

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Barbara Gottlieb

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Barbara Gottlieb conducted by Frances Garrett Connell on April 25, 2015. This interview is part of the Barnard Class of 1971 Oral History Project.

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

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project

Interviewee: Barbara Rose Gottlieb

Location: Newington, CT

Interviewer: Frances Garrett Connell

Date: April 25, 2015

00:00:05 Q: This is an interview taking place with Barbara Rose Gottlieb at her aunt's apartment in New York City on April 25, 2015. Okay, so let us begin. I would like to start first with some memories of your childhood, things you remember growing up, where you were born, what have you.

Gottlieb: Okay. I was born in New Haven, CT, where I lived my whole life, and where my parents were both born and raised—except I think my father was one year of his life in Brooklyn [New York], but otherwise we go back there a few generations. My mother comes from an Italian family and my father was Jewish. They grew up next to each other, so they were best friends. My mother and my aunt, whose house we're at now, were best friends, so I think that sort of formed me.

My mother had twelve siblings; I have thirty-six cousins. I grew up thinking the world was Italian; I actually—one of my early memories, actually when I got to Barnard [College] and realized the fact that everyone made such a big deal about [John F.] Kennedy being elected was because he was Catholic and not because he wasn't Italian. I just thought the world was Italian. I spoke Italian, I learned Italian in school; it was a big Italian community. I graduated high school with five cousins. So, that is actually important, also, because going to Barnard was the first time that I wasn't around people who had known me my whole life, who knew my parents, that knew

everything about me. So it was a big thing for me to go to college, and my parents did not go to college. My father went to one semester, but he was a welder, and my mother was a secretary, so it was a big thing for me to go to college, but a bigger thing for me to go someplace where everyone didn't know everything about me already. Yeah, so, that is a little bit about my childhood.

I'm the youngest of three. My two brothers had already kind of gone forth, gone to college ahead of me, but I was the only girl. Most of my female cousins did not go to college; many of them got pregnant and married at sixteen, so I was different, in the sense of where I came from, but my parents were very, very, very much about all of us getting educated. I had no ideas, really, what that meant. But I knew it meant something about going to college, and I didn't really know what going to college was actually going to look like.

I think another formative thing about me was that like—so all children of the Barnard Class of '71 were children of the '60s—I was also raised to be politically aware and conscious even before the '60s. My father, who is probably the strongest influence in my life, of anybody, had been politically active, for one year was a member of the Communist Party, and then he joined the Trotskyite Movement. My grandfather was part of the Bund, so we come from a few generations of politically-aware people, so my father—and the active issue at the time was some issues around class, and also the civil rights movements, and my father fed me books to read, mostly about the civil rights movement, but other things about class, and being aware from the time I was really young.

Interestingly, I don't think my brothers were as influenced by that, and maybe my generation was already—my generation meaning being five years younger than my older brother—those generations of cohorts were kind of short, so maybe my cohort was already declaring itself somehow different than my brothers'. But I just ate those books up and also I saw myself as someone who cared about civil rights, and I was part of New Haven Friends of SNCC, the Students Non-violent Coordinating Committee—

00:04:52 Q: This was while you were still in high school?

Gottlieb: This was while I was still in high school. I was the chair of that organization for a couple of years. Mostly we raised money for people to go down South to the various Freedom Rides and demonstrations. It's interesting now to be seeing that stuff fifty years later, and I almost, almost, went to the March on Selma [Alabama], but—and had raised money—but then realized that money should go to—at that point we still called people Negroes, at that point—as opposed to Blacks or African-Americans—so there was someone who seemed like it was sort of in her life story that she should go instead of me, because she was Black. So I almost went but didn't, and used my place to give it to someone else. But I was very much part of that movement. So it was interesting to go from that to Barnard, here it was SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] that kind of defined some of the politics for White students. But I felt like the class awareness wasn't there for them, and then also because the Black Power movement was beginning to take hold, that I wasn't really welcomed—I didn't have any Black friends at

Barnard, which was very different from how I grew up in my town. And, it was not like I thought they were wrong, but it was very different for me to suddenly be a White person with White friends, and for the people who were sort of the political leaders to not understand—from my political experience—to not really have value in their world. It just seemed like people could talk so much and talk so fast, and they knew so much about certain kinds of things, but they knew nothing about class, and not so much even about race. So that was sort of an interesting place for me to land, and a little bit, another part of the jolt of being in a place where part of my identity really didn't really have a place to land.

Q: Um-hm.

Gottlieb: But anyway, you were talking about early influences, and in that transition, those early influences didn't have a place to land, exactly. What else?

