomfortable for me.

[00:46:28.20] Q: Was it?

[00:46:29.00] Kahn: I felt a little shabby.

[00:46:31.16] Q: Shabby?

[00:46:31.16] Kahn: Yeah, but Barnard was socially an eye-opener for me.

[00:46:43.11] Q: Could you expand on that a little bit?

[00:46:46.11] Kahn: Probably I was also in touch with people who were less affluent than I. Not everybody was middle class. There were people who came from much less and there were people who came from very much more. There was more ethnic diversity than I was used to.

[00:47:14.16] Q: Accustomed to.

[00:47:16.16] Kahn: And it just was interesting.

[00:47:19.09] Q: Did you develop a group of friends?

[00:47:22.08] Kahn: No, no.

[00:47:22.08] Q: Just one here, one there?

[00:47:23.27] Kahn: Exactly.

[00:47:25.10] Q: Scatter shot.

[00:47:29.13] Kahn: The work load and the independence were kind of overwhelming a little bit and I also drifted away from science and more to the social sciences. I don't know—

[00:47:48.05] Q: Do you remember why? Was there a particular class?

[00:47:50.18] Kahn: I don't know. It just was exciting to me. I think Professor [Peter] Juviler was a tremendous, tremendous—and Professor [Dennis G.] Dalton and then there was another woman in comparative political systems. She wasn't at Barnard for very long, Audrey Smock, and she was a younger professor and she was very much a role model for me. I came to Barnard sort of thinking I would go to law school; and then I just wanted to be like her. And I was very, very into that—always had an interest in Russia or China, I don't know. Nobody in my family

comes from either place, but they just seemed very exotic and fascinating to me and the languages are beautiful, and the literature is beautiful and so here I was at Barnard and it was kind of a really exciting place to study this. Professor Juviler was just extraordinary, but also at Columbia there were some real luminaries. [Zbigniew Kazimierz] Brzezinski was there. Marshall [Darrow] Shulman in foreign policy. It was really an exciting place to pursue this interest, and so I did.

[00:49:01.21] Q: You came alive, academically.

[00:49:02.23] Kahn: Yeah, well—

[00:49:05.28] Q: In the humanities.

[00:49:06.28] Kahn: In my interest in the social sciences, taking things that we didn't have in high school, like sociology.

[00:49:18.03] Q: Right, of course. Did you have a best friend ever at Barnard?

[00:49:24.24] Kahn: Well, it was probably Barbara and we are still friends. We don't necessarily see each other all that often but we are kind of very attached—Siamese twins in the soul. She is Jewish; she is also from the Bronx. I think her parents are American, also from this very traditional Jewish background. When I was a kid and I was being obnoxious, my parents would threaten to send me back to the Gypsies. Her parents were going to send her back to the Indians.

[00:50:08.28] Q: I was—the Indians. I was going to go back to the Indians.

[00:50:10.20] Kahn: Cultural distinction. Where were you going?

[00:50:13.01] Q: Back to the Indians. My grandmother was going to send me back to the Indians. What the Indians would have wanted with me, I have no idea.

[00:50:20.13] Kahn: I don't know.

[00:50:22.19] Q: Do you remember a class, except for Kate Millet's class, in which you just felt completely overwhelmed?

[00:50:30.07] Kahn: Well, not until graduate school.

[00:50:35.16] Q: Not until there. Okay.

[00:50:36.27] Kahn: Not at Barnard. Not at Barnard.

[00:50:38.06] Q: And you knew all the time that you were at Barnard that you were going to be a professional. You were not going to be a stay-at-home mom.

[00:50:46.14] Kahn: No, and my mother for the first few years of my life was that. I think Betty Friedan probably wrote about my mom. And so when I was eight years old, my mother went to work. There were two reasons for this; she wasn't really needed at home as much, although I came home many times. She didn't go to work full time at first; she went to work part time at first, and then full time, but lots of times I came home to an empty house. I was a latchkey kid. It didn't bother me, but it did. Again I also had a sense of being different from other children. But she was going to do this and for two reasons. One, I think she just didn't like the life of staying home alone, doing housework. We were able to afford help so she didn't have to do that all the time. She didn't like just hanging around with the other women, talking, gossiping and shopping. She just wanted to be out there in the real world and I think, two, she wanted her own money because there was a time when she and my father were having difficulties, and I know that they were seriously considering splitting up, which totally devastated me. I didn't know anybody who was divorced, who came from a broken home then. But they were serious enough about it so that they talked to me about it to prepare me. I remember my father talking to me about it. I prayed to God that this wouldn't happen.

[00:52:44.02] Q: It worked.

[00:52:45.02] Kahn: Well, correlation does not prove causation but they didn't. But this idea of having your own money and being able to be independent, to be able to take care of yourself was very important to my mother. It was in the air I breathed. I didn't think of my mother as being such a trailblazer or feminist. In fact, I sort of thought better of men and men's thinking. I never wanted to be a boy. Never, ever. It's just that what men did was better.

[00:53:31.20] Q: Well, they had more things they could do.

[00:53:33.11] Kahn: And it was more important. So I didn't admire my mother as much as I should have and as much as I came to in retrospect and part of it is just being a teenager. Isn't there a certain amount of conflict with the same-sex parents during adolescence?

[00:53:52.04] Q: Sure.

[00:53:52.25] Kahn: It's part of your separating and finding your own self. She and I, God, we had screaming matches, but—

[00:54:01.01] Q: What did she do when she went to work? What did she become?

[00:54:03.17] Kahn: Well, at first she was a secretary and then she ultimately—She had wanted to be a teacher and this is another thing: She never went to college. She went to—she hadn't gone to college. Her parents pushed her to get married; she graduated from high school and married my father. They met—they were all kind of in the jewelry business and the parents' offices were in the same building and my father was really kind of a handsome guy, sort of looked like Louis Jourdan. So she fell in love with him and they got married. She never went to college and she always felt terrible about that. So she went to college. She went to work; took two courses after work. She majored in French at Hunter College and it took her ten years to get that degree, but

she did. I was angry with her for not being more there for me and I was angry with her when she was there. (both laugh)

[00:55:19.18] Q: She could do no right.

[00:55:20.18] Kahn: Right. She did all that. She didn't eventually become a teacher. What she did was—she was very artistic person and she went to work for people who sold furniture to the trade, modern furniture designers. Okay, so she worked with architects and decorators and represented these—well, for a long time it was Harvey Probber. So she was in this modern furniture business. It's actually sales. So that's what she did until she retired in her mid-sixties.

[00:56:13.21] Q: Did you then develop an aversion to modern furnishings?

[00:56:17.12] Kahn: No, I actually love them and when she died I took a lot of her stuff. She definitely informed my taste in that respect. She furnished her apartment with things from where she worked, things that they wouldn't have been able to buy, or they certainly wouldn't have bought if she had to pay full price. She had wonderful taste and she always dressed very well. She wasn't even French; she was Belgian. But she always put herself together so beautifully; I wish I had paid more attention. The one time I listened to her—this is much, much later on—I was working on Wall Street and I was leaving on a business trip to Europe and my mother had spent the afternoon with me; she was with me in my apartment as I packed to go and she—You know, I was going to fly business class because the company was paying and they kind of—you have to, because you're representing them. And I was dressed in jeans and an old sweater,

because it's an overnight flight. She said, "You cannot leave the house, dressed like that and fly business class representing your company." I could listen to her or miss the flight, but—

[00:57:54.14] Q: So you changed.

[00:57:56.03] Kahn: I changed. But I would have done well to pay more attention to her. It wasn't on my radar screen at the time.

[00:58:07.17] Q: Now, other commuters have spoken about certain little hubs on campus where commuters kind of clustered and made them feel a little bit more a part of things. Did you—?

[00:58:22.25] Kahn: There were a few. The first year was that little annex; do you recall?

[00:58:30.07] Q: Yes.

[00:58:31.23] Kahn: That was it.

[00:58:32.18] Q: It was like a little coffee place.

[00:58:36.16] Kahn: Yeah, but then when they built McIntosh that was a big hangout. Also the Lion's Den at Columbia.

[00:58:36.19] Q: Yeah. I remember that, too.

[00:58:50.11] Kahn: It was really those three and I really remember especially at McIntosh, at least in the beginning, do you remember they had a lot of banquettes?

[00:59:02.21] Q: Yes, I do.

[00:59:03.20] Kahn: I mean that to me was heaven but I can see it could make for a very inflexible space in terms of use.

[00:59:12.21] Q: Yes, I loved it though, too. You could sit there all afternoon—

[00:59:14.02] Kahn: I loved it and we did. But I remember, too, that when Juilliard [The Juilliard School] moved to Lincoln Center and Manhattan School of Music moved into the old Juilliard building, they were doing renovations and they didn't have any place for the students to hang out, so they had an arrangement with Barnard where they could use our Student Center, so there were all these guys from Manhattan School of Music that I got to know and I dated a trombonist for a while. I have no memory of a big break up or something; did he just walk into my life and then drift out? I don't know, but I had a really good time with him. He used to take me to concerts, jazz concerts in the Village and we'd see Urbie Green and his green trombone [the “Green Monster”]. He lived in Brooklyn with his parents; he had a car. This was totally so not my New York, Manhattan life. I didn't learn to drive until I was thirty-five and that was only because I met Alan and he told me I had to learn how to drive because he was going to lose his eyesight.

[01:00:37.14] Q: Planning ahead again.

[01:00:38.06] Kahn: He was already at the point where his vision was sufficiently impaired that he should not be driving, but he still was. So it had a certain urgency. That was another Barnard experience that's really nice and interesting and enriching.

[01:01:07.10] Q: Did you plan to be a virgin when you got married?

[01:01:10.16] Kahn: No. (both laugh)

[01:01:12.11] Q: Okay. You planned not to be.

[01:01:14.20] Kahn: I guess I sort of did. I once said to somebody—I was reminded of this; I didn't remember—and we were very much younger and she also came from a kind of religious family. I said, “Well, I don't know. Maybe I won't ever get married, but I'm not dying a virgin.” She was shocked. (both laugh)

[01:01:36.27] Q: Well, that was just—why I ask is other things, political things were changing and you know—

[01:01:42.28] Kahn: And the sexual mores.

[01:01:14.28] Q: Yeah.

[01:01:44.28] Kahn: She wasn't a virgin when she got married. She probably expected at least at that point that she would be.

[01:01:50.28] Q: Yeah. And do you remember the point at which you decided, Oh no, I'm not going to be a virgin when I get married?

[01:01:58.29] Kahn: No, I can't say when or where this happened.

[01:02:02.19] Q: Okay. It wasn't an overriding attraction or deciding you were in love with somebody. Nothing like that.

[01:02:09.10] Kahn: No. No, it really wasn't. It wasn't. I think it was more of a function of meeting—getting to know people who were—It wasn't a question of promiscuity or anything like that—

[01:02:31.22] Q: No, no, no.

[01:02:32.22] Kahn: I was just more open sexually, less restricted than the religious people that I—

[01:02:42.00] Q: Had grown up with.

[01:02:43.13] Kahn: Yeah, among the ones that I had grown up with. Or else the other ones were just people I knew when I was very young, so we played doctor but it wasn't about sex and love or love and marriage in the same grave, and in what order. Well, the grave has to come last, doesn't it? (both laugh)

[01:03:04.28] Q: Usually. (both laughing) Did you have an idea, an ideal of the sort of man you wanted to marry?

[01:03:14.26] Kahn: Well, I kind of figured he'd better be Jewish, although at some points I thought maybe not, but I thought he would be a professional. I wanted him to be kind of intellectual.

[01:03:36.14] Q: So kind of like your dad, only—

[01:03:37.20] Kahn: Kind of, kind of.

[01:03:40.13] Q: Did you end up marrying somebody like that?

[01:03:42.07] Kahn: I would say so. It took me long enough to find him but he is Jewish, he was in Wall Street, and he is very well read. He was a—what he could see, he was a voracious reader and he comes from a family of—he is a very bright man himself; it sometimes takes my breath away the things that he remembers, his recall of information and points. In some ways I think—I don't feel awed by him intellectually, that I'm not on a par with him. Sometimes he can come up

with an analogy that makes me think, What? But there is almost a brilliance in how much he retains and that I just don't have. So, yes, I think he is very much like my father in that way, very much the man I wanted in that way.

[01:04:58.08] Q: Let me go back a bit to the spring of '68.

[01:05:02.05] Kahn: Okay.

[01:05:04.21] Q: Where were you emotionally, politically, physically? Where were you for all that?

[01:05:13.17] Kahn: Well, a lot of this is even kind of vague in my memory, but I was still a commuter, so I think I heard about the bust on the news, in the morning.

[01:05:24.09] Q: Because it was at night, yeah.

[01:05:25.14] Kahn: And I guess I went to school. In the lead up to it, the strike, I was not sure where I stood. I mean, I was in sympathy with the goals of the students. I had from my first trip up the steps at Barnard moved a little bit to the left from wishy-washy liberal to armchair radical, but I was troubled by the tactics.

[01:06:03.15] Q: The tactics of the demonstrators?

[01:06:05.25] Kahn: The people in the buildings. I also didn't really—I don't know how much I knew of what was going on.

[01:06:14.17] Q: The issues.

[01:06:14.17] Kahn: No, I knew the issues, yes. But the dean that was captive—

[01:06:2.17] Q: He wasn't really captive. (laughing)

[01:06:25.17] Kahn: I mean, there was so much that I learned only in retrospect, and I don't know how much was true. Was it Dean Coleman [Henry Coleman]?

[01:06:31.11] Q: Coleman. What happened was Hamilton Hall started filling up with people. It just started filling up with people, and he'd been to lunch with his basketball team that he loved and they loved him and he came to the door of Hamilton and there were students all over and he ordered everybody to step aside and let him in, so we did. We stepped aside—

[01:06:57.19] Kahn: And then you wouldn't let him out.

[01:06:57.24] Q: Well, no, it wasn't that we wouldn't let him out. It was that by the time he wanted to leave, there were three times as many people in that foyer area that anybody would have had to fight their way out. So there was a moment—I mean, it was a really childish moment when we realized there were so many people in the lobby and we sort of looked at each other and

said, Well, he wanted in there so bad; wonder how he is going to get out? But it was kind of like, Eh, he, he. We didn't keep him captive.

[01:07:29.29] Kahn: Okay, against his will.

[01:07:31.11] Q: But when he looked out—he looked out and he went and he closed the door. (both laugh) We thought it was hilarious, but then when he ordered us to step aside, we stepped aside again. But it was that moment that we realized, there are a lot more of us than them.

[01:07:47.27] Kahn: Did that make you feel powerful?

[01:07:49.06] Q: Yes! And giddy, actually; I'd have to say giddy.

[01:07:52.08] Kahn: Giddy with power.

[01:07:53.28] Q: Yes. We weren't going to do anything to the man. It was that just the aah—

[01:08:00.12] Kahn: So, but the point is I didn't have this information, as you see, in anywhere near a timely fashion. I was confused. I was ignorant. I was troubled by tactics. I also was afraid. I was living at home and my father, he was not a violent man but this was just so off his radar screen, that kids do this sort of thing. He came from Germany, for goodness sake.