00:07:26 Q: Yes, I want to go more in depth, obviously about the years at Barnard, but let's go back kind of chronologically. So, can you tell us a little about what kind of school you attended, in elementary and high school, this whole community you were part of, and maybe some of your other activities besides—

Gottlieb: Sure. Yes. So I went to a neighborhood school, walked to school, walked back for lunch, walked back to school. You know, that whole thing, picked—It was just the classic sort of '50s, early '60s childhood, tons of kids in the neighborhood, played outside with the mothers

peering out the windows of their kitchen. So, you know, pack of kids, all different ages, playing in the street, together, riding my bike, of course—without a helmet—to places. I think about—my parents had no idea where I was on my bike. It just doesn't happen like that anymore—a feeling of sort of freedom and safety, you know, kind of an extended community that was really, really nice. Yeah, so, we all walked to school, we went to a school [where] my parents were very active in the Parent-Teacher Association because they valued education.

And the school was—it was Sputnik era, so we were all about beating the Russians or catching up with them— so we had a ton of science and math. We—in Hamden, Connecticut we grew up very much in the shadow of Yale University, so they tried out a lot of things, which I am sure were from the Department of Defense, but were education-oriented, actually the best of all of that, so tons of science, the “new math,” learning languages at an early age, incredible education definitely shaped my life in a way that I think current generations of students don't really have. That's definitely the reason I could go to an Ivy League-type of school, from a public school. It doesn't happen so much anymore, but it was- it totally worked—when they actually put resources in the schools.

So I had great school—elementary and middle school and high school, and all kinds of advanced opportunities—got to take classes at Yale, in philosophy and stuff like that. I was always the good student and definitely sort of tracked to—I mean I wasn't aware of that, but I was definitely, looking back on it—totally tracked to go to college and to succeed. Pretty much got straight A's—I would not say effortlessly—I worked hard. I wasn't an effortless kind of guy, but

I always did well. I mean, my kids laugh when I describe myself, because I was so totally a nerd. I was on the Math Team, and I was a science person, I was President of the National Honor Society—whatever that meant. You know, I was one of the “smart kids.” This was before Title IX, so I probably would have been a jock, but there were almost no opportunities for kids, so I played—

00:11:01 Q: I think we had field hockey.

Gottlieb: Field hockey and badminton, so I played on the field hockey team, and I played badminton. And I didn't know enough to feel like, wait a second, like why don't I have more opportunities. But just a few years later, obviously, the doors opened a lot wider and I realized I would have been one of those jocks, I would have been doing that, if I had had that opportunity. So I did what I could with those things, and my parents, you know, they did what they called “social graces.” So we all had music lessons. I played the piano and the violin, and took ballet dancing, and all kinds of things like—you know—did all of those things. I don't know how they paid for it. Honestly, I do not know how they paid for it, but, and I did theater. So that was probably, of all the things I did in high school, that was probably the thing, which I did the most seriously.

00:12:06 Q: Theater?

Gottlieb: Theater. Both—

Q: So, was that connected with Yale as well?

Gottlieb: Interestingly, it was, in that people who were doing theater seriously at Yale, who wanted to try things out would sometimes come to the high schools and do sort of experimental theaters, or help out with the drama club. I was Helen [A.] Keller, I played—whatever—I had some lead role, also did sets and costumes, loved that stuff, and then did some stuff—and at that point Yale was not coed, so being a female was a good thing, cause I got to play some parts that they didn't have anyone around to play. So that was another sort of way that Yale was a nice resource at that point. And, I don't think that I ever fantasized that I was ever going to do theater professionally, but I took it really seriously. I read every play. I still have all my books, all kinds of author, I mean I just read that stuff voraciously. I just loved what theater was. And, yeah, so that was a big part of what I did in high school. It's how I met Mark, who has been my partner since high school. We were in "Helen Keller," so I was Helen Keller and he was my surly brother. That's how we met. So that was a big part of what I did in high school.

I worked also. I knew I had to save money for college, I mean when I think about how little college cost then, compared to now, the idea that working actually made a difference, then as opposed to now, when it is just a drop in the bucket. But, yeah, so I actually worked for Mark's father transcribing Russian—he was the Head of the Russian Department and I transcribed books and stuff. They wrote in long hand in those days, so that was fun and interesting, took the bus downtown. So the fact that Yale was here was big both for—that's who I worked for with SNCC,

where I took some classes because I had that opportunity, that's where I worked to earn money. It wasn't an option at that point of going to Yale. It opened up when I was in the middle of college. But anyway, that was, so my world was bigger in Hamden than it would otherwise have been.

But I also had the fact that I was Italian and came from this huge family was a big part of my life. If you have thirty-six cousins, you've got a big social life, and you have lots of parties to go to and family gatherings and stuff like that, and I—so my brothers and I, and then a couple of cousins also went to college. Then, for the most part, other people didn't. Some cousins entered the military. Nobody died in the military, interestingly, luckily. There was definitely sort of the small minority of us who were college-bound, and then everybody else, who clearly were going to live in the town. They would talk about going far away, like from Hamden to West Haven, which if you have never been there isn't very far. So someone maybe like going way out of bounds for finding a life partner, like in another town or something. Their world was very different and I always knew that was not where my life was headed. But I definitely identified with them cause they were my cousins and they were—I mean on some level, it felt very much like an accident that I had the opportunities I had. So my mother married someone who was Jewish and not Italian, which made her different, and put her in a different world. And I think she would have articulated that that was—I think she knew that that made her different, and that made our family different, even though we were still part of that larger social context as well.