[01:08:30.27] Q: Well, there was the SS [*Schutzstaffel*]; they were pretty young.

[01:08:33.16] Kahn: It's interesting that you mention that. When I was growing up, I was not allowed to join the Brownies [Girl Scout Brownies] because it reminded by parents of [Adolf] Hitler, Hitler Youth.

[01:08:43.12] Q: Oh, that makes perfect sense.

[01:08:43.01] Kahn: The brownshirts Hitler Youth and it wasn't just the color of the uniforms, it was the regimentation. The idea of uniforms, this to my parents was just anathema. You know, my father was fine with the civil rights movement, because that didn't upset his universe. But for my father, this was—kids just didn't do this. It just upset his sense of order in the universe and he was very, very angry. And if I would have been in the buildings and gotten arrested, I am quite certain he might have killed me.

[01:09:29.18] Q: He was really passionately upset.

[01:09:31.19] Kahn: As it is, we had an argument about, I don't know, the War? He was either against the war or, you know, go in there and bomb their asses off. He just didn't get this whole idea of change. He wasn't sympathetic to the women's movement at all even though his wife was—

[01:10:03.05] Q: Probably all the less because of—

[01:10:05.13] Kahn: Well, I'm sure he didn't like what she did, you know, going to work, but he had no choice. So, anyway, we had had a big argument and I remember for months not speaking to him.

[01:10:19.28] Q: Really? Living in the same house.

[01:10:22.04] Kahn: Yeah.

[01:10:23.03] Q: That's interesting. Did you manage to stay—

[01:10:24.12] Kahn: *Interesting* is what my mother always told me to say when you really meant *yech*. (both laugh)

[01:10:27.23] Q: I think my mother probably told me the same thing. Were you aware of doing your very, very best not to go home?

[01:10:39.19] Kahn: Yeah, I would study late. Came home late.

[01:10:42.17] Q: Was there anybody's room that you slept on the floor of?

[01:10:45.14] Kahn: No, no, I didn't do that. I did come home every night and we made peace.

[01:10:55.01] Q: Months though, that's quite a long time.

[01:10:56.21] Kahn: Yes, it was a lot of time.

[01:10:58.02] Q: Do you think if you had lived on campus, that you might have—because these things, they sort of happen spontaneously.

[01:11:06.18] Kahn: I know. I might have been sort of carried away. It could have happened; it could have happened and I'm sure for some people it did. Yeah.

[01:11:13.12] Q: Yeah.

[01:11:15.24] Kahn: So, but I remember with my good friend Barbara, we were walking around campus and we weren't in class, and we asked each other, Are we striking or are we cutting? I didn't know.

[01:11:32.24] Q: Well, there was a lot of chaos and uncertainty.

[01:11:34.24] Kahn: Yeah. Chaos and uncertainty and, you know, for the commuters really, sort of ignorance.

[01:11:43.10] Q: For everybody, ignorance, because we didn't have cellphones.

[01:11:49.16] Kahn: And you didn't know what was going on anywhere else.

[01:11:49.21] Q: Yeah, we just knew what was happening in our building.

[01:11:51.27] Kahn: You know, that's very interesting to imagine, to reimagine the world pre-cellphone.

[01:11:57.09] Q: It really made a big difference in this. We didn't know what was happening across campus in another building. We just knew what was happening in our building with an occasional phone call. There was a lot of misinformation. We had no idea. So the night of the bust, did you watch it on television? No, the next day—

[01:12:15.27] Kahn: No, the bust I think I heard about it on the radio and then I went up to school and it's all very vague for me now. I can't really tell a good narrative.

[01:12:28.24] Q: You weren't there to observe it.

[01:12:31.07] Kahn: Right.

[01:12:31.07] Q: The night that—

[01:12:31.02] Kahn: Exactly. I was not.

[01:12:35.14] Q: And then, was there ever a point—

[01:12:36.22] Kahn: And also because I had few friends. It's not like there were all these people telling me what happened. So I don't think that it really relieved me of my ignorance in a serious way.

[01:12:59.13] Q: Martha Peterson was very mellow about the whole thing. She refused to get exercised, she didn't make any threats, she wanted a few meetings, and let's consider, and she really handled it remarkably well as opposed to whoever that was—

[01:13:18.20] Kahn: Grayson [Louis] Kirk?

[01:13:19.20] Q: Yeah, her attitude was, Oh, well. Our girls have their feelings and they demonstrated them. Let's try to get back to normal. Grayson Kirk was like a raging maniac. They were very, very different, the two schools right across the street. Was there any point in your life where you thought, Gosh, I really want to transfer from Barnard and go away?

[01:13:45.25] Kahn: No.

[01:13:46.00] Q: No.

[01:13:46.21] Kahn: No

[01:13:46.29] Q: No, you loved being there.

[01:13:47.24] Kahn: I did. I might have been unhappy for a stretch for reasons having nothing to do with Barnard, but also it's part of my DNA. I don't transplant all that well.

[01:14:02.04] Q: Yeah, yeah, I know what you mean.

[01:14:03.09] Kahn: Changing your place is not for me the solution. I lived in the same house for long enough not even to bother painting the insides of the closets anymore because once you take the stuff out, you can't get it back in. (Patrick laughs) I don't want to move. You know?

[01:14:25.03] Q: Yeah, that's just—

[01:14:27.17] Kahn: Once I have it the way I like it, I want to keep it that way. I might hang a different painting, (Patrick laughs) but that's as far as I go.

[01:14:37.10] Q: I really understand that way of being. I'm kind of like that. Were you relieved when you got back to school? What did you do over that summer, that first summer of '68?

[01:14:48.24] Kahn: Oh, my God. You know, I think I was supposed to go with a friend from high school who was not at Barnard to study at the Sorbonne [University of Paris]. We were going to take French. It was just one of those summer programs and my father wouldn't let me go because stuff was happening there.

[01:15:10.19] Q: Yeah.

[01:15:12.12] Kahn: So I think I just stayed in the city and I got a job in a local store. I just walked in and they offered it to me. It's interesting. There weren't that many things—I think, in my experience, we didn't have the intern stuff that kids have today.

[01:15:36.02] Q: No, no.

[01:15:39.22] Kahn: If you typed well, you could get a job or you could wait tables. I mean, it was a little early for computers. I had a roommate in Plimpton [Hall], a suitemate at Plimpton, who did have a job off campus doing something with computers, but I think in those days it was still mainly data entry.

[01:16:03.27] Q: And the computers were—

[01:16:04.17] Kahn: So here I was offered this job doing the payroll for a shoe store and, you know, all the paperwork. It was mind-numbingly boring but it's a good experience. It developed some—

[01:16:21.19] Q: And you were good at math, liked it.

[01:16:23.02] Kahn: Yeah. But the point—I think the experience of having a really terrible job like that is that it—hopefully you get some respect or at least compassion for the people for

whom that's their working life and, you know, it maybe keeps you focused to make sure you don't end up like that and you keep doing what you need to do to have another opportunity. But we steer kids away from that today, with good reason—it's hard to get a good job, a career-track job—

[01:17:00.20] Q: And they don't pay. I mean, they're interns.

[01:17:03.01] Kahn: Yeah. Well, some pay. But, you know, I mean on Wall Street they get paid.

[01:17:08.23] Q: Well, yeah. But then just— my son is younger than most because I got such a late start. He is twenty-five still and his friends are interns for—

[01:17:19.19] Kahn: He is twenty-five still. He is going to be twenty-five for one year like everybody else. (both laugh)

[01:17:24.15] Q: I think he has been twenty-five for two years. (both laugh) Now when I look at the etchings of the slaves and the plantation fields I say, “Well, those were the interns actually.” (laughs) So. Do you remember the first time that just knocked—except for the paper—just knocked you off your pants, that was such a surprise about being at Barnard?

[01:17:57.01] Kahn: Well, I think that that was a pretty overwhelming experience that made me question whether I could do this. Whenever you advance to the next level of school, they always tell you adjust your expectations, you are really good at this level but now you are in a more

select group. So I thought, Okay, here it is. (Patrick laughs) What is it? The Peter principle? Everyone rises to his level of incompetence? You know, for me that was my freshman year at Barnard. So I had to get past that and then—

[01:18:25.23] Q: But you rebound from that.

[01:18:27.23] Kahn: I did, but then there were other sort of interruptions. They were time management and emotional distractions rather than anything to do with the work itself.

[01:18:41.04] Q: Right, or interest in the work. In other words, did you find yourself more in the—well, yes, the humanities—

[01:18:48.19] Kahn: Well, social sciences. Yeah, I was interested in what I studied. There were very few courses that I took that I hated. I can't even think of any, even the required things that I took to satisfy distribution requirement that I took because I had to. There wasn't anything that I really didn't find tremendous value in, whether I did well in it or not.

[01:19:21.24] Q: Did you join any clubs or organizations?

[01:19:24.20] Kahn: I don't think so. I didn't audition for the orchestra; I had stopped taking violin lessons.

[01:19:34.03] Q: You never mentioned that you had taken violin lessons.

[01:19:35.11] Kahn: Well, you didn't ask. (both laugh) You should have asked when I told you my father had the opera on, when he was listening.

[01:19:43.29] Q: I should have asked.

[01:19:44.28] Kahn: I took violin lessons as a kid and played in school orchestras.

[01:19:49.15] Q: Did you love it?

[01:19:50.10] Kahn: I did. I didn't practice as much as I should have. I really wish they had made me. But it was fun. But college is where I let it go. I think freshman year with one of my friends, we went down to Henry Street Settlement to tutor, so I did that. That was something that was organized by—we did it through Columbia.

[01:20:25.25] Q: I think the Urban Center probably did that.

[01:20:27.01] Kahn: Maybe, but I don't think that I was involved in any—

[01:20:38.26] Q: Not SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], of course.

[01:20:40.21] Kahn: No, no and I am thinking that probably it was also related to being a commuter that I simply wasn't aware. I wasn't on campus enough to be aware of it. New York

was a different place when we were at Barnard from what it is today. I remember once when I was at Plimpton I was at my parent's house. I was going to go back up to Plimpton to go home and a cab driver didn't want to take me. To 122nd and Amsterdam. What I'm getting at here is I think the idea of spending evenings on campus and then making my way home—

[01:21:35.18] Q: It was harder.

[01:21:35.18] Kahn: Probably it didn't seem to me to be something I really wanted to—

[01:21:43.28] Q: It wouldn't be easy.

[01:21:46.25] Kahn: I was worried it wouldn't be safe. So I went to school to go to class, to study in the library, and then went home.

[01:22:02.27] Q: But you did hang around in McIntosh and—

[01:22:07.15] Kahn: Certainly, in between classes.

[01:22:09.13] Q: But not—It wasn't your passion to be there. In other words, you didn't find yourself having to drag yourself home before wanting to stay on campus.

[01:22:19.26] Kahn: No, I didn't experience it that way. It wasn't so much a question of—

[01:22:28.16] Q: Passion.

[01:22:31.29] Kahn: —passion or preference or not wanting to be some place. It's just, Okay, my work is done here for the day. It's time to go to home. I didn't really think about it.

[01:22:43.12] Q: Even when you were in love?

[01:22:45.14] Kahn: That relationship was mostly a summer relationship.

[01:22:53.00] Q: Ah, okay. Any big disappointments other than the one love affair?

[01:22:57.05] Kahn: That relationship? Big disappointments? Not that I can think of. I'm sure on the subway on the way home I'm going to think of that.

[01:23:14.01] Q: You know, you can call. (laughs) Anything you wish you'd done differently? A class you wish you hadn't taken, a class you wish you had, something you—

[01:23:25.15] Kahn: Those aren't—You know, I probably should have gone to law school.

[01:23:29.17] Q: That was the plan?

[01:23:30.29] Kahn: It's not a big regret but I don't know that I would have loved my career better. I probably would have had the same frustrations and so forth but if I had a choice now

about if whether I could decide today you went to law school or you didn't, I would say I would like to have done it. Just to have that education. The only other regret that I had in my life has more to do with the way I was raised. This comes up for me because talking about it with people that I study Spanish with. My parents and their families spoke many, many languages. My mother in her childhood home in Antwerp spoke French to her mother, Flemish to her father, the parents spoke Polish between them, and they spoke Yiddish to the grandparents. It's like every relation had its own language but when they got to America, they spoke Yiddish because that was sort of the lingua franca of the refugee Jewish community. My father's family, they always spoke German until the day—certainly for the rest of my grandparents' lives. I think when my father continued his relationship with his sister they may have started a conversation in English and then ended up arguing in German. And then, of course, my father learned Spanish in Spain—the year he was in Spain—very, very well, but nobody ever spoke a different language to me.

[01:25:19.08] Q: English then?

[01:25:19.13] Kahn: English, it was English. My mother wanted to learn English and my father had to learn English. Even though they were speaking—there was plenty of English spoken in my maternal grandparents' house, but in my father's parents' house the ambient conversation was German. My mother got along as best as she could in Yiddish, but everybody spoke to me in English. It is such a missed opportunity to be sort of bilingual and I always asked my parents why they didn't do this and my mother said to me, “We didn't want you to have a foreign accent.” And I thought—

[01:26:03.13] Q: Which makes perfect sense.

[01:26:04.13] Kahn: But I wouldn't have had—maybe initially.

[01:26:07.15] Q: For Holocaust survivors—

[01:26:10.23] Kahn: But then you have—I know kids whose first language was not English because their parents didn't have it to give them. My friend Lila was born in a DP [Displaced Person's] camp in Austria and she grew up in her early years speaking Yiddish and then she spoke English and she speaks English like me. You develop the accent of where you live if you learn that language early enough. She did, of course, because she went to school from the time she was five. But I think there was something about their thinking in terms of what happens when we learn two languages. At the same time, I would have been confused but it wouldn't have been a permanent disaster. And now from what we know, from what neuroscience teaches us about what happens to your brain when you have another language really early on—Look, you can always learn a language; you won't speak like a native, but it's something that I wish they had done differently. Not much else.

[01:27:24.06] Q: What made you decide—When and why did you decide not to go to law school?

[01:27:29.18] Kahn: Well, first what happened was I got deflected at Barnard. You know, I wanted to be a professor. It was part of the intellectual excitement of the place. It was part of I wanted to be like Audrey Smock. It was also, I think, a certain amount of inertia of imagination. I was always in school so this was a way of staying at school because I just didn't see myself any other way. So I applied to Columbia Graduate School [of Arts and Sciences] because I was interested in Soviet politics. And I was just going to study that and I was—

[01:28:09.03] Q: School of International Affairs?

[01:28:11.04] Kahn: It was the School of Arts and Sciences because it was political science but also the Russian Institute at the School of—it wasn't SIPA [School of International and Public Affairs] yet; it was just SIA [School of International Affairs], and we called it the School of Imperialist Affairs. (Patrick laughs) I wanted to be an intellectual, I wanted to be a professor, and I started this program there and smack dab in the middle of it, I realized, No, I don't. So I left after the first year. I thought I would go to law school, but I needed a break and I needed to work. So through a friend I got a job as a sales assistant at Merrill Lynch and I decided I really liked this. The thing about the market is everything affects it. So if you're kind of unfocused, you get to learn a lot about a lot of different things and follow a lot of different things. It was kind of exciting to me. It was also an opportunity to make my own money, which I identified with—I guess I got this from my mother. You know, independence. But it doesn't take all that much to see that if you have your own money, you don't have to ask somebody to buy something. And this, to me, is absolutely synonymous with being a grown-up. A series of jobs later and I ended up at Prudential—what was Bache [Bache & Co.] then—on their international desk. It was an

institutional sales position dealing with foreign institutions and basically what I did was help distribute the national debt and it was a lot of fun. The market was exciting and it was the time of tremendous change in the market because of the way the Fed was targeting interest rates, and I met some really interesting people. I had a great time. Wall Street was such a tremendous adjustment and rude awakening on two fronts that were total antithesis of everything I got at Barnard. One was the treatment of women. (laughs)

[01:30:48.26] Q: Okay? Could you expand—

[01:30:52.26] Kahn: Okay. First of all it's just the attitude of your coworkers. There is no lower form of life than a Wall Street trading room. The jokes they told.

[01:31:07.26] Q: Vulgar—

[01:31:09.28] Kahn: Vulgar, misogynistic. It was also one of the places where I encountered some anti-Semitism. I was never a victim of it. I would never call myself a victim of it. Things were just too good for Jews here already in New York, but a bigoted remark. I didn't get too many of them growing up, but once or twice probably. But the things they [Wall Street traders] said about Jews—

[01:31:47.22] Q: That assumes, I guess, that there weren't that many Jews there?

[01:31:51.11] Kahn: In a trading room, a lot of the traders it seems, they are Irish. I don't know why that is; I think it has to do with people hiring people like themselves. They thought they were saying it all in good fun. It wasn't vicious but it was obnoxious, all this Christ-killer stuff. So there was that. The other thing was the political conservatism. Voting Democratic is an act of sedition in all but a very few quarters. And I remember seeing, for a period of time—because I was in this last firm for twenty-two years and a lot of people came and went—but there were two people that I could sort of agree with politically.

[01:32:58.17] Q: Two out of—

[01:33:00.20] Kahn: Yeah, I mean one was—Okay, three. One guy was Canadian. So while he was conservative, he was Canadian conservative, not off the charts.

[01:33:13.04] Q: Mellow conservative.

[01:33:16.11] Kahn: Yeah. The other guy was a black young [inaudible oddlot?] trader; he could have been my son, And he was such a nice guy. His parents grew up in the South and I guess they were few years older than I, and they had the experience of integrating schools.

[01:33:47.25] Q: They were the ones.

[01:33:49.23] Kahn: Yeah. And I remember wanting to meet them for two reasons. First of all, to hear their stories, but also they raised a terrific kid. He was just a nice, nice guy and bright guy,

and good-looking guy, and he had this absolutely drop-dead gorgeous girlfriend. I wonder whatever happened to them.

[01:34:12.19] Q: What was his last name?

[01:34:13.19] Kahn: I don't remember, I don't remember. I could probably dig it up. He was very helpful to me when other traders didn't want to help me. He was kind of liberal because of his experience. He was very enlightening about some things because he would tell me how he would always be stopped by cops when he was driving the family car, and it was just inconceivable to me. In these days when you worked on Wall Street, you wore a suit. I mean, somebody in a suit and tie? Unless you are looking for fraud, there is no probable cause there, you know? But there was. And he would be stopped all the time. And nobody ever gave him a ticket. Why else were they stopping him? So that was illuminating, and then the only other guy that I could agree with was the guy who was shining shoes—Ray, the shoeshine guy. He would talk to the sales and trade people; they were always on the wrong side of history and the issues. I would pipe up to give him some support. You know, how Alan called Mayor Giuliani, “Benito Giuliani”. (both laugh)

[01:35:41.18] Q: But despite this inhospitable—it was politically and socially inhospitable but you stuck to it so you must have loved it—

[01:35:47.27] Kahn: I stuck to it. I guess you can get used to anything, plus—

[01:35:57.18] Q: But you didn't have to.

[01:35:57.18] Kahn: —there were some people—But remember I don't like to transplant. There were a couple of inflection points where I actually—At one point I actually did take the LSAT to maybe do a different—

[01:36:12.06] Q: Give yourself the option.

[01:36:13.14] Kahn: Yeah. But then what happened was—I don't know. When I got married, it also happened to coincide with certain changes in the politics of the firm and how things were developing. So my career, in retrospect—I didn't see it at that time that way really, but my career was sort of stalemated. But I was married and I didn't care. It wasn't devastating to me if I would lose my job. There were always questions about the sale of the firm that would be pending; if I left I'd be leaving money on the table, but it was while there that I was kind of secretly hoping that that would happen and eventually it did. Then when I got married, I also had stepchildren who spent a lot of time with us and it was wonderful and I was trying to get pregnant. So my focus shifted; I wasn't so career-driven as I was in my earlier years, but I thought maybe I could still go to law school, but then what happened? Eventually I got—when I would have had the time—I got retired quite early. I sort of then fell kind of head first into middle age. Things got delayed a year, the year I had breast cancer. Then things got delayed—I rethought this when we became grandparents, because my stepdaughter who had the children was living in San Francisco so to be part of their lives, we have to travel a lot and that's fine, but you can't do that when you are in law school. And more to the point, Alan would not have been able to do it without me at

that point. So more and more I thought, Well, okay, this just isn't going to happen now and that's fine.

[01:38:33.13] Q: And you did—did you ever manage to have your own biological child?

[01:38:37.09] Kahn: No, I didn't—

[01:38:41.06] Q: But you had several stepchildren.

[01:38:42.02] Kahn: I have two stepdaughters and they lived with us half of the time and the younger one actually a little more than that. A stepmother is not a mother; nobody has to tell me that, and they have a mother who is a big part of their lives and wonderful. But they were also a big part of my life and it did keep me from feeling childless.

[01:39:06.27] Q: And now you are a grandmother. Were you ever frightened at Barnard?

[01:39:17.18] Kahn: Sure, frightened in the sense of—

[01:39:25.07] Q: On any level.

[01:39:26.03] Kahn: Yeah, of not being smart enough. I guess I always had a sense of being apart, and that was part of it. That I wasn't as smart as some of these other women. I mean, I certainly didn't think I was stupid, but—

[01:39:52.11] Q: Was this maybe because of your parents being not quite part of any one group or?

[01:39:58.25] Kahn: No, I don't think so. I think it's just my own insecurities. Really being kind of hard on yourself, being afraid to make a mistake, of looking stupid.

[01:40:22.11] Q: What were the qualities that this professor—Smock?

[01:40:26.07] Kahn: Yes.

[01:40:26.18] Q: What were the qualities that she had that you wanted?

[01:40:29.16] Kahn: Admired? She was what she was and she was young, and she was smart, and she did this. I could see myself in her high heels. (laughs)

[01:40:49.19] Q: In her high heels. So she wore high heels?

[01:40:51.12] Kahn: She did.

[01:40:52.04] Q: She wasn't a Birkenstock—

[01:40:53.26] Kahn: No, no, no, no. She wore skirts and—

[01:41:00.06] Q: And what did she teach again? I'm sorry.

[01:41:01.05] Kahn: Comparative political systems, Asian political systems. Asian and African political systems.

[01:41:06.00] Q: So she was fascinating.

[01:41:07.12] Kahn: Yeah, this to me was fascinating stuff, how people had different countries, organized themselves, the structure of power, just the way the places—

[01:41:21.29] Q: How the world works.

[01:41:24.18] Kahn: And the organization of this society, this government, as opposed to that government.

[01:41:28.24] Q: What sent you fleeing from SIA?

[01:41:32.23] Kahn: Oh, just that I knew I wasn't going to do this.

[01:41:38.08] Q: Because?

[01:41:37.08] Kahn: This is wrong, it was not thought out, I'm not going to be an academic, just not. I don't have that focus, I don't have that drive to find the question and then you spend your life answering it. That's probably why I didn't become a scientist.

[01:41:58.22] Q: You wanted quicker results.

[01:42:00.03] Kahn: I wanted not to be locked into something. I can't answer. It's just my intellectual DNA is more scattered.

[01:42:13.06] Q: You've been involved with Barnard for a long time. Almost since leaving, right?

[01:42:17.27] Kahn: No, that's not true. In the first—

[01:42:17.12] Q: No?

[01:42:20.16] Kahn: You mean as an alumna?

[01:42:21.14] Q: Yeah.

[01:42:22.23] Kahn: I think it took about—I think I went to a fifteenth year reunion. And then I would go back. Two things. I became a reunion-goer and two things happened. One thing was that I got coopted to be a co-class fund chair. They needed somebody to help one of our

classmates who was doing the job and she just couldn't stand it. It's not fun to be asking people for money but once you agree to do it, it's sort of a life sentence because you can't unless you replace yourself and she managed and I never did. The other thing is that Barnard had a capital campaign and my husband and I were solicited by Carol Cohen, who was a very, very active alumna, she is class of '59. She met with us trying to get a gift out of us and we ended up endowing our scholarship. And of course Alan had to be part of this because I simply couldn't write a check that big—I could but it wouldn't clear. (laughs) So what happened was, it jumped me to another level of commitment and it stayed. Julia Hong Sabella was our class president for a long time and then there was that coup that Katherine became president and she's—

[01:44:21.10] Q: I don't know anything about that.

[01:44:22.25] Kahn: Well, Julie wanted to run again, she wanted to keep the job, and there were people who thought we could do things differently and Katherine, I think, was really good at that. She wanted the job and she got it. I think she's done a great, great job of keeping us together and a core group of classmates to raise some money for Barnard. We are not stellar in terms of the amounts we raise, but we have been pretty good at participation. And you know, making some interesting things happen at the reunion. But nothing is going to top what you and Bob did for our 40th. That was great.

[01:45:21.25] Q: We really have very much enjoyed what we've done on it.

[01:45:26.13] Kahn: It's just such a worthwhile project.

[01:45:29.28] Q: I'm American Studies so for me this was just—

[01:45:33.03] Kahn: It makes me feel bad now that I didn't interview my parents. I did sort of but not enough. They had kind of interesting stories, which I knew, I gathered over the years, piecemeal, about how they got to the United States, the adventure of leaving Europe. But what I didn't get from my father—and he would have been very happy to discuss it with me, I just didn't have the interest at the time—was about the years in Spain because he lived through the Spanish Civil War and he was pretty young. He wasn't a combatant, but he was there; he had a perspective. And now since I'm no longer working, what I started to do is to study Spanish.

[01:46:30.23] Q: Oh, that's right. You mentioned that.

[01:46:32.10] Kahn: Because I never studied it in school.

[01:46:36.10] Q: But you heard it.

[01:46:38.13] Kahn: Well, it's an important language in this hemisphere and it sort of bothered me that I didn't know anything about it and I like studying languages. You know now my fixation of—my feelings of deficit at not having learned—it probably would have been German. You know, when I studied French in school, I enjoyed it. When I was interested in Soviet politics I had to study Russian to get a reading knowledge and that was fantastic. So this to me was a way of keeping the wheels turning, having a place to go because my husband worked at home in

those years already so it was nice to get out of the house. I've been doing this for five or six years now with the same group of people, so it's a social thing, so sort of a book club. When we read a book by a Spanish author, we read only things originally in Spanish and modern things generally. No Cervantes [Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra], all the things that they would have read when they studied Spanish in high school. It seemed for a while that every book we read by a Spanish author had something to do with the Civil War. It's like after seventy-five years they were finally able to talk about it. My father at that point was dead for ten years and I was thinking so many times, Oh my God, I'm so sorry I didn't talk to him about it. I'd love to ask him about this. I should really give him this book to read—

[01:48:19.08] Q: You always think there'll be time.

[01:48:20.20] Kahn: Yeah. So that's why I think this is such a wonderful idea.

[01:48:28.19] Q: I'm loving doing it. Everybody is so different. It's great. The biggest belly laugh you ever had when you were at Barnard?

[01:48:40.03] Kahn: (sighs) There probably were so, so many but one thing comes to mind now, and it's going to suffer in the retelling. It was my friend Barbara who was very much like me, kind of from a traditional Jewish background in the Bronx. She moved up to 616 [616 West 116th Street Residence Hall] before I moved in the dorms, so I was sitting with her in her kitchen, at the table, and one of her suitemates was really this terrific premed student I think from—she was a year ahead of Barbara from Maryland. She is totally WASP. White bread to my

Levy's but Levy's Jewish rye. So Barbara was saying something about, Are you gonna make a Gantze Megilla out of this? And this woman from Maryland said, "What's a Gantze Megilla?" And without missing a beat, Barbara looked at her and said, "A big Tzimmes." (both laugh)

[01:49:53.07] Q: Oh, that clears it right up. That's funny.

[01:50:00.03] Third voice in the room: I have a couple of questions.

[01:50:02.11] Kahn: Sure.

[01:50:02.11] Third voice in the room: [When] we went to college it was the sixties. Do you identify yourself as having been a child of the counterculture?

[01:50:15.10] Kahn: Um, I wasn't all Haight-Ashbury about this, but there was a certain way I dressed and certain earrings that I wore and the certain way I didn't bother to do anything with my hair. I was never really that big into drugs. I smoked a little as a social thing. Frankly, I was kind of traditional in the sense that I preferred alcohol. Especially when I got all into Russian studies stuff I thought I should develop a taste for vodka, so I did. (both laugh)

[01:51:01.19] Q: You were successful in that.

[01:51:03.23] Kahn: Yeah. And I mean, I liked all kinds of music. In the sixties I got into the folk movement but also rock and I never lost classical. At some point, I don't know how I came

across it, but I liked bluegrass and even some country music. When I was little, thinking of this now, when I was in my room in the Bronx—I think it was in the Bronx, maybe it wasn't anymore—but I would listen very late at night to a radio station that was WWVA from Wheeling, West Virginia and I guess late at night, it had that reach. I heard this music that, you know, you didn't hear that in New York. I liked it. I don't know, maybe it was an invitation to a different world, different travel, some place that was not New York.

[01:52:20.27] Q: It was a discovery.

[01:52:22.29] Kahn: Yeah, and then also I liked some jazz, although I tend to like older jazz than the newer. Music is important. The sun could forget to rise one morning. I get that. But a day without some kind of music is just—

[01:52:5e.07] Q: And your musical taste is very eclectic.

[01:52:55.26] Kahn: It is. Even now, I've been drawn to—For a long time I listened to “A Prairie Home Companion”; I don't know why. We just fell into that. I do know why, because my sister-in-law lives in Minnesota and she is actually a representative in the state legislature. So through campaigns and stuff like that she got to know Garrison Keillor and I think she introduced us to it. He gets a lot of fiddle players on that and—

[01:53:32.06] Q: Hm, I know. Yeah.

[01:53:33.09] Kahn: —I adore that and I so wish I had stayed with it that I could learn these things. I listen to everything.

[01:53:45.25] Q: Is there—Oh, go ahead.

[01:53:46.04] Third voice in the room: I've just [got] one more. When you were graduating—other people have talked about this I think—when you were getting about to graduate did you look at the future as like this abyss, you know that you—?

[01:53:59.13] Kahn: My oyster or my abyss, you know? A little bit of both. I knew I was going to graduate school so I didn't expect all that much of a change, but when I got out in the real world, still in that era, if you were an estrogen American, you still had to take a typing test.