00:26:52 Q: That was going to be the next question. Why do you think your family encouraged education to such an extent?

Gottlieb: Yeah. I think, my father was Jewish, and I think that that sort of, you know the second generation, so my grandparents came here from Russia, and they were very focused on education. I think the fact that my father—I'm not totally sure why my father wasn't the first, nor my aunt, she didn't go to college either, but I think it was something that they came to learn, to value education. I think that was just more typical of Jewish immigrants than other immigrants, and sort of high culture, going to symphonies, and I remember actually—so we didn't have very much money, and my father as a welder was often unemployed, either because of the economy or because he got himself into trouble because of his organizing activities, so we didn't have much money, but we would go to like free concerts at Yale. I remember my brother, my brother and I would like walk downtown to Woolsey Hall and see [Harvey] Van [L.] Cliburn [Jr.] and all these amazing people for free, and it was as if we were part of another culture, except that then we would walk home, or take the bus home, or—you know, so we were sort of walking in two worlds, I guess.

00:18:26 Q: Can you—you've already given quite a bit of information about your father, and your mother, can you—what would be—How would you sort of characterize what their days were like and how they interacted with you?

Gottlieb: So, well—

Q: This being the '50s and '60s.

Gottlieb: Yeah. So when my father worked, and he worked sometimes long distances, so he was a welder and he worked at Electric Boat in New London, or bigger or smaller factories, depending on who would hire him, got up super-early and went off and—I'm not sure I had a concept of what he was doing, except that he came back dirty, with holes in his shirts, because the sparks, I guess, would burn his—and a lunch box that never had a lunch in it. It always had like tools and stuff. I remember his lunch boxes. And my father and I were really close, like very sort of bonded. His death in 1989 was probably one of the bigger events in my life. And we would sit on the porch and he would tell me about his life, and his days, and what he believed in, and we would draw pictures, and I remember at one point, when I was really little, and it might have been one of the points when he was laid off, he would say that the companies cared more about the machines than they did about the people.

And I remember, I remember trying to grapple with that as a young kid—I probably was like six or seven, thinking, how could that be? How could anybody care more about a machine than a person? It just didn't make—it just didn't compute. And it was almost like, I have to believe this because this is my father telling me this, and he's everything. He would never lie to me. But I kind of don't believe it, because it is so outrageous. I didn't know the word outrageous, but it seemed so unbelievable to me that that could be the case. And every once in a while that comes back to me, like, yeah, he was really right. They really care more about the machines, than the people, or whatever the current version of that is.

There was one point, in my understanding, as a child, and I was old enough to be able to write, but not old enough to be able to sort of think straight. So he, in my understanding, he was fired because he wanted to go to the bathroom. So probably what happened is he took a bathroom break when he wasn't entitled to, and he got fired. Probably. But that's not what I understood. So I wrote a note, which was in my family, and of course my brothers intercepted it and teased me for ever, and I'm sure my brother still has this letter. It was called the "Dear Boss" letter, where I was standing up for my father and his right to go to the bathroom when he needed to go to the bathroom. It just seemed so outrageous to me, you know, that a grown-up—

Q: It is—

Gottlieb: It is, and I had already been to school, and I knew that we had to get permission, but I didn't think a grown-up had to get permission to go to the bathroom, and that you could actually lose your job over that was just beyond what I could understand. So I wrote the "Dear Boss" letter, just "How can you do this?" and "Just because my father had to go to the bathroom," and anyway. But that was very—I think it formed my sense of sort of—righteousness—I guess. And I think there is a certain amount of pain associated with that, that I don't think I was aware of then, but that I am now, certainly as I got older, recognizing that. I mean the way I sort of thought about it was that people have one life. That's it. Like they lived and then they died, their one chance, and for them not to get everything that they can out of that, it's not right, and that was something I could articulate to myself even at that point, and I think it sort of—as a doctor, as a—whatever—as I walk through life, that's very foundational, and I think I learned that through

both the articulate things—the things my father would articulate, but probably even more profoundly what I must have been reading about his life and what he wasn't getting to do in his own life.

So that was my father. Everyone loved my father. He was—I tell people, you know, as a physician and a teacher of physicians that the thing that some people have to be taught and other people get, is that it is about listening. It's not about talking. Right? And I feel like I learned to listen from my father; that he just learned, that he just knew how to ask the question and listen and take it in, and that's probably another really profound lesson that I learned from him. He really cared about people and people felt that, and really wanted to—felt safe with him, I think.

And I think it took me longer to realize that that was also true of my mother. So my mother was always—the way I picture my mother was she was always doing something, always busy, always working. She was born in the wrong generation—mean in some ways they both were—my father would have been a hippie, really. He would have been a great hippie, very creative, very big-thinking. And my mother would have been Hillary Clinton, very—my father used to call her “Mrs. IBM,” like when computers were the size of this room or whatever, extremely organized, very methodical. She did everything with a method. Her sort of philosophy of life was, “Don't waste a trip.” If you are going to do something, carry—do three things at once.

00:25:18 Q: Multitasking.

Gottlieb: Yeah. Totally. So, like she wasn't the world's greatest house cleaner; she was a terrible cook. She really wanted to be out in the business world and when we were little, she worked for family friends in a pharmacy, but as soon as we could manage to not have her home at lunchtime, or whatever, she started working as an executive secretary at Olin-Mathieson [formerly Winchester firearms]. I'm sure that she ran the place, that she was the one, I'm sure.

00:26:00 Q: Sure.

Gottlieb: Yeah. So, that's who she was. I think she was maybe caught between two worlds. So my relationship with her when I was younger was probably more ambivalent, and I think because she was an Italian woman, and on some level, saw men as people she was supposed to wait on, and whatever, except that that wasn't exactly what happened with my father, but kind of, so she waited on my brothers and then. As a daughter, even though I think she really definitely wanted me to succeed and go to college, and all that, she also wanted, I think, the kind of daughter that called her up on the phone all the time, was close to her and whatever. So I think, I think when I was little, I didn't know what she wanted and I felt like whatever that was, it wasn't exactly who I was. So I was much more—I was close with my father and much more guarded with my mother, I would say, until the woman's movement later. So, yeah, I think I didn't quite get who she was in a—clearly it was easier for her to parent my brothers, so she—

What was her day like? She also got up really early. My brothers both had paper routes, morning paper routes, so she would get up. She would help them fold the newspapers. She would make—

from a package—corn muffins, so we had hot corn muffins every morning, And, so she was like always, she was always there, always sort of doing what she thought she was supposed to be doing as a mother, on that level. But I think really, actually, her heart was—she really loved working outside the house, so—yeah—that’s my mother. I can tell you the end of the story later, about my mother.

00:28:16 Q: Sure, sure, at any point. So obviously, one of the themes, since we’re all Barnard graduates, of women’s college, and all that, is very much the role models you had of women as you were growing up and how that changed, and how you changed, in your perception. It sounds like you never felt pulled back by the fact that you were a woman in a large Italian family? Or did you?

Gottlieb: No, I mean, I think. No. There was never any doubt in my mind that I was going to go to college and that I was going to do “something,” whatever that was. And, interestingly, I don’t think my parents—it wasn’t until I got into medical school that I realized that “they must have wanted this all along.” Because they were so happy. The graduate school thing—for a while I was going to go to graduate school in anthropology. I think that just did not compute to them, what that would actually mean. So, I mean, it’s not like they got in my way or discouraged me or anything, but I never felt they had any investment in that, but medical school—Whoa! They were like so happy and so invested in it. But no, I never felt like I wasn’t going to go forward. And I think, I mean, I was very aware of the fact that my mother worked and loved to work, and that she didn’t actually enjoy being home doing things.

But one of the funny things about my mother—We grew up in a five-room house, two bedrooms—you can do the math—two boys, a girl, living room, dining room, so my parents slept in the dining room and for a while I slept—I am closer in age to my middle brother. For a while we shared a bedroom, then I had my own room. And we had no money. My mother sometimes, I think, acted out her need for sort of change, like what other people might have done as a shopping spree, which we didn't have—she would move the furniture. So I would come home from school, and everything would be different, including—. So I had, for a while my brother and I shared a bedroom with twin beds, so I would like come home from school and I would just like fling myself on my bed. One time I came home and flung myself on my bed and the bed wasn't there. She had moved it while I was away. But that's what she would do. She had so much energy, and I think so much need to—affect something—and not always a lot of opportunities to do that. And that's what she had. She could move the furniture. She couldn't buy new furniture, you know, whatever, anyway.

So that's sort of emblematic for me of how my mother had this boundless energy. People used to call her the “Energizer Bunny.” Really boundless energy. She would just go, go, go, go, and then at the end of the day, she would stop and sleep. She was not somebody who ever had trouble falling asleep, never had a day of pain, early, in her life. She was little, shorter than me, little, wiry, and just had this boundless energy. And I think that was a role model for me, even if I didn't know that. I didn't know that until later, but it clearly was, because how could you not notice that? Right? And also people came to her, so she was the person that so many of my

cousins came to, and other aunts, you know these extended family. So I would say both my parents—I didn't realize, as I said, until maybe later, how much it was actually both of them that people sought out, but it really was both of them. Our house was tiny and always filled with people, always filled with cousins, and family members, and then as we grew up we always brought friends home, they always had—food—you know. People stayed at our house, slept on the floor, we had no place to put people, but you know, the doors were always open, always open, very generous people.

00:33:02 Q: Um-hm. That's great. Okay, let's skip then to, let's move on to Barnard, pre-Barnard. How did you end up selecting Barnard and what do you remember of your first days, weeks there?