[01:54:21.23] Q: Yeah, yeah.

[01:54:23.23] Kahn: You know. And that was kind of another rude awakening.

[01:54:28.12] Q: Isn't it interesting and the estrogen American—

[01:54:01.26] Kahn: That actually is—Garrison Keillor said that once. I really can't call myself that anymore at my age, can I? (both laugh)

[01:54:41.07] Q: Post-estrogen. Is there something—[an] area that I have completely missed here that you feel strongly—

[01:54:50.03] Kahn: Want to talk about? I did get into my parent's background because I think that's sort of really formative for me.

[01:54:57.26] Q: Of course.

[01:54:58.20] Kahn: We got the only child thing in. I can't—

[01:55:04.14] Third voice in the room: You were always a commuter?

[01:55:08.20] Kahn: No, no, no. My senior year I lived in Plimpton. That was transformative.

[01:55:14.13] Q: Tell me about how that was transformative.

[01:55:16.04] Kahn: Well, you know, first of all living with other women—

[01:55:22.14] Q: For the first time.

[01:55:23.14] Kahn: Yeah, who was not my mother. Well, apart from summers at summer camp. But without the monitor, being completely responsible for myself. I mean, not that I was off the payroll, but you know. And not that my mother was doing that much for me anymore at home,

but—you know, if you have a Jewish mother, you speak to her every day. When I was working if she didn't hear from me by nine thirty, she was calling hospital emergency rooms. (both laugh) In the pre-cellphone era, you didn't necessarily do that. I was sort of separated in a way that I had never been before. Well, they weren't far away. And that really felt good, I felt grown up, I felt part of campus life.

[01:56:27.29] Q: Yeah. Did you wish that you'd been there all along?

[01:56:30.22] Kahn: Oh, absolutely. Freshman year, it couldn't have happened because I lived too close, but yeah, yeah. I wouldn't say that for this reason I should not have gone to Barnard in retrospect. I certainly don't feel that way. Living at home for three years is a fair enough trade-off.

[01:56:57.11] Q: It was worth it.

[01:56:57.15] Kahn: Yeah. I mean, I'm glad the school is different today.

[01:57:02.09] Q: In terms of being able to accommodate—

[01:57:05.10] Kahn: Yeah, that you don't have to be a commuter.

[01:57:13.03] Q: This is from nowhere, but the absolute worst date that you ever had at Barnard.

[01:57:19.11] Kahn: Date?

[01:57:19.22] Q: Date.

[01:57:22.23] Kahn: Oh, the worst date that I had would not have been at Barnard.

[01:57:25.21] Q: Oh, okay. Not at Barnard?

[01:57:28.19] Kahn: At Barnard—

[01:57:28.20] Q: All smooth—

[01:57:29.26] Kahn: No, it's just that they were not—

[01:57:36.13] Q: Important enough?

[01:57:39.07] Kahn: Yeah. Nothing was that bad as a date. But I remember after Barnard, sometime, this guy, I don't know where I found him but he came to my apartment, and he was just disgusting; his clothes were dirty. No. Put on clean clothes for me.

[01:58:06.01] Q: What was he? Like a big hippie?

[01:58:07.29] Kahn: No, he was just a big slob. I don't know. I don't know. I sort of was angry about that. Whereas my first date—I don't know, I was about sixteen years old; it was kind of late, but not really for then—but I'm sure his mother told him to do this, he actually bought me a bottle of perfume.

[01:58:31.07] Q: Oh, my goodness.

[01:58:32.17] Kahn: Yeah, it's kind of sweet. I didn't expect that.

[01:58:34.25] Q: No.

[01:58:35.25] Kahn: But just, you know, be clean. I can't say that any date really was—

[01:58:56.01] Q: Horrific.

[01:58:56.29] Kahn: Horrific in that sense. Oh, well, once, much, much later on when I was on a trip to Paris where I was almost raped by a—

[01:59:07.06] Q: That would have been a very bad day.

[01:59:09.24] Kahn: That certainly would have been a very bad day and it was, in fact, a very bad day, but thankfully it was *only* a very bad day. It was a lot of bad judgment on my part picking up this guy that was also travelling, but thankfully I screamed and he, he—

[01:59:31.11] Q: Fled.

[01:59:31.00] Kahn: Yeah. And it was funny—I was spending a lot of time with a cousin I had in Paris; he was working and I was sightseeing during the day. I would see him and his friends at night; they were just a bunch of friends that always hung out together, went to cafes or this person's apartment or that person's apartment, and so I was hanging out with his crowd. The next night I was with him and his friends again and I told this woman what happened, not by way of pouring out my heart but it was more like she asked me, “What did you do last night?” And I said, “Well, I almost got raped.” And then she told that the same thing had happened to her and she screamed so loud that she didn't have a voice for three days, and I just felt a whole lot better about it. Here I had an international buddy in the same experience. But that was a horrific date.

[02:00:34.18] Q: Yeah.

[02:00:37.11] Kahn: And thankfully it wasn't at Barnard. Although from what you hear today—

[02:00:41.20] Q: No, I know women who were actually raped at Barnard and who never reported—

[02:00:46.19] Kahn: Reported it.

[02:00:48.03] Q: Because they just couldn't go through what they knew was going to be the hell of it.

[02:00:52.13] Kahn: I mean it's very, very troubling but somebody—Maybe it was on Bill Maher's show that there was—“Real Time with Bill Maher”—he was talking about this. Oh, he was interviewing two women who had written a book about their Title IX suit. He made the observation that the frat boys at Norman, Oklahoma just were out of there in a heartbeat and here when a student is raped it's just such a big deal to get some consequence. But I thought about that and the thing that troubles me, or I think might be a difference—you know, what the frat boys did was mean and stupid; the university can punish mean and stupid pretty much as it wants. Once you allege a crime—rape is a crime—you have to have a presumption of innocence.

[02:02:10.06] Q: Well—

[02:02:10.06] Kahn: And that just—

[02:02:12.04] Q: That doesn't seem to be a problem.

[02:02:13.03] Kahn: Well, I think they ensure that it's not a problem. I'm sure also because the university is afraid of being sued to kingdom come.

[02:02:27.06] Q: Karla was very caught up in the Title IX stuff. I don't know as much about it but she is because she is—

[02:02:31.20] Kahn: Because of her position yeah and she was dealing with the case, I think.

[02:02:37.13] Q: Yeah, I think so. And she says, every time I talk to her she is, “Oh, this Title IX is driving me crazy.”

[02:02:43.16] Kahn: She is the world’s leading expert on it now, probably. So no, it's very, very troublesome. I like the effort to, in terms of prevention. I don't see that as shifting the blame. We can be—

[02:03:04.01] Q: Safety rules.

[02:03:06.12] Kahn: Exactly, exactly. You get involved. When you see somebody’s had too much to drink, you know what's going to happen.

[02:03:11.17] Q: Yeah.

[02:03:14.17] Third person in the room: What was your reaction to the physical ed [education]? That was always an issue, physical ed, where you got to—at Barnard you had to take the—what were those things called?

[02:03:24.14] Q: Posture tests.

[02:03:24.14] Third voice in the room: Posture tests.

[02:03:25.09] Kahn: I remember that. I remember that. Did we ever take a swimming test?

[02:03:30.02] Q: Um—

[02:03:31.10] Kahn: I thought so.

[02:03:31.10] Q: I didn't take a swimming test but I had to take the posture test and we had three years of phys-ed.

[02:03:37.21] Kahn: We did.

[02:03:38.03] Q: Three years and we had these things with pantaloons and—

[02:03:42.14] Kahn: It was so like what I had in high school that I don't think it really phased me, but there were some diverse things I remember. My first semester I took fencing.

[02:03:52.24] Q: Oh, good for you.

[02:03:53.19] Kahn: Yeah, you think? (Patrick laughs) I don't know, my thighs still hurt. (both laugh) And then you could take folk dancing.

[02:04:03.17] Q: Oh I did; I took Balkan folk dancing.

[02:04:05.29] Kahn: I did, too.

[02:04:08.04] Q: Oh, _____(??). I took archery—

[02:04:10.28] Kahn: I took Balkan; I took Israeli folk dancing. So that didn't really bother me that much.

[02:04:20.26] Q: It's just seemed to take so much time that could be done other things. Three years, you know.

[02:04:28.26] Kahn: Oh, yeah.

[02:04:32.29] Q: I took a relaxation course, at the end of which I was snoring every class.

[02:04:37.16] Kahn: Really? (Patrick makes snoring noise) I didn't even know these things existed.

[02:04:43.26] Q: Anything else? Am I missing something?

[02:04:46.03] Kahn: I don't think so. What else is on your list?

[02:04:49.26] Q: Well, I had the background, what schools, what Barnard—Oh, the first day. Do you remember the first day?

[02:04:58.21] Kahn: The first day at Barnard.

[02:05:00.16] Q: Um-hm.

[02:05:00.16] Kahn: I do not. But I remember—my Barnard first that I do remember is going for my interview at Barnard and I was interviewed by Helen McCann who I think was the—

[02:05:19.14] Q: She was the Director—

[02:05:20.18] Kahn: Director of Admissions, and the interview kind of went really well. I don't know why. It just did and she gave me to understand that I might have a choice. I told her where else I applied and I really was excited about coming to Barnard and I really just felt absolutely exhilarated leaving that interview, whereas my interview at Radcliffe was not as pleasant. The woman was very chilly and off-putting and intimidating. And then I remember—I went with my mother, she came up to Cambridge with me and after the interview we were walking around campus and my mother who is always, you know, kind of a flirt, she just liked men and boys and she found this like really, really cute senior and she starts asking him about the school. Her opening line was, "Where is Harvard yard?" You know, we were standing in it, but he proceeds to give her a tour of the campus and I am following along behind. But to add insult to injury, on

the way home she said to me, “One like that you can bring home anytime.” And I said, “Well, would you ask him if he has a friend for me?” (both laugh)

[02:07:07.07] Q: That's funny.

[02:07:10.12] Kahn: Anyway, that was Barnard and that was Radcliffe. I don't regret not having gone to, gotten into Radcliffe.

[02:07:25.25] Q: Harvard was horrible. I did graduate school there.

[02:07:28.26] Kahn: Did you?

[02:07:29.18] Q: Yeah, um. Never more miserable anywhere in my life.

[02:07:33.05] Kahn: Why?

[02:07:34.20] Q: Everybody was so cold and detached.

[02:07:39.00] Kahn: Really?

[02:07:39.18] Q: Yeah. I was used to Barnard where everybody was very expressive, and stayed up all night talking. It was very arms length. I hated it.

[02:07:49.11] Kahn: How long were you there?

[02:07:50.10] Q: Three years. I would have—it was a five-year program but I dropped out. I got very sick and dropped out. They didn't make me go back because I'd been so sick. Any zany, crazy friend that got you to do things that you wouldn't ordinarily have done?

[02:08:13.00] Kahn: Oh my goodness. I spent a good part of a summer in Israel—this is after Barnard, but not much after Barnard—and I met a guy and we were riding a motorcycle, no helmets, it was too hot. That was pretty adventuresome for me.

[02:08:57.03] Q: Anybody who sort of pushed you to the edge?

[02:09:01.03] Kahn: No, I mean, I did a little—I wasn't that adventuresome a person and I didn't hang out with such adventuresome people. We got into some mischief and cut school on a couple of occasions. But I cut school to go with a girlfriend to go hear [Mstislav] Rostropovich play cello at Carnegie Hall.

[02:09:23.07] Q: Really radical.

[02:09:24.10] Kahn: Because we couldn't get in. This was in the sixties. He was still Soviet; he didn't come to the United States very often. He was giving two concert at Carnegie Hall, one in the evening; we couldn't get anywhere near tickets to that and so what could we do but go to the matinee the next day.

[02:09:42.07] Q: That was your radical rebellion.

[02:09:45.05] Kahn: Yeah, that was it. (Patrick laughs)

[02:09:45.05] Third voice in the room: Did you go to the hangouts like the West End Tavern
[West End Bar] and what was the other?

[02:09:50.11] Q: The Lion's Den.

[02:09:51.14] Third voice in the room: The Gold Rail right?

[02:09:52.19] Q: The Gold Rail was the Waspy jock place.

[02:09:55.22] Kahn: Oh, I didn't. That was so not my world.

[02:09:57.19] Q: Yeah, not mine. The West End was the—

[02:10:01.14] Kahn: Yeah, there were some hours wasted there. (both laugh) I wasn't a regular
there but I'm sure on dates and things like that, that was a place where we spent a lot of time.

[02:10:16.13] Q: Your fondest memory of Barnard.

[02:10:19.13] Kahn: I can't say that anything comes to mind as a singular—

[02:10:30.18] Q: Event.

[02:10:31.10] Kahn: Event, but just some of the classes, some of the conferences with Professor Juviler or Professor Dalton, the atmosphere of the place, there was just so much open to me and I didn't take anywhere near as much advantage as I now wish I could have, but that it was there and available and I did feel kind of privileged to be there.

[02:11:13.08] Q: So you are still there. They got you back just when you thought you were out.

[02:11:19.13] Kahn: Just when I thought it was safe to close my wallet. (all laugh) You know there is another capital campaign coming. You know that, don't you?

[02:11:25.22] Q: I do now. (laughs)

[02:11:27.24] Kahn: They are still in the quiet phase but we're getting a new library. I think they are taking down Lehman Hall.

[02:11:38.04] Q: They are taking it down, really? Boy, it's changed—Every time I walk in the gates, I miss that long patch of lawn that we used to have.

[02:11:46.18] Kahn: There is still that terrace, there is still that. It is just much narrower.

[02:11:46.18] Q: But it was beautiful and I lived in Brooks so you'd look down and there was long patch of—

[02:11:57.06] Kahn: Now there's that whole quadrangle since they built _____ (??) but the thing is I love the Diana Center; I just think that that's a magnificent building and they did such a good job of integrating it with the campus for a modern building but it even made Lehman look kind of good to me. I like the facade of Lehman, you know, that mid-century thing. I really kind of like that but when you look at the building itself, it's a lot of, you know, it's just a red box and it's probably not an efficient use of space.

[02:12:37.29] Q: I am sure it's not an efficient—

[02:12:39.10] Kahn: So they need to do that. The other thing is to beef up the endowment.

[02:12:45.00] Third voice in the room: But Barnard's not involved in all the 125th Street—

[02:12:49.16] Kahn: That's Columbia. Is that 125th Street all the way West?

[02:13:00.12] Third voice in the room: Broadway, yeah.

[02:13:00.12] Kahn: That's going to be almost a contiguous campus.

[02:13:03.22] Q: Yes.

[02:13:03.22] Third voice in the room: It's huge what they are building there.

[02:13:06.03] Kahn: But it's not far from the north end of us, right?

[02:13:08.24] Third voice in the room: No.

[02:13:09.10] Q: No, no it's not far at all.

[02:13:10.28] Kahn: How do you feel about that?

[02:13:12.29] Q: Ambivalent because I went to jail to keep that part of Columbia from—

[02:13:19.16] Third voice in the room: There is nothing there. That was never a residential neighborhood; it was like garages and warehouses, you know. I don't think it displaces people.