Gottlieb: Okay, so, I knew, so as one of the top students—its kind of interesting because it is so different now. I was probably third in my class. It wasn't such a big deal then. I mean I was like a hyper-achiever, but I didn't really realize it until my kids had to go through it and produce their—you know—CVs [Curriculum Vitae] at the age of seventeen. Oh, yeah. That's what I did, except that's not really what we had to do then. We didn't really have to package ourselves that way, but I really was one of those students, so I was among the students who applied to all of the top schools, and my father came on all of the interviews with me. He really wanted me to go to Connecticut College, I think because one of the teachers in our elementary school, Terry Roufalow, who was also very beautiful—he probably had a crush on her—had gone there, and she was one of the teachers active in the PTA [Parent Teacher Association], so he thought,

“That’s were smart women go, Connecticut College.” I so didn’t want to go to that school. I got a full scholarship there; I got a full scholarship to NYU [New York University]. I did not get into Harvard [University], where I would have gone, not so much because I thought, but because it was Harvard. I actually had really liked Swarthmore [College] and didn’t get in there. Mark had gotten into Columbia [University] and I had spent a lot of time visiting there.

Q: So, was he a year ahead of you?

Gottlieb: He was a year ahead of me. And of—so I got into a bunch of places. Barnard did not give me very much money. Barnard’s endowment at that point wasn’t very high I guess, but I remember thinking, aside from the fact that Mark was there—I had no idea that I was going to spend the rest of my life with him—but we were still together—but the idea that it was a women’s college in a big university seemed like a good idea. If you—if someone had said. “Why?” I don’t think I would have been able to say. But it seemed like a good idea. And I liked New York. I liked how the whole Columbia area felt, and something about the women’s college in a big college, as opposed to a women’s college in the middle of nowhere, seemed like, maybe that’s a good idea. So, that’s why, not super well-thought out but some—whatever— image of something. So, I got to Barnard—

00:35:58 Q: Did your folks drive you down, or—

Gottlieb: Yeah, so they drove me down to orientation week, and then left me. My roommate, who I think is a filmmaker, we had—you know—exchanged letters—did not totally click, I'd say. We seemed really different. But I was sort of optimistic and terrified at the same time. And I would say the main thing was just, really, honestly, I had never been anyplace where people didn't know everything about me. Having my aunt and my uncle, who were alive at the time, kind of down the street was important, and I saw them a lot. But it was really frightening. And then there were these kind of finishing school aspects of Barnard, like getting our posture checked—remember that? Standing up in this auditorium and having our posture checked. And I kind of thought—

00:37:05 Q: And the photographs of us in our underpants—

Gottlieb: In our underpants, sideways—

Q: On the first day of school—

Gottlieb: —Thinking, what am I getting myself into here? Like what—and then on the—so I was in Reid [Hall], I was in Reid, as was Josephine Drexel Biddle Duke, and one of the first things I remember early on was her going to some sort of an opening movie about her parents and she's wearing a designer dress, and I'm thinking, "Whoa, where am I?" And the people that I would have identified with more, Black students, didn't really want me around, and so that was sort of dislocating, and class, at that point, was really invisible. Or at least I didn't feel comfortable

saying, “You come from a certain kind of wealth and comfort and I don’t know what that feels like. Your parents went to college, my parents didn’t. I don’t even know what this is going to mean, what this is going to look like.” So I felt like I left what I knew, and didn’t know what I was getting into. And so it was, it was hard. It was hard; I was frightened. I’m a bit of a shy person, which is probably not all that obvious because I’m the only one talking right now, but I’m not, I’m still somewhat shy. So I didn’t have lots and lots of social skills for figuring things out.

On the other hand, the hippie movement was starting, so I remember also in the first—during our orientation week, there was a Love-in in Central Park, and I met somebody. Amy Sowell. She was from California. We went to it together. We found a thrift store; we bought hats, we bought—so that was fun and that was a good thing, because there was, kind of being hippies in the Summer of Love, and all that stuff, gave you a sort of a language to speak in that didn’t require social skills, which I didn’t have very many of. So that was kind of nice. So we sort of had—I don’t know about a friendship, but we sort of knew each other at the beginning and I think there is always a certain amount of—you meet somebody and like you think you’re friends, and then you try out different things.

I think the other thing that happened was that I had placed out of—I mean going back to my excellent education, so we didn’t have AP [Advanced Placement] classes, but we had really good training, so I actually placed out of a whole bunch of things including Freshman English, which turns out to have been a bad idea, because I would have met people. So I was in a lot of classes

with upper class-men, which seemed like—this is good, I'm going to do well here, whatever. You know, I was sort of primed to excel and be one of the smart students, whatever, but in retrospect, probably not a good idea, because I didn't meet my peers in a context where I probably would have had the social skills to figure out. So, so it was tough.

So I didn't automatically bond with my roommate, who—I guess I can put this— so it turns out she was a lesbian and at one point I walked in on her and her partner, and somehow then everyone found out that they were lesbians—this was early, this was 1967—and there was a lot of tittering and whatever, and I think she thought I told everybody. I didn't have any friends, I wouldn't have had anybody to tell even if I wanted to tell somebody and it's not what I would have done! I mean, I had no language for gay rights or anything. It's not something I would have done to anybody. So, anyway, so then she hated me. And I was like—I felt this anyway. I don't know who thought this—I was sort of identified as someone who was not a nice person, or whatever. So that was really hard. That happened in the first semester. Somehow I met—so then what turned out was that the roommate wanted to switch with me, which was perfect, because then I got a single and I met the people who have become my friends. And, so that ended up working out well. But, so that was spring semester, and then the Strike happened and all that. But it was just a really, it was a hard beginning and I didn't have either sort of the language or the social skills or the confidence to know what to do with all of that. That was really, so that was very hard, yeah.

00:42:32 Q: So what about the classes? Academically were you satisfied?

Gottlieb: Oh, yeah. I loved the classes. I loved the classes, and I discovered anthropology, so I had been a science and math nerd and I think I would have probably gone in that direction, except that it was the '60s and the questions that were being asked, or that I was asking were not what science and math answered. So social sciences was where it was at. Anthropology was this world; it was amazing, so I had no idea what it was when I signed up for Anthropology 101, or whatever was the introductory class, but it was totally the right thing, because it answered my questions and it became a sort of—I became very engaged with it and I took lots of classes and realized that was what I was going to major in. And imagined that I would go to graduate school in anthropology, having no clue really what that meant, even though Mark's parents were scholars and all their whole social world was scholars, and Mark's uncle was on the faculty at Columbia. So I sort of had an idea of what that looked like; I had no personal idea of what it meant to be a scholar. And kind of experienced this phenomenon where I would—I loved being in the library.

I loved the Barnard library, I loved the carrel, the desks, and lining up your books and I loved the way it smelled and I loved that you would just surround yourself with all this stuff for hours and you had no idea whether it was day or night, and I loved thinking of the paper, and writing the paper, and I loved everything up until I was done with the first draft. And then, like, now I am ready for the next thing. So I think I didn't have that scholar—and that's still true for me, actually. I think I was great at asking questions and great at getting to a certain point, and then sort of the fine-tuning and all of that was just not where I was at. But I didn't know that that was

actually what it meant to be a scholar, so I thought that was what I was going to be and it's probably a good thing that I didn't end up doing that. And, so anyway, but I loved anthropology and probably—I feel that I do anthropology anyway, as a doctor, for doing what I do, which I'll explain a little later. So that was fine.

I loved the classes. I took Russian, I loved that, philosophy, I loved just everything about it, art history. I took some theater classes, and realized, “This is Barnard. We're in New York. We're actually on Broadway. The people who were taking theater classes here are people who spent their summers in London doing theater, like they're going to do this.” And, I didn't think they were necessarily better than me in their talent, but their commitment to it was very different.

So at a certain point, I sort of longed for high school where you could just do everything, and you didn't have to commit to it, and you could be really good at it, but not necessarily the best at it and not necessarily want to do it as your whole life. And that wasn't the way it was, at least not for those kinds of things. And, so that was okay. So I started doing some art stuff that I wasn't so good at. I took some studio art classes because I was less—

00:46:35 Q: Was this painting or sculpture?

Gottlieb: I did sculpture. What are you talking about [laughs]—

Q: Oh, fantastic.

Gottlieb: I had never done sculpture before. I did one sculpture and one studio art class. I'd always drawn, but I had never seen myself as an artist, so this was no—and it wasn't something I spent a lot of time doing—so the investment in it—it was less of a loss for me to say, some of these people are probably going to be in the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] someday and I'm not, but it's okay. That was different than about the theater where I had really done that very seriously. But then I realized that where they were headed was not where I was headed. So anyway, but I was brave enough in that context to do things that took a certain amount of—you know—confidence or chutzpah—because it was school and classes and that was a good thing. And then definitely meeting people, you know, when I moved my room, meeting people; it was just easier and I made good friends and that was nice. And in retrospect, I now know that lots of people don't make best friends in their first semester of college. But I didn't know that and I so much wasn't sure that I belonged to begin with, that that just sort of fed that sort of sense of self-doubt. Whatever.

00:47:59 Q: Absolutely. That was tough. So when did you first hear about the Strike? What was your involvement in that, or not involvement?

Gottlieb: I was totally involved. So I went to SDS meetings, mostly because Mark did. He was there; he was a year ahead of me. And he had kind of fallen into a secondary leadership role in that way and it seemed like that was what people—given that the Civil Rights movement didn't want me anymore because it was Black Power, and SDS was about the War in Vietnam, and sort

of about race, although less than I kind of would have liked, it seemed like a good home for me, and I went to those meetings. And probably a lot of Barnard women felt like this was—I mean—men did all the talking, and so in that sense I wasn't that different from a lot of the women. But it felt like this was where I needed to be. These are my people.

So I went to the meetings. I went to the rallies, and I went to the sundial the day, you know, on April 23rd, two days and however many years ago, and believed in the righteousness of the struggle about the gym, and went to that demonstration, and you know, I mean I had been in demonstrations before. I believed in sit-ins, so I was part of it, and I was in the group that stayed at Low Library.