[02:13:30.04] Q: There wasn't much on Morningside Park either but it was just the idea that—

[02:13:33.04] Third voice in the room: I am going to turn this off now.

[02:13:34.16] Q: Yeah.

[02:13:34.16] Kahn: Sure.

end of Part 1

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project

Interviewee: Linda Kahn

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Michelle Patrick

Date: April 11, 2015

PART 2, TAPE 002

[00:00:00.00] Kahn: He works, he worked in Wall Street. In fact, I—

[00:00:03.27] Q: Your husband, we are talking about your husband?

[00:00:07.18] Kahn: I met him actually because I was trying to do business with his firm.

[00:00:13.27] Q: Ah.

[00:00:13.27] Kahn: We got together, you know, for a drink after work to see if we have anything, you know, in common, and we didn't but there was enough there to turn this into dinner and then a second date. And, actually there's a Columbia-Barnard connection because he went to Columbia in '59.

[00:00:32.06] Q: Ah!

[00:00:33.17] Kahn: Class of '59, and he told me, you know, how he loved the place, and how important the core curriculum was and we were trying to see whether we had any professors in common, and it turned out that he had for, I think, contemporary civics, music humanities or something, he had an instructor from Barnard by the name of Hubert [Alexander] Doris.

[00:00:52.24] Q: Oh, I know of him—

[00:00:53.29] Kahn: And I said, “Well, I had him for music and he was chairman of the department at that point.” And, so, we both discovered that we, among very few people in the class, our respective classes, actually really liked this guy. You know, most people I think had trouble with the course, that there was a disconnect between their expectations and what he delivered because, you know, it is classical music and they expected to be really turned on to it, and they felt that he was only capable of refining the tastes of those who already loved—But also you remember the course guide, and it was a lot of—

[00:01:40.28] Q: I don't. I mean, I took a couple music courses and I don't remember any of the professors, I don't remember their names. One was at Colombia; there was a lot more at Columbia than at Barnard.

[00:01:50.21] Kahn: Maybe. But I remember also another music course, probably the second half of this course, was taught by a woman—I think her name was Carpenter [Patricia Carpenter]—and she had been a pianist, who actually studied with [Arnold] Schönberg and—

[00:02:03.22] Q: Hm.

[00:02:04.22] Kahn: —but she always wore purple boots.

[00:02:07.08] Q: Oh, well that's very sixties.

[00:02:10.02] Kahn: Yeah, and very, you know, I guess arts, an artistic statement, but—So, since we both liked Professor Doris, we decided this is worth exploring. (both laugh)

[00:02:27.16] Q: A life based on a mutual affection for Professor Doris.

[00:02:32.03] Kahn: But the fact that we sort of—You know, I hate to say this—Well, Professor Doris is no longer living; I don't think he is—but we were kind of unique in our class—

[00:02:44.23] Q: Yes, yes.

[00:02:46.23] Kahn: It's not romantic: my husband announced to me on our third date that we were getting married. You know, we *are* getting married and—

[00:03:01.19] Q: Wow! Those dates must have gone pretty well!

[00:03:04.17] Kahn: They did! It was just like it clicked. But there's been an evolution, because it's—I was single for a long time. I was an only child; I mean, I had great capacity to—

[00:03:21.26] Q: Amuse yourself.

[00:03:22.26] Kahn: Exactly, to be by myself. And to the point where I wondered how I would integrate an intimate relationship that's, you know, all the time.

[00:03:32.19] Q: Um-hm.

[00:03:33.09] Kahn: And you know, it happened, and it happened in stages; we both went to the office and then he began working at home. How would I feel about coming home and he is there all the time? Before it used to be that he would come home later and I had a couple of hours to, you know, if the kids weren't there that evening, to decompress, change gears, and listen to the music I wanted to listen to. How would it be without that? And it was fine. And then when I stopped working and we were both in the house at the same time, well, you know, how we would get used to that? And we did. And now it's at the point where we're almost—we've merged into one person. And if you would have told me a quarter of a century ago that that would have happened, I would have been horrified because I would have assumed that, you know, that meant we had become Alan and Linda disappeared. But it's not so. There is a lot of me in this person we became. You know, like in the marriage, if he is the one with greater intellectual recall—I don't want to say smarter (Patrick laughs)—I am the funny one!

[00:04:55.04] Q: Yeah!

[00:04:55.23] Kahn: And then—but, you know, the other day he came out with something that just—I don't even remember what it was, but it was such a witty remark that I said to him, "You weren't that funny when I married you." (both laugh)

[00:05:08.14] Q: It took twenty-five years but he's finally almost as funny as you.

[00:05:11.11] Kahn: So, yeah, it's really—I can't imagine life without him. I don't want it, but—I mean, yes, I do. I mean, if, God forbid a million billion times, something happened to him tomorrow, I'd still want a few more years with the grandchildren and stuff like that. But, it took me a long enough but I found the right guy.

[00:05:39.16] Q: You got very lucky. Yeah. How old were you when you got married?

[00:05:41.26] Kahn: Well, when we actually got married I think I was thirty-nine. Because it took a while to be able to get married. But we have been together since I [was] thirty-five.

[00:05:51.01] Q: That's wonderful!

[00:05:54.11] Kahn: Yeah, well there is a lot of longevity in his family, not so much in mine.

[00:06:00.16] Q: Maybe just by—

[00:06:01.04] Kahn: Just try, yeah! I'll try to hang in there for—

[00:00:06.03] Third voice in the room: He'll drag you along!

[00:06:05.04] Kahn: Maybe. Maybe.

[00:06:07.15] Q: Do you want a cookie?

[00:06:08.28] Kahn: No, thank you. No, no.

[00:06:13.10] Q: Just go through the catalog of your mind and see if there is any area that I might have—

[00:06:23.24] Kahn: That's an important part of me that we didn't touch on.

[00:06:28.15] Q: Or *was* an important part of you. Or something that was pivotal in—

[00:06:34.18] Kahn: Well, I just want to make this observation. We talked about this at the birthday party—

[00:06:39.00] Q: I wasn't there.

[00:06:40.13] Kahn: I know, but the rest of us did. And we're, again, sort of all over the places our class was in terms of there's some people who still have children, your children's age. Others

of us are, you know, grandparents. Others of us are still—The big divide is who is working and who isn't anymore. But what we all seem to report is a contentedness. A comfort in our own sagging skin. And this is true, and I've been noticing this and Alan and I actually talked about this several months ago, how happy we were. You know, it's being off the treadmill, it's also just having each other. And then people started dying. The happiness had everything to do with getting old. I don't want to say getting older because getting older is what you do from the time you are born. It's getting to that place where people perceive you as old. There is something almost liberating in it.

[00:07:56.15] Q: Um-hm.

[00:07:57.15] Kahn: But then you get the flip side of that and people you love die. And I had the sense when my—

[00:08:08.08] Q: That starts happening a lot earlier than one would—

[00:08:11.02] Kahn: Yes, yes. But I don't know if this is because I am an only child, but when my mother died—you know, the last parent to die—there was a sense of mourning at the same time the death of my childhood. Because no matter how much of a role reversal there might have been in your relationship with your elderly parent by that point, or how you're a grandparent yourself, as long as that parent lives you are a somebody's child, and then at some point you're not.

[00:08:52.28] Q: Yeah.

[00:08:53.28] Kahn: Christopher Buckley, in his book, *Losing Mum and Pup*, writes kind of movingly about that—

[00:09:00.13] Q: He's a very funny guy!

[00:09:02.07] Kahn: —and he's an only child, too—that it's a feeling that you're in a crowd and your mother lets go of your hand. And I wonder if people—I mean, there is something that changes when you don't have parents anymore, for everybody. You are finally, in some sense, an adult. Completely. But I wonder if you have a sibling, this living vestige of your childhood, that makes this less lonely or just—

[00:09:35.14] Q: I know exactly what you mean. My mother died very young at fifty-six. My stepfather just died a year ago. And I am an only child. And I remember thinking, I am the only person in the world who remembers that my mother's birthday was March 22nd.

[00:09:52.02] Kahn: Very poignant. My mother has a surviving sister and a niece who have that information. It's just like—The way I see it, all of the people who know me from the—well, my aunt knew me from the time I was born—but my little family that I grew up in, that I said good morning to and goodnight to, it's all gone.

[00:10:20.29] Q: Yeah. Mine too. No siblings—

[00:10:26.12] Kahn: Yeah.

[00:10:26.15] Q: Although then I have friends who I used to envy who were very close with their siblings, and who now hate their siblings. I think, What? How did you—

[00:10:36.02] Kahn: How did this happen?

[00:10:37.29] Q: What did you—What happened?

[00:10:40.19] Kahn: Well, this is in my husband's family, too. He is the middle child of three boys and they were very close. The older brother, the one who just died, he was sort of a mathematical prodigy. And while my husband did plenty of things with him—you know, they built rockets in the backyard and stuff, really intelligent stuff—he grew up actually much closer with his younger brother, and they went into the business with the father together. They were very close for years and years and years and then almost twenty-two years ago, there was a big blow up and it had to do with the business and that was it. You know, he is my former brother.

[00:11:33.05] Q: Oh, yeah.

[00:11:33.05] Kahn: And it was very painful; I mean, now after twenty-two years it's sort of a way of life.

[00:11:39.18] Third voice in the room: They still don't talk.

[00:11:41.05] Linda Kahn: Oh, no. No, no! And I said to my husband, "When Irving"—the father—"dies"—which he just did—"and when all the dust settles, you know, the memorial service, and all of this is gone, it makes me sad to think that you will probably never see your brother again." And he said to me, "That makes you sad?"

[00:12:07.06] Q: Yeah!

[00:12:08.06] Kahn: And he can still talk about how close they were and the things that they did together and it's a fond memory, but now it's nothing.

[00:12:21.22] Q: Yeah. That's very hard for me to understand.

[00:12:22.25] Kahn: I don't get it. I don't get it.

[00:12:24.08] Q: I don't get it either. And I know people, who at Barnard had siblings that they couldn't wait to see and they visited, they traveled together, and you see them at a funeral or a memorial service and, "How was Melba?" "We don't talk. She's not my—"

[00:12:41.25] Kahn: Really?

[00:12:41.18] Q: How did that happen!

[00:12:43.16] Kahn: And so, you know, my friend Barbara that I spoke of. She had a brother, and they were close, I mean, there was a lot of rivalry between them and she always felt that her parents sort of favored the boy. So there was some—They were close family but there was some resentment, and yet they are very, very close now.

[00:13:03.12] Q: I just know so many who started out close, and were always close and, in my mind, would always be close. And now they are in different worlds, in different universe. I don't understand how that—As a person who pretty much stays, like you, in, you know, not in the same place but maybe larger—

[00:13:23.08] Kahn: Did you wish you had siblings?

[00:13:24.18] Q: Oh, when I was a little girl, oh yes! Oh yes, and that's why I was so eager to share my toys and anything else I had because I wanted to be an attractive playmate.

[00:13:39.02] Kahn: Yeah!

[00:13:39.07] Q: So people would come, so I was very nice to them. Would you like this? Would you like that? Because I really appreciated the company. Oh yes! There were people that—My mother was divorced for a period of time. And sometimes she would date somebody who had a child, who was my age. And we would plan how our parents would get married so we could be siblings. (laughs)

[00:14:02.19] Kahn: Yeah! The parent trap. Yeah.

[00:14:05.16] Q: _____ (??) “Okay. They’ll get married”—This is like seven or eight years old—“and we can be sisters, and that’s how it will be.” Never went that way. (laughs)

[00:14:16.19] Kahn: It never worked out, no. So, when they broke up, did you miss, losing your potential sibling?

[00:14:22.16] Q: Oh, yeah! Always! It wasn’t that I wasn’t allowed to play with the—

[00:14:27.27] Kahn: No, I understand but you would have actually, possibly—you would have lived in the same house and it would have been another child.

[00:14:34.13] Q: Yeah, no, when the dream died—The children were always the ones holding out for the—But what about the picnic? (both laugh) Would you like a glass of wine?

[00:14:45.28] Kahn: No, I don’t think so. This is actually fine. It’s a little too early for me because I have to do work at home. There is something else that comes—a memory of my parents that comes to mind now.

end Part 2

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project

Interviewee: Linda Kahn

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Michelle Patrick

Date: April 21, 2015

PARTS 3-4, TAPE 003-004

Note: The audio for 00:00:00 to 00:02:57 is also on the end of AUDIO TAPE 002. It is only transcribed here.

[00:00:00.00] Kahn: And it also has to do with language, but at some point—I can't remember exactly when it was, probably in the fifties; we were still living in the Bronx, and my parents were talking about moving back to Europe.

[00:00:14.04] Q: Really?

[00:00:14.19] Kahn: And it wasn't that they weren't getting along here well; it was nothing like that. I think the idea of the great recovery going on there, and that it just would have been an exciting place, a place of opportunity to be, and also maybe they missed Europe more than they thought. So I remember being present, not participating, but present, on the conversation they were having where they were trying to decide where it would be. Well, my father would never go back to Germany.

[00:00:49.07] Q: Wow.

[00:00:50.10] Kahn: My mother didn't want to go back to—

[00:00:52.13] Q: Brussels.

[00:00:52.27] Kahn: —yeah, Belgium. My father didn't like Paris; he had gone to school in Paris, and his memory was that his hands were cold all the time. Well, my hands were cold in Paris. I bought gloves. He harbored resentment. (Patrick laughs) It's different, but—So, it was going to be Amsterdam. My mother had some residual Dutch from Flemish, and my father figured he could learn it, because he was—

[00:01:28.03] Q: German.

[00:01:28.13] Kahn: —German. And it was a big city. I remember sitting there in the living room thinking, What about me? (both laugh) I knew they would be taking me with them. What about Dutch, what about school, what about friends? And, it wasn't resolved. Then later on alone in my room at night, I was ruminating about this. And this kind of surprises me. I started to think, This could be cool! You know, reinventing myself. And, because I was not so adventuresome a kid, how I got to be all right with this amazes me. But nothing ever came of it. I suspect it was just musing and it was never really under serious consideration. To my knowledge it was never spoken of again. But I too, to this day, have an affinity for Amsterdam, as the city where I might have grown up.

[00:02:27.29] Q: I've never been there. My son's been there. When he went I said, "Try to see something; try to do something besides sit in the cafes, staring blankly into the space."

[00:02:38.24] Kahn: And smoking marijuana, and getting your picture taken in front of a marijuana store. (both laughing) Yeah, it's—I can't think of anything else I failed to tell you.

[00:02:53.29] Q: Q: Now, I don't want you feel that I didn't plum the—

[00:02:57.28] Q: There were just a few things that I had sent to you. Your life's greatest joy, your greatest disappointment, why you attend reunions, what you get from them. Were you— Some of these are fairly personal, so if you don't want to go there—There was rather a long time between Barnard and getting married. Were you confident during that period that it would work out or were you anxi—?

[00:03:32.19] Kahn: Well, in the beginning I was confident that at some point it would happen. Then, you know, time, I guess, time sort of—

[00:03:40.13] Q: Oh, could you hold on a second? Are you taping? We'll say who taped—

[00:03:46.00] Third voice in the room: We have that.