So I was—in the Columbia Strike movie, there's what I think of as sort of emblematic of the gender roles. So there's a picture—Mark was on the Strike Committee, so he left and met—I don't know if you know how things were structured then, but once the buildings were occupied and the White students were kicked out of Hamilton Hall, and we occupied Low Library, so a strike and other buildings were occupied and there was a strike committee with representative from each of the buildings. Mark was a representative of Low Library. So there's a picture in the —there's footage of Mark sort of rapping it down, and being like a leader, and there is Bobby [herself] passing out oranges to the people in Low Library. And it was just totally the way things were.

My brother was in medical school in Italy at the time and he—there was a picture of me in Low Library in the international press, sitting on the—so he picked one up and saw me sitting on the window sill in Low Library. I mean it was an amazing experience. I get chills talking about it. It was scary, it was exciting. I felt like we were—I knew we were part of history. I knew we were doing the right things. I also felt like I didn't know where my voice was in all of that, and I did know that as smart and articulate as everyone was who was running those meetings, I knew that there was something I knew that they did not know. And I had no idea if I was ever going to get to say it. But I did know it. I knew that, but— it felt okay. It felt like, “This is what it is, and this is the way to express at least what I care about and my values, so that all felt right.” I mean, I remember standing—there's one bathroom—the President's bathroom, with however many people, and [Thomas] Tom [E.] Hayden was also in Low, or he came to visit or whatever, and I remember standing in line, and I said to him, “You should probably get ahead of me, because I know that you're more important than I am.” So, God—

And the other thing about my experience then was that I was very worried about getting a scholarship, and at some point, while we were still in the buildings, there was a kind of general amnesty that people could get pass-fail, I think, and I felt like I had to get grades, so I actually studied while we were in the building—

[Interruption]

00:53:34 Gottlieb: So I was, in the midst of everything else, also studying my Russian and whatever else I was taking, while we were in the buildings. When people talked to me about, “Can you study, can you do this?” I always give that as an example, because there were like bunches of people around me, and shouting, and I felt like I had to be able to still take tests and get grades, not just do pass-fail. So that was a little bit, I guess, unique. Most people were not studying. But, yeah, I felt like I was one of the masses, I was definitely not a leader, didn’t see myself as ever becoming a leader at that, but. So then, the night of the bust came, and the police came in, and it was scary. I mean, until that point as much as I knew about the civil rights movement, I didn’t actually know what night sticks were for. I didn’t know that they hit people on the head, and I didn’t know how much people bled. So that was not one of the amazing—

00:54:56 Q: So you were not passive. You did not all go limp and just—

Gottlieb: We did, we held—but they beat people up.

Q: You still got beaten in Low.

Gottlieb: I didn’t get beaten, but I saw people getting beaten on the head, and I didn’t actually know what those sticks were for—I thought they were for moving people. I didn’t know that you actually beat people with them, and I didn’t know that people bled so much from their heads. So that was interesting. So I was [hand] cuffed to Josephine Drexel Biddle Duke, which was interesting. And the handcuffs started to fall off, and—I mean—I’m such a good girl—I said to

the police, “This is falling off.” So on top of every other charge, I got “resisting arrest.” Everyone else got “trespassing,” and I got two charges. I got “resisting arrest,” which—it is just kind of the funniest, like, anybody who knew me at the time, but also I literally said, “My handcuff is falling off.” Anyway, so that was one of the amusing things of that night.

And we got sent off in the back of the paddy wagon into a women’s jail, where I believe I—I don’t know if I was singled out—as in the only one, but I was given body searches, including rectal searches, multiple times. We were in jail for twelve hours, so between that and the bologna sandwich and warm, sweet tea—they passed out baloney sandwiches, they gave us some tea, the worst tea in the world—and I got pulled out and had searches, a numbers of times, probably three times. It was a really unusual experience.

My brother and my father came down to get me out of jail. All the people in the neighborhood contributed to my bail, which was interesting, and sort of—like I never knew what our neighbors thought of my family’s politics—but everyone was so proud of me. And that also distinguished me from a lot of other people. A lot of my friends were disowned. In fact, one of my friends, someone I had gone to high school with, who was a year ahead of me at Barnard, was literally disowned, and I worked that summer—I went back home and worked and gave her all my savings, because she had no money, and gave her \$500, which at that point was a lot of money, because her parents wouldn’t pay for anything for her, because she was arrested.

00:57:49 Q: Barnard lawyers didn’t help you with this?

Gottlieb: We all—they dropped the charges.

Q: Everything was dropped. But to get you out of jail, you had to have bail?

Gottlieb: We had to have—well, so it turned out we didn't, but my parents didn't know this.

00:58:01 Q: Okay, okay. You tell the story.

Gottlieb: So they gathered all this money anyway, but it turned out that they didn't have to—

Q: That's amazing, the support from the family.

Gottlieb: The support. So, everybody else is like, "My parents disowned me, my parents won't talk to me," and—"Oh, my parents are proud of me. My whole neighborhood is proud of me."