[00:03:47.06] Q: Oh, okay. I'm sorry, all right. Time sort of—

[00:03:49.01] Kahn: —you know, it sort of got away. So, what happens if you work in a trading room, you are like shoulder to shoulder with other people on a bank of desks. And you know everything about what's going on in everybody's life. And so when the day is over, sometimes you go out with somebody for a drink or something, but pretty much I was done with people. (Patrick laughs) Yeah, I was happy to go home, pick up some Chinese food on the way home, turn on the news just so somebody talks to me, and but I don't really have to pay attention, which is sort of preparing yourself for marriage, isn't it? (Patrick laughs) And then, so that's how I spent like a lot of evenings and then I realized, I'm not meeting new people. And so I sort of—it took a while to realize I had to engage more if I ever thought I would meet somebody.

[00:04:53.25] Q: So, how did you do that?

[00:04:54.29] Kahn: Well, I don't know. Went out with some people, let them fix me up with somebody, all of that sort of thing. But I ended up meeting the man who would become my husband through business, trying to do business with his firm. We met for a drink and then we decided really there wasn't enough confluence in business interest but everything else seemed to look good, so we had dinner. And, then, you know, we just continued to see each other and then we eventually got married.

[00:05:35.22] Q: A while though. Was it five years?

[00:05:37.23] Kahn: No, it was three and change.

[00:05:40.16] Q: Did you live together in between?

[00:05:42.14] Kahn: Well, not completely, because he was going through a divorce, which was already in the works when I met him. So, I wasn't the cause of it. But, you know, he had children. It wouldn't have been a good idea for us to live together.

[00:06:03.25] Q: Yes.

[00:06:04.01] Kahn: And also I had an apartment that was going to go condo. It was a rent-stabilized apartment and I didn't want to jeopardize my rights to buy it as an insider. So I couldn't live someplace else; it had to be my primary residence. So we each had our reason to maintain our own, proper—

[00:06:31.12] Q: Domain.

[00:06:32.25] Kahn: —domain, but we spent a lot of evenings together. So it was kind of nice, actually.

[00:06:40.23] Q: So, there was no anxiety attached to, Am I going to marry this guy, or am I not going to marry this guy?

[00:06:46.13] Kahn: No. I mean, once—I think he announced on our third date that we were getting married. And so, I felt—Not that we didn't have our moments and our quarrels, but I sort of realized I was done. That this was it.

[00:07:06.29] Q: It's a nice feeling.

[00:07:07.14] Kahn: And just for things to fall into place and let my parents plan the wedding they wanted, and that happened. So what was the greatest joy of my life? I can't say, I mean there are several.

[00:07:21.03] Q: Okay, how about several?

[00:07:23.17] Kahn: So, I would certainly say finally marrying Alan. I would say also the relationship that I have with my stepdaughters, with the older one that was a little bit more—

[00:07:40.01] Q: Patchy?

[00:07:43.14] Kahn: A work in progress initially—I think about it and I don't know, I just had a confidence about me then; I think today I would have been maybe a little bit not turned off but less optimistic when things were bad that they would not necessarily always be that way. But then I just somehow knew that it would get better. The younger one, it certainly was, from the very beginning, this was more of an adventure for her. She was very—

[00:08:21.09] Q: How old were they when you first got together?

[00:08:23.04] Kahn: When I first met them? Eight and eleven.

[00:08:24.23] Q: Very young. Yeah.

[[00:08:25.20] Kahn: Well—

[00:08:28.12] Q: Well, I mean, eighteen wouldn't have done it.

[00:08:31.19] Kahn: No, but also what I realized with the older daughter is that it wasn't so much when I met her father and was dating him; it was getting married. Because like I think a lot of children of divorce have the fantasy that their parents will get together again. So that wasn't completely dashed until one parent remarries. And so that was—I think the wedding was the problem for her. But things did get better and I think, you know, it's wonderful. I mean she really wants me to be grandma to her kids and I am enormously grateful for that. Because if I am, you know, to answer the other question, what's the greatest disappointment, I would say that I didn't have the child that Alan and I planned to. But—

[00:09:30.20] Q: Was that devastating or did you just—

[00:09:32.02] Kahn: No, actually it wasn't and it sort of makes me wonder whether I really wanted it as badly as I'm so sure I did. But again, it was the relationship with the

stepdaughters that enabled me to feel not childless. I mean a stepmother is not a mother, you don't have to tell me that, but—

[00:09:52.08] Q: Some more than others.

[00:09:54.12] Kahn: But it did enable me to feel not childless, and otherwise it could have been devastating.

[00:10:04.08] Q: Now this is going to sound like a silly question, but—

[00:10:06.24] Kahn: There are no silly questions, only stupid answers.

[00:10:08.14] Kahn: —do you remember what you wore your first day?

[00:10:11.24] Kahn: Yes! I—My first date?

[00:10:12.22] Q: Your first day. Oh, what you wore on your first date and your first day.

You're walking into Barnard; it's your first day—

[00:10:18.07] Kahn: Oh, what did I wear my first day at Barnard? I don't know. I don't remember. Probably a skirt and sweater or something. You know, we wouldn't have worn jeans yet, not in the—

[00:10:33.02] Q: That's what I was getting at. Everything changed, and one of the things changed so rapidly is what we wore.

[00:10:42.05] Kahn: Yeah! And, also coming from the New York public school system, that was what we wore, you know, skirts. We couldn't wear pants to school.

[00:10:54.05] Q: Every public school system. So do you remember what you wore to your first date?

[00:11:02.25] Kahn: With anybody or with Alan?

[00:11:06.19] Q: Oh, how about both?

[00:11:09.02] Kahn: Well, the first date, no I don't remember what I wore. I just remember that the boy bought me a bottle of perfume. And then, you know, first dates were downhill from there. (both laugh)

[00:11:24.28] Q: But this is before Barnard, right?

[00:11:25.09] Kahn: Yes.

[00:11:27.13] Q: At Barnard what was your first date? Do you remember?

[00:11:29.02] Kahn: I don't know. It was probably—

[00:11:31.07] Q: Not memorable.

[00:11:34.03] Kahn: No and I don't know what was really first. You know, I can't put things in sequence. There are things I remember, guys that I met at mixers. They used to have a bus on Friday night that would take us to Yale.

[00:11:48.08] Q: I know you told me. I missed that bus.

[00:11:54.08] Kahn: But I guess none of those were really memorable except for one guy that I met from the law school that was sort of, you know, my first real heartbreak.

[00:12:08.22] Q: I was going to say, what was your first real heartbreak?

[00:12:10.20] Kahn: Well, that was with this guy who was a little bit older than I and I was really kind of impressed by that—I mean, he seemed a man. But he also seemed to be a liar and I don't know. After the summer, I got dumped and—

[00:12:36.10] Q: It was hard.

[00:12:38.14] Kahn: Yes, it was. But—

[00:12:41.22] Q: How long did it take you to get over it?

[00:12:45.14] Kahn: Ten years? No, I don't—You know, a long time and he still sort of was—I tortured myself by making him a kind of yard stick against whom I measured everybody I met and that was sort of dumb.

[00:13:06.00] Q: It was natural—

[00:13:07.04] Kahn: But people do it. I didn't invent that stupidity.

[00:13:11.18] Q: Dating and courtship rituals changed so much between the time—or at least where I lived—between the time we entered as freshman and the time we left as seniors; did you experience that or did you—did dating then go pretty much the way you thought it would except for this one heartbreak?

[00:13:33.27] Kahn: Um, I don't know. When you meet people on campus, it's sort of more casual and, you know, is it really a date or are you just getting together with friends. I guess it was a little more porous, but—

[00:13:56.07] Q: I'll tell you what I mean. I thought that I would go out on dates and get dressed up and be taken out to dinner and by the time I was a junior, anybody who bought me half a cup of coffee expected that I would sleep with them. I was just like, "What? What about the dinner? What about the—"

[00:14:20.08] Kahn: I sort of had a kind of expectation about being taken out to dinner. I mean, that was what the first date was like. We were sort of, I think, coached by our parents and that what it was like for them. But what I remember in college is, you know, who had the money paid. (both laugh)

[00:14:47.11] Q: Could you expand on that a little bit?

[00:14:50.15] Kahn: I ended up paying for a lot of dates.

[00:14:52.27] Q: Oh, yeah.

[00:14:53.22] Kahn: Or at least kicking in some money.

[00:14:55.25] Q: Not expected.

[00:14:59.19] Kahn: Maybe the first time it was not expected but it just sort of seemed to be the way things morphed.

[00:15:08.17] Q: Were going. Okay. Um—

[00:15:12.17] Third voice in the room: I have a question. When you went to work at Wall Street after graduating, that was really a man's world, wasn't it?

[00:15:22.15] Kahn: Yes, yes.

[00:15:23.07] Third voice in the room: Why don't you talk about that a little bit?

[00:15:25.10] Kahn: Well, you know, [I] still had to take a typing test and—

[00:15:33.08] Q: And the men didn't.

[00:15:34.04] Kahn: And no and also we—There was a roughness around the edges of the guys I worked with. They weren't kids but in the trading room every other word is *fuck*.

[00:15:57.21] Q: I know, it sounds miserable to me.

[00:16:01.13] Kahn: But you know, it really wasn't. First of all it was exciting, because I think I talked about this earlier, the allure was that everything affects it and moves so fast. So it's kind of exciting and then there are a lot of things competing for your attention and everything that would have driven me, would drive me crazy about the place now, I found exciting. Some people were really interesting and then everything I guess sort of sinks to the lowest common denominator and so you are surrounded nine hours a day by this language, you begin to use it. To the point where I had to watch myself around the grandchildren.

[00:16:50.00] Q: Right, yeah.

[00:16:51.07] Kahn: And then some of these people were notwithstanding a certain amount of misogyny and telling jokes that you really shouldn't tell. They are the people you spend most of your waking hours with so you do make friends.

[00:17:09.25] Q: From TV, it looks so loud and frantic and like an assault of the senses.

[00:17:16.13] Kahn: Well, it could be. And then there are hours of boredom.

[00:17:22.05] Q: That I would not have figured.

[00:17:25.15] Kahn: Well, this was bonds. It wasn't the stock market. There's one good friend from that era that I've sort of stayed in touch with over the years. Then another thing was that we were kind of the beginnings of an international department for a while so I met some interesting people, and some perfectly ridiculous people, but they were people that our boss hired because they were well connected socially in a certain country so it was kind of interesting to meet these people.

[00:18:19.05] Q: I am presuming that most of these people were men.

[00:18:21.29] Kahn: Yes, a couple were women.

[00:18:24.07] Q: You were one of maybe two, three?

[00:18:28.08] Kahn: Yeah, well a lot of the support staff were women.

[00:18:32.12] Q: I mean at your level.

[00:18:36.21] Kahn: But became my level. Initially, it wasn't my level.

[00:18:40.07] Q: (laughs) You didn't sail right in.

[00:18:41.17] Kahn: But no. I mean, that's the thing; it's just like "Mad Men", you know.

You reach a level of competence and then they hire some guy that you have to train to do that job but at some point somebody gave me a break and I was able to do sales, rather than support.

[00:19:9.29] Q: Were you frustrated waiting for that to happen?

[00:19:11.19] Kahn: A little.

[00:19:14.27] Q: Did you express that frustration?

[00:19:16.22] Kahn: Sure.

[00:19:18.10] Q: To your boss?

[00:19:18.12] Kahn: Yeah.

[00:19:19.01] Q: And what was the reaction?

[00:19:20.24] Kahn: You know, "We'll, see."

[00:19:24.13] Q: *We'll see*. Better than some, better than a poke in the eye with a stick.

[00:19:28.13] Kahn: There were times when I looked for something else. And then I thought, Well, I'll do this a while and then maybe go to law school if it doesn't work out. But I don't know, I don't like change and I just stayed and things got better. I also studied—I did this for a while in the early eighties—I thought I would do programming and systems analysis so I did do some work, get some kind of certificate in that from I think NYU [New York University] in continuing ed and that you know, that was—

[00:20:10.09] Q: Opened a window?

[00:20:12.27] Kahn: And it was sort of fun. I thought maybe I could do something in that area, transfer in my company, but they told me no and then what happened—

[00:20:24.06] Q: They told you no why? Because they weren't interested in moving in that direction or because?

[00:20:27.27] Kahn: No, no. They had a department and they just weren't going to take me from what I was doing to train me to do that. They would only hire somebody who had actual experience to be in—

[00:20:42.04] Q: Well, that must have been disappointing.

[00:20:43.08] Kahn: Well, it was disappointing and— but shortly thereafter came the break I was given. So rather than look for a job in IT somewhere else, you know, that entry-level position, I just stayed where I was.

[00:21:06.23] Q: So what was it? I don't know anything about—

[00:21:07.23] Kahn: So basically I was in international fixed income sales and what I did mainly was I dealt with foreign central banks and basically helped distribute the national debt. You know, it was fun. Had I gone to law school, I don't know that my career would have been subject to fewer frustrations. Corporate law was pretty inhospitable to women; not many became partners. Also I have to say—and this is especially so after I got married—I wasn't driven. You know, it was important to me to work and to have my own money and security and know that I could take care of myself. And sometimes I found what I was doing was still interesting and sometimes I felt close to burning out but—I forgot where I was going with this—

[00:22:25.25] Q: You weren't driven.

[00:22:25.28] Kahn: I wasn't driven. Exactly. There was a time I was trying to get pregnant. I don't know, after I got married, I just—I didn't think I would stop working—

[00:22:41.26] Q: You didn't feel the fire in the belly the way you had—

[00:22:46.27] Kahn: No, I didn't. No I didn't. That's exactly it. I don't know if that makes me something of a disappointment to Barnard but that's the way I am.

[00:22:52.08] Q: I'm sure it does not. (both laugh) I'm sure it doesn't. What do you think is the biggest mistake you've ever made in your adult life?

[00:23:01.15] Kahn: In my adult life, the biggest mistake I ever made was—I can't think of—I don't have regrets like that. I could say if there is something that I would really rather have done that I didn't do, to have that legal education but on the other hand, if I had gone that route, would I have met my husband? I don't know. I don't know. I'm also kind of the most glass-half-full person that you might ever meet. It's not that I just see the silver lining in every cloud, or think that things invariably happen for a reason. It's just that whatever it is, I can handle it. It's okay and no one thing like that is going to determine whether or not I can be happy.

[00:24:10.02] Q: Wonderful way to be.

[00:24:12.24] Kahn: I would think. It's a choice. It's not that I'm never sad, but I just always manage to see my way out of it.

[00:24:24.27] Q: What's the best decision you ever made?

[00:24:29.06] Kahn: Well, I would say marrying my husband. It's what I wanted to do but I guess having waited as long as I did, I might have gotten cold feet. Certainly there was a breaking-in period, where we kind of fought a lot but I knew I wanted this to work and I kind of tweaked my personality a little. I mean, at least to the point of choosing my battles a little more carefully. You know—

[00:25:10.08] Q: You were bellicose, you were pugnacious, you were an argumentative person.

[00:25:14.19] Kahn: You know, it's not just me. It was also a little bit the way Alan was. You know money—he was more successful than I was, and he made a lot more money than I ever did and that's good. I benefited from it. But it also gives you a sense of power in a relationship when there is that kind of imbalance?

[00:25:42.05] Q: Yes, the other person.

[00:25:43.19] Kahn: Yeah. So, you know, I did have to stand my ground in the sense that—and I remember having this talk with him, “I am not some urchin you took in off the street; some things have to be the way I want them to be.” But I knew for my part if I wanted to stay married it wasn't going to be all the things that I wanted to be the way I wanted them to be.

[00:26:10.05] Q: But on the other hand, it wasn't going to be none of the things because things changed so very rapidly there—

[00:26:19.05] Kahn: For example, he wanted to live and die in his beloved Forest Hills Gardens and I wanted to live and die on the Upper West Side of Manhattan but I agreed to move overseas to Queens and it's not that I—It was a compromise, but it was a compromise that I willingly made.

[00:26:46.07] Q: Yeah. You had to do that. And you didn't think you'd have to compromise on anything, really, after certain point of success. Yes?

[00:26:54.22] Kahn: I'm sorry; I'm not following the question.

[00:26:58.05] Q: Did you think that when you got to a certain point—and I think you were professionally pretty far along by the time you met your husband. Right?

[00:27:10.25] Kahn: Did I think I was done compromising?

[00:27:12.07] Q: Well, major compromises. Yeah, did you think you were done with that?

[00:27:17.15] Kahn: Well, in terms of the big picture, I thought I found somebody that really kind of fit what I wanted for myself.

[00:27:30.26] Q: Right, right.

[00:27:31.26] Kahn: And then when it actually came to melding our lives because he was a man with children and soon to-be-ex-wife, and he came, as we say, not without baggage, and so I have to figure out how to incorporate this with my expectations and what I wanted. For example, okay so my husband's ex-wife, lots of people when they get divorced, they never see the other spouse again and that's fine if you don't have children, but when you do, this woman is going to be part of my life—

[00:28:16.05] Q: How did that work out for you?

[00:28:18.27] Kahn: Actually, it worked out quite well. I'm sure there were times when we got on each other's nerves but I thought of her as the mother of my children.

[00:28:27.01] Q: That's a lovely way to put it.

[00:28:28.26] Kahn: They loved her very much and this woman is part of my extended family. We didn't vacation together but we could spend an occasional holiday dinner together

and then later on when we visited my younger stepdaughter at Amherst, it meant spending the parents' weekend together, and she didn't like to drive up there by herself so we went together. It was fine.

[00:29:05.00] Q: It sounds great. Especially for the time.

[00:29:10.10] Kahn: She and I probably got along better than she and her ex-husband. But when my father-in-law recently passed away—she lives in California now, and she came back East for the funeral and she and Alan were sort of reminiscing the early years of the family and it was just really lovely to see. I didn't—

[00:29:46.18] Q: Feel threatened by that at all.

[00:29:48.26] Kahn: No, not at all. No.

[00:29:50.27] Q: That's very mature.

[00:29:52.00] Kahn: Well, I once had a—I don't know if it's a bona fide nightmare—but it occurred to me that if I died, what if he remarried her? Would it be like I never existed?

[00:30:07.20] Q: How could that possibly be?

[00:30:09.14] Kahn: That whole Linda era. Would it be that it never existed? No, it wouldn't. Plus, I really don't think he would marry her. I don't think she would marry him again.

[00:30:22.15] Q: You are probably pretty safe there.

[00:30:24.07] Kahn: I think so. I think so.

[00:30:28.05] Q: You've been married for how long?

[00:30:29.16] Kahn: Twenty-six years, and we're together almost thirty—

[00:30:32.27] Q: That's a long time. I don't think Bobby even knows that _____ (??)

[00:30:37.28] Kahn: It's sort of that we—I don't know if I said this earlier, it's just we sort of melded into the same person. Do you find that?

[00:30:42.22] Q: Yes, pretty much. Or here's how a conversation would go: "You know that?" "Yeah." "Didn't you think?" "No." "I thought." "Yeah, I know you did." (laughs)

[00:30:54.16] Kahn: We make a game out of it; you give the answer and the other one has to ask the question. And then you get, either we've been married too long or we haven't been married long enough. But it's true, it's not just finishing each other's sentences. I could have entire conversations with him without him. (both laugh)

[00:31:20.09] Q: It's very funny and it's really very true.

[00:31:23.23] Kahn: I like it. If you would have told me a quarter of a century ago, that that would happen, I would have been horrified.

[00:31:32.20] Q: Really? Horrified?

[00:31:33.00] Kahn: I would have assumed that meant we all became Alan and Linda disappeared. But there is a lot of me in this person we've become.

[00:31:43.09] Q: I bet there is. Okay, so is there anything that I have missed here? I am picking up after four years—

[00:32:01.29] Kahn: Well, you mentioned something about why I go back to reunions, and—

[00:32:03.12] Q: Oh, yes.

[00:32:04.19] Kahn: —what I get out of them. I didn't go to reunions right away; I don't know, I think it was sort of a sense of not wanting to go back to what was. As much as I love Barnard and how important the experience of going to Barnard was, I can't say it was all a happy time and it was that way not because of Barnard. It's growing up; it's not always easy.

[00:32:39.08] Q: And in a very difficult time.

[00:32:40.10] Kahn: And so I just was looking forward and forming those relationships and dealing with that different environment and how I—you know, which was my work environment—and then how I got to go to reunion, I think there was some kind of, maybe it was fifteen or something, and Alan really wanted to go with me. He really—I don't know whether he wanted meet Ellen [Victoria] Futter or something or he just wanted to see that part of my life. He was very curious that way, like he's dying to see this.

[00:33:23.16] Q: Oh, really?

[00:33:58.05] Kahn: So he, I think, got me to go and he went with me to couple of the events. You know, like the dinners and the cocktail party and it was fun and for me it was really a question of forming a different relationship with Barnard. One thing is when I was a student that was for four years. But now for the rest of my life, I'm an alumna and that's a different relationship and it didn't matter that I didn't know all of these women; I'm meeting them now.

[00:34:03.03] Q: That's what I was going to ask.

[00:34:04.02] Kahn: And we have something in common and we're just getting to know each other now and so it's interesting. I feel—I don't know, after I attend a reunion or more leadership council—Because one of the things that was the consequence of attending a

certain reunion—I can't say which it was—but I became class co-chair, fund co-chair and it was to help out somebody who really couldn't handle all the work, you know writing the thank you notes. Oh my God, I have months of thank you notes to do still. It sort of became a life sentence after that, you can't really— nobody else wants to do it.

[00:34:59.21] Q: So you can't bail.

[00:35:00.19] Kahn: So you can't bail. So I stayed connected and Barnard looks to find ways to keep you feeling connected in a leadership sort of way and when I attend these things it's always—I feel invigorated; I feel exactly what Barnard wants you to feel: that this is an important connection and that I want to support the school and the students who go there now.

[00:35:37.26] Q: Have you met many of your friends post-graduation? In other words, from reunions as opposed to school? I have friends that I've made at reunions that I never even knew.

[00:35:53.24] Kahn: Oh sure. I mean, I knew very few people from our class at Barnard; my best friends were somebody in the class behind us and the class ahead of us. I was very friendly with someone in our class who died tragically not that long after—a few years after graduation in a car accident. But most of the people that I know from Barnard I met through reunions and being involved as an alumna.

[00:36:31.28] Q: And so you'd say the first one you went to was maybe the fifteenth?

[00:36:34.09] Kahn: Maybe.

[00:36:37.25] Q: I'm forgetting things. Oh—in that what you packed and what you wore and what you left in, I packed—

[00:36:49.15] Kahn: Well, I was a commuter; I didn't pack.

[00:36:51.21] Q: Oh, you're right. You're right. But in terms of, you know, I went in with knee socks and loafers and camel neck sweaters, and went out with bell bottom jeans and hair out to here, and peace symbols and tie-dyed shirts—

[00:37:06.22] Kahn: I didn't really—Did I have hair out to here? I mean, I was preoccupied with straightening my hair and still I am, but I remember setting it on beer cans—

[00:37:20.00] Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:37:21.07] Kahn: Straightening it out and sitting under the dryer until they were too hot to touch.

[00:37:38.15] Q: They were tin, after all.

[00:37:29.20] Kahn: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Then one time it was fresh—was it freshman year or? Later on I had my hair professionally straightened at some place in the West 40s on Broadway. There was one other white girl there. That was serious straightening. I did that.

[00:38:03.29] Q: How did that work out?

[00:38:05.19] Kahn: You know, I thought it was great and then my friend's mother, she is a friend from high school and junior high school, she went to City College but we stayed friends and I went to her house and her mother said to me, "You know, you did it. It's fine. But your hair used to shine like diamonds and now it doesn't. Don't do it again."

[00:38:31.26] Q: Oooh.

[00:38:32.28] Kahn: She was right. And then I kept thinking, If my friend Lila did this what would her mother say? But Lila had naturally straight hair.

[00:38:44.19] Q: That was it for the straightening.

[00:38:35.14] Kahn: For the chemical straightening. Also the hair broke. That stuff was not good for your—

[00:38:56.16] Q: Well, it was a lot stronger in the old days.

[00:38:58.00] Kahn: Yeah, yeah.

[00:39:00.19] Q: Yeah, it was lye based if I'm not mistaken.

[00:39:03.15] Kahn: It did smell pretty strong.

[00:39:06.09] Q: Yeah.

[00:39:08.09] Kahn: I still struggled, and sometimes you know just pull it back or—I think at some point I did go natural and still do sometimes but then I go to the hairdresser and they just do wonderful things with the blow-dryer—

[00:39:34.31] Q: I know.

[00:39:35.15] Kahn: —that I simply cannot do myself.

[00:39:34.26] Q: I can't do it either.

[00:39:37.02] Kahn: I don't have the patience or the leverage or whatever it takes. So I still have ambivalence about natural as far as the hair is concerned.

[00:39:51.01] Third voice in the room: Gender roles, okay?

[00:39:53.17] Q: We sort of touched on that.

[00:39:55.20] Third voice in the room: That was one thing that changed radically and I'm just doing this because (I remember you spoke??) about this in all the other interviews you've done. There were gender roles changing during when you were in college, that's one part of the question: How did that affect you? Did you notice that happening or what was your position? And then in your marriage, was that a crucial—

[00:40:19.20] Kahn: Well, it's funny. Barnard is a very, I think, a very nurturing place as far as career ambitions are concerned. Maybe even more so than some of the other women's colleges, I don't know, for our time, but I never thought as a student at Barnard that there was anything that I wouldn't be able to do and it was kind of shock when I got out in the real world that they would still ask me to take a typing test or that I might not be considered for a certain path, the way a guy might initially, at least. But things were changing in the work place, too, and Wall Street kind of lagged and then also the trading room is more testosterone filled than say, an area like research but—

[00:41:35.05] Q: Were you ever angry?

[00:41:40.05] Kahn: Oh, sure. Sure. But what does that really—What are you going to do? Tell your boss that he's a—

[00:41:44.20] Q: No but—

[00:41:44.20] Kahn: —fucking idiot? You know.

[00:41:47.14] Q: What sort of things made you angry?

[00:41:49.01] Kahn: Well, the slights, the lack of opportunity. Nothing specific comes to mind but the expectations—You know what it is? Okay, this is what made me angry; his is what still makes me angry in any context: entitlement. Men are entitled, more so than women and women more so now than used to be but whether it's money-based, whether it's gender-based, entitlement makes me angry. So whenever I encountered that, yeah, it would get my hackles up. But—

[00:42:38.20] Q: And how would you handle it?

[00:42:40.21] Kahn: Well, mostly—I don't know, I remember many times at work going to the ladies room, slamming a door to a stall, and trying not to cry. But you don't necessarily make it better by showing a real display of anger. I think men, especially men with power, don't really like to see that in women and they have a way of getting even so it's just not a constructive way to handle your relative lack of power, I think.

[00:43:34.06] Third voice in the room: What do you say to fact that we're still debating whether woman should get the same pay for the same job?

[00:43:39.04] Kahn: Well, yeah. Well, and that you have to call it the same job when it is the same job. That's how we get around that. Interestingly, I think in some ways I've fallen back into a more traditional gender role in my marriage now. Part of it is a function of the fact that my husband is losing his eyesight so there are things that he simply can't do around the house anymore. Some of it is a blind thing; some of it, I think, is a man thing, some of it—But I could be wrong there. But also there are some things that—and this was a life lesson that I learned early on in my marriage—about picking your battles carefully. Some things—you can't take a bookkeeping approach to things in a marriage and expect to be happy. There were certain things that just bothered me more and that he didn't care about in the least, and a lot of it was housework related (both laugh) so if I wanted it to be the way I wanted it to be, I could argue with him and try to get him to do it or I could do it myself and that seemed to be the path leading to greater happiness.

[00:45:11.01] Q: Or hiring someone else to do it.

[00:45:12.19] Kahn: Well no, we did do that, too. But you know, she wasn't there all the time. You know there were certain things that, in the interim you just have to do a certain amount of maintenance, and you know, there's laundry to be done, and frankly, I fired Alan from doing laundry. (Patrick laughs) I fired him when he put my pantyhose in the dryer. Remember pantyhose? So there was that. Then—and this was totally my fault—Alan once said to me that it was satisfying to him—I don't remember the words exactly—but he felt satisfied to have a stack of clean, folded laundry. And I completely misconstrued that to mean he liked to fold laundry. Nothing could be further from the truth. You know, he is

happy to dump the clean laundry on the window seat and just take the things as he needs.

(Patrick laughs) Now, to him this is efficient use of his time; to me this is arrested development. (both laugh) So, but clearly, if the laundry was going to be folded before the housekeeper next came, I would do that, and it's okay.

[00:46:43.07] Third voice in the room: What do you think is the funniest thing he thinks about you?

[00:46:47.05] Kahn: The funniest thing he thinks about me? I don't know. I think you'd have to ask him.

[00:46:54.21] Q: Does he laugh a lot?

[00:46:55.10] Kahn: Yeah, we laugh a lot and you know, we commented on this recently, that we laugh a lot together.

[00:47:09.07] Q: Which is a wonderful thing.

[00:47:11.05] Kahn: I think so.

[00:47:13.16] Third voice in the room: Do you laugh at him?

[00:47:14.02] Kahn: All the time. All the time. He's a funny guy in ways he doesn't quite realize. There's a lot of Ralph and Alice to our marriage.

[00:47:33.02] Q: Really?

[00:47:33.02] Kahn: I think so.

[00:47:35.02] Q: To the moon! (laughs)

[00:47:35.02] To the moon, yeah.

[00:47:42.11] Third voice in the room: _____ (??) We got into a lot of personal stuff in that last _____ (??)

[00:47:45.15] Kahn: Is this too personal?

[00:47:47.04] Third voice in room: No!

[00:47:47.23] Q: No, I wanted it to be personal but I didn't want to be intrusive. Some people were a little—

[00:47:54.11] Kahn: Because once you get me started talking about myself—

[00:47:57.01] Q: You're so easy, you know, but other people, you have to kind of feel your way. (Patrick and third person both talking at the same time) You don't squirm. And there're some people, you get to a certain point, and it's like, You're not getting past this point. Do you know what I mean?

[00:48:14.07] Kahn: Okay, so I think that a lot of is this that I'm simply comfortable in my sagging skin and very little really shames me about myself anymore, (laughs) as long as I am dressed. (all laugh)

[00:48:30.22] Q: I actually went to Santa Fe to interview somebody who had been my roommate for three days. She was a Boston Brahmin and I said, "Well, what did you think about the demonstrations?" And she said, "I thought everyone was dressed so badly." (laughs)

[00:48:57.05] Kahn: I don't remember whether it was she or whether I'm even remembering this correctly but I recall seeing somebody at demonstrations wearing pearls and yeah, and then I'm wondering this is not how you dress for a demonstration but we have, I guess, different—

[00:49:15.28] (everyone speaks at the same time)

[00:49:23.02] Q: —to go to see what was happening. She wouldn't have been demonstrating, but she would have gone to see—

[00:49:30.23] Kahn: Talk about demonstrating, this reminds me of something that's funny about my husband. We were in San Francisco—my mother was there also—and we were walking around Union Square, and there was some demonstration outside of Neiman Marcus. It had to do with, I don't know, maybe animal cruelty, something PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals]—I don't know what it was. My mother went into Neiman Marcus to go to the bathroom, and Alan just picked up a sign and joined the demonstrators. Because somebody had gone off to get coffee or something like that and he just joined them.

[00:50:22.14] Q: _____(??) (laughs) He got a kick out of it.

[00:50:29.13] Kahn: Yeah, so.

[00:50:31.13] Q: Alan sounds like quite a character.

[00:50:35.19] Kahn: He is. I mean, he is very, very bright, and he is very individualist. He is not—you could never see him the CEO of a major company because he's just not political in that way. He says what he thinks. You know, he is a shtuperunterer. He doesn't play the game. But it's going to be a lot of fun growing old with him.

[00:51:11.24] Q: Well, that's a lovely thing.

[00:51:14.29] Kahn: I hope so. I think so. And I would think he would feel the same way because at least he doesn't know where anything is. (both laugh)

[00:51:23.28] Q: Is he adapting pretty well to—man, it has to be really hard.

[00:51:29.09] Kahn: Well he is and he isn't. The crucial thing for him is he still is able to read; he has a tiny bit of central vision. So I mean it is harder and harder, and he reads the New York Times now on his phone, because it's a small enough screen, and he can not lose his place as much; it's backlit. So there are all those kinds of accommodations but he should use his cane more when he's not with me. He's had actual training in it, but I think that's a big psychological hurdle for him.

[00:52:06.03] Q: Now, I've heard and read that there is a lot of progress being made.

[00:52:12.19] Kahn: There are, you know, enormous strides being made on three fronts. The gene therapy, the retinal prosthetic devices, and what will probably be most promising for his kind of disease is replacing, transplanting photoreceptors that are grown from a biopsy taken of your skin, they are able to make those cells go back to becoming stem cells and re-educate them to develop as photoreceptors. This is an area of enormous progress and I think—it's worked in mice, and it will be ready for some human trial in the very foreseeable future. Whether this is going to be successful in humans, whether it will be successful in humans in time for Alan, we'll see. But there is hope. I am getting the science education that I sort of neglected at Barnard.

[00:53:48.08] Q: I bet you are.

[00:53:50.20] Third voice in the room: How long a period is that? When did this all begin?

[00:53:53.28] Kahn: For him? Well, it's a genetic disease, so by definition he's had it since birth but the onset of the problem that he could perceive was, I guess, in his twenties. He was an air force ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] at Columbia, but they disbanded it. So, he could have been flying jets.

[00:54:19.27] Third voice in the room: Not with his eyesight.

[00:54:25.05] Kahn: Well, they didn't pick up on it; they didn't see the beginnings of the deposits on the retina. But he began missing a lot of tennis balls, you know, night blindness is one of the earliest manifestations. So it's been a long period and there are periods when it seems to be stable and then there are times when he'll notice a more rapid decline. I don't know if that's just his perception or whether it's truly not linear. I just don't know.

[00:55:12.26] Q: Flying jets. One thinks of someone who is fairly conservative. Is he fairly politically conservative?

[00:55:20.18] Kahn: No. Well fiscally kind of, but he's actually socially, I think, pretty progressive. You know he says he loves paying taxes, it just depends what you do with them.

[00:55:38.21] Q: I just want to _____ (??) that we had this expression, "shaven head warmongers," we used to call people in ROTC. We didn't know any of them but we, you know—

[00:55:52.00] Kahn: Well, when did they get ROTC off campus?

[00:55:55.20] Q: Sometime after our revolution.

[00:56:00.10] Kahn: Well, you know, he is eleven years older than me so for him it was a question of he was going to be drafted one way or the other, so go in as an officer or go in as a grunt. So he thought, Well, okay, I'll go in as an officer and he joined ROTC. It wasn't, you know—

[00:56:25.27] Q: Elective, really.

[00:56:27.08] Kahn: No, it wasn't that of a commitment to the military and this is the life he wanted to live.

[00:56:35.04] Q: Do you remember the lottery?

[00:56:37.27] Kahn: Yes, and my birthday would have been 168.

[00:56:40.24] Q: One sixty-eight. And what about your husband's?

[00:56:44.05] Kahn: Well, I don't think the lottery was in effect at that point.

[00:56:49.05] (all speak at the same time)

[00:56:52.07] Kahn: But he is eleven years older.

[00:56:54.16] Q: Oh, I see what I am saying. Yeah.

[00:56:55.21] Kahn: And at that point he would have been 4-F. Because he would have known.

[00:57:06.21] Third voice in the room: Plus, he would have been old.

[00:57:09.07] Q: To be drafted. But I remember people breathlessly waiting—

[00:57:14.26] Kahn: I know, and his younger brother was—he taught school in the Bronx I think, to defer the draft. You know, you could do—

[00:57:26.16] Q: You could still do that?

[00:57:28.16] Kahn: Yeah.

[00:57:30.17] Third voice in the room: Did you personally know anyone who was affected by the war, you know, by going?

[00:57:35.03] Q: By being drafted or hiding from being drafted?

[00:57:41.29] Kahn: I don't—I don't know anybody who—I do know somebody who served in Vietnam but only I met him after. I didn't know anybody who went to Vietnam or to Canada when we were in school. And my friends with younger brothers, I think they managed to stay in school and then, you know, the war was ending. But I don't—The guy that I knew, he was actually the older brother of somebody that I worked with and he was—
(phone rings) This friend was Italian; he grew up in Rome and he came here to go to graduate school but his brother, I think, had been born in the United States, and his, their father had—
(phone rings)

[00:59:03.11] Q: You want to wait until this stops, because this is going to be over your talk, because we've got the phone. Let's go back. When this stops. Okay. Go back.

[00:59:19.16] Kahn: The interesting thing was that the father, I think, in the time of World War II would have been subject to the American draft and he just went back to Europe and he didn't serve. And when his son was subject to the draft in the United States, he told him, "Don't make the mistake I did. You have to go." And he did.

[00:59:50.08] Q: Why was it a mistake? Why should, why, was, would it—

[00:59:51.11] Kahn: I guess he felt, the father felt that he didn't do his duty, that he should have served. I mean, this was World War II after all, but I guess he had misgivings about the way he handled it at the time.

[01:00:12.11] Q: Two very different wars.

[01:00:13.18] Kahn: Very much so and this kid went. He served in Vietnam, and all of his friends were the black soldiers, and—

[01:00:33.12] Q: Was he black?

[01:00:33.05] Kahn: No, he was Italian, son of an Italian communist, just not the kind of—
He just didn't feel anything in common with the white guys who volunteered, or well so many of them were drafted but—

[01:00:56.19] Q: And he served the whole time?

[01:00:57.05] Kahn: I don't know how long he was there, but he served in Vietnam and he is actually the only person I know who actually, I think, that I know of who served in Vietnam. A husband of a friend I worked with who was in management in our company, just in a different part of the business, but he didn't serve. He got out of the draft, I don't know how he

did it, but he did manage not to be drafted and he said he regretted it, I guess because of the people he worked with, there were some people who had served and he felt he should have done what they did. He could look at it very differently after the fact. I guess he saw that they did their duty and he didn't.

[01:02:16.07] Q: But their duty to what? World War II—

[01:02:19.08] Kahn: I can't say that I endorse this, I'm just repeating what he said. I mean I don't think he should have felt bad about—

[01:02:35.04] Q: I mean, Hitler was one thing.

[01:02:38.04] Kahn: No argument from me.

[01:02:39.04] Q: I wonder if it was a macho thing.

[01:02:41.00] Kahn: I guess it's a macho thing. It's also, you know, these were conservative people who would have felt that this is what the right thing to do was, and this is what they did. And he was managing these people and I guess he felt he should have been more like them. That's the kind of thing I can entertain in retrospect.

[01:03:12.08] Q: Did you have to deal with it? Did you know anyone who had to deal with being pregnant?

[01:03:18.12] Kahn: I knew someone who had an abortion, and it was a very traumatic thing for her. I mean it was not yet legal.

[01:03:29.11] Q: Yeah, you had to find—

[01:03:30.29] Kahn: She got—Somebody referred her to a doctor; I think she had to go out of State, and I think she felt kind of guilty about it. I mean, it was unquestionably what she had to do at the time, but she thought that she would be marrying the father. I mean, they thought that they would get married anyway, but they didn't. I think it sort of stayed with her that anything that happened to her bad in life was sort of a punishment for this. She became kind of religious. I did not—well, I apparently have problems getting pregnant, but well maybe then I wouldn't have, but I was on the pill and I didn't—I'm a pretty cautious person and it didn't stop with that. So, but I don't think I knew—My mother-in-law, my late mother-in-law, told me that she had had an abortion. This was after she was married and after the birth of three of her children.

[01:04:58.19] Q: Back then it must have been just awful.

[01:05:00.04] Kahn: Well, the doctor came to the house. A guy who was sympathetic and he took care of it for her. You know, she just didn't see how she could have a fourth son. So I did know people who had an abortion under one circumstance or another but—

[01:05:25.10] Q: Several certain different sort of circumstances—

[01:05:27.09] Kahn: One was a college student, and one was married and her family was complete.

[01:05:38.02] Q: I meant really at Barnard, because they didn't—Roe v. Wade was '73, wasn't it?

[01:05:41.07] Kahn: Seventy-three, right.

[01:05:42.07] Q: And while you could get birth control but you had to be twenty-one or have—

[01:05:49.14] Kahn: To get the pill?

[01:05:50.13] Q: I remember having to go to a doctor on Park Avenue, named Dr. Soroda. And it was either because I was not yet twenty-one or because I was not married. I cannot remember which it was.

[01:06:03.06] Kahn: My gynecologist prescribed birth control pills.

[01:06:12.20] Q: Well, if you weren't married or—

[01:06:14.14] Kahn: You know I wasn't!

[01:06:16.01] Q: I know, but if you weren't married or twenty-one, he or she wasn't supposed to. That's why this doctor Soroda was such a, you know—Oh, Dr. Soroda, he must have made a fortune. From Brooks alone. Dr. Soroda would make you—

[01:06:36.04] Kahn: I don't know. I'm sure I was on the pill before I was twenty-one.

[01:06:41.29] Q: Dr. Soroda— (both laugh)

[01:06:43.17] Kahn: It was Dr. Berk.

[01:06:47.05] Q: Friend of Dr. Soroda. (sighs)

[01:06:50.05] Third voice in the room: I'm just trying to go through in my mind all of the _____ (??) questions.

[01:06:55.05] Q: Race. We haven't talked about race. Race in the black-white way. Did you— things were becoming polarized at a certain point. You know—

.

[01:07:08.21] Kahn: Yeah, I remember—This is funny; I was talking to somebody about this on the subway. Barnard, someone in our class. I remember something, a friend of mine, somebody that I had known in high school, she went to Barnard with us to start. And then I

think sophomore year, after sophomore year, she left with her boyfriend at the time to go to Berkeley. And that's where she eventually finished school and went to medical school at Davis [University of California, Davis] and came back to—I was going to say to the United States (both laugh)—to New York, and she and I became friends again. In the last several years our mothers sort of died at the same time. We both had breast cancer, and we sort of bonded over those experiences after meeting at a couple of reunions and trying to reconnect and it didn't happen until we had this to share. Anyway, I remember this experience with her—there were some goings on on College Walk or something and it had to do with black students demonstrating, and she said to me, "I've never been so ashamed of being white." So, I don't know what I thought about it in any concrete way but it made an impression on me and I began to think—it wasn't all at once, but it caused things to mull over in my mind: Well, I am not black, but am I just white? And that's when I began to think in terms of my Jewish identity as being something important to me and that something that I could in some way connect with and be proud of. You know, I was talking earlier about the influence of religion in my life and at least part of my family was fairly observant or at least liked to give the impression that they were. And some of them were really observant. I think on my father's side if we go back far enough there are Hasidic roots. But on the other hand, I went downstairs every year to trim the Goldberg's Christmas tree—

[01:09:49.05] Q: This was fun!

[01:09:49.27] Kahn: It was fun and also that's what being an American kid had to include.

You know, it wasn't about being Jewish; somehow it was more American. But then after this

experience, and I started thinking about this, no it wasn't. You know, and that is a consequence, I think, of the sixties that the WASP was no longer the social icon. They did kind of fall into a little bit of disrepute maybe. It was okay to be whatever minority you were. That that was sort of enriching. And so, I felt about being Jewish that way and, you know, sort of in a national or ethnic or not really in a religious way. Do you understand?

[01:10:56.23] Q: Culturally.

[01:10:56.12] Kahn: Yes. Yes. So, that's what the race divide sort of did for me; it sort of helped crystallize what I was.

[01:11:09.03] Q: The Yale lawyer guy, was he Jewish or gentile?

[01:11:12.13] Kahn: The guy was—I think he was Jewish. But that was that one of the lies. He gave me to understand that he was not. But, you know, that was only one of many. He totally invented himself.

[01:11:69.29] Q: He's a sociopath.

[01:11:37.05] Kahn: I think so. I think so. I mean, I can have a fantasy or two but this was—I don't know what. Was this the game he was playing with me or was he just sick that way? I don't know, but it really—it was an experience that threw me for an emotional loop.

[01:12:01.29] Q: Well, I think we've all had them. People who are not people so much as constructs of different aspects of different pieces of art or literature. Like, I'll be a little bit of [F. Scott] Fitzgerald, and a little bit of The Last Poets, and a little bit of—

[01:12:27.27] Kahn: Well, that makes it sound almost like a nice thing to do, but it certainly wasn't—

[01:12:29.21] Q: Well, it's fascinating but it's not—What you got is something fascinating to look at and listen to but it's not a person.

[01:12:39.09] Kahn: And it's not genuine.

[01:12:40.21] Q: Yeah, it's not a human being. It's not a person. There's no person in there. Do you know what I'm saying?

[01:12:47.21] Kahn: Yeah, I mean it's different from saying, Well, I would like to be like this—

[01:12:51.28] Q: No.

[01:12:54.00] Kahn: —telling somebody that you are this.

[01:12:55.16] Q: Right, right.

end Part 3-4

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