So that was kind of the flip side of my life was different in a way that made me not really clear if I belonged, but at that moment in time, I was really blessed, and really glad to be who I was and where I came from, but also I felt like, for me this wasn't brave. This was just what I was doing. I mean, yeah, I guess it was brave, but it didn't feel brave to me, and I felt like, "for you to do this and to keep doing this, it's a really big step for you." So I felt—I felt impressed that people could do things against their parents' wishes. I never really had to do that. So that was another

thing that separated me from a lot of people, was that for them it really was a rebellion, while for me it really wasn't.

And I both felt lucky about that, but I also felt like, "it's a big thing for you to do this and I—you know—that's pretty cool that you can do that, and that you don't back down just because your parents say that they're not going to pay for your college." Whatever.

So, yeah, so that was a big moment in time. It also—so we, both Mark and I, I think, strongly identified with all of what happened and we've gone to the reunions on Columbia '68, and in some ways, that's *the* reunion for me more than the *Barnard* Reunions. I did come to the reunion a couple of years ago, but I had so few friends. I appreciated Barnard, but my experience was so much shaped by being part of that, you know being part of the '68 [Strike] and many of our friends of people who were part of that. So it was a really big part—

01:00:34 Q: So how did you continue then? To things that you had expressed a commitment to in the Strike, during the next couple years at Barnard/Columbia.

Gottlieb: So things fractionated in SDS. A lot of people left school and some people joined Weathermen. We—actually, I guess I can say this—now that it is that many years later—we actually stayed in touch with people who were underground, not around the time of the Townhouse Explosion, but maybe—when did we first reconnect—maybe about a year after that. So, because they were our friends. So we knew the people who were killed, and we knew the

people who were underground, and we always knew that there was—and I am saying “we” because Mark and I, our politics are actually very similar—and we went through this very much together because our good friends were making choices we weren’t making. We both knew that they had a level of commitment that was different, but we also knew they had a level of zealotness that was different from ours. So we didn’t completely agree with what they were doing, but we also understood it on some level and we were committed to them as friends. And I guess that is the way we would still say, that definitely people who were friends at that point have followed political directions—I’ll say for myself that I don’t believe in—but I understand how, I understand why people made those kinds of choices and attached themselves to those kinds of more extreme movements.

But, I—so there were still demonstrations against the war that we participated in citywide. The student movement was more fragmented, and then I would say the woman’s movement began to—I don’t know if it was that I wasn’t aware of it, or that it did actually begin to take hold at Barnard, and I got more involved in that, and there were—so especially in my last year at Barnard, when Mark was already gone. He had moved to Seattle and I was going to follow him after I finished school—I was more involved in Sisters in Struggle, was it called?

01:03:29 Q: Sisters in Struggle. Was this the cohort to BOSS [Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters] the organization of Black women?

Gottlieb: Yeah, probably.

Q: Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters.

Gottlieb: Oh, no. This was definitely white. Yes, so there were probably a Black women organizations and Ntozake Shange and other people who were very active at that point.

Q: The former Paulette [L.] Williams.

Gottlieb: Yeah, yeah. So there were white women getting together, so I was with the white women. Yeah, so that was actually the first time that I connected with the women's movement in a way that felt like that was a home for me. I think I was sort of held at arm's length because it felt more middle class to me, than other kinds of political movements, and I wasn't sure how I identified with that, but I kind of got it that women were also oppressed and that—I began to feel sort of comfortable saying, whatever else this is or isn't, there is something about gender that is real to me, too. So that was a bigger defining thing in my life. I think also because it was also the first time I had not been with Mark, since he was away, that I was more a woman with woman friends, and kind of that was a bigger part.

01:04:57 Q: Can you say a little bit more about what was being advocated at that point and what were you doing?

Gottlieb: So we met, we had meetings, and we had cultural events, we had dances. I remember showing—what was that Cary Grant movie, *His Girl Friday*? You know, movies that illustrated sort of women's roles, and then we would talk about them. There were books we would read—

01:05:27 Q: Consciousness-raising.

Gottlieb: Consciousness-raising, all of that stuff. I never actually did the sitting in a circle with a speculum looking at my cervix thing, but that was going on as well. And people not wearing bras, and—But I met a lot of women friends at that point, and having women friends became a real sort of value for me.

It was also a turn-around point in my relationship with my mother because I started feeding her the books that I had been reading, and she totally ate them up, and at that point could articulate that she really wished that she had had these kinds of opportunities. And unlike a lot of women who I think were bitter, I don't think my mother had one bit of bitterness. I think she was like so excited that I had this and was really interested in books that I was giving her to read, and that was a real breakthrough. She was able to say, you know at one point Mark and I hitchhiked across country and she was totally worried; my mother also could say, I wish I had been able to do those things. So I think it was the first time that I realized—I think on some level she wished that I called her, like the way my cousins called their mothers—that I just never, that wasn't who I was—I think she still wanted that but I also realized that there was something about who I was

that she was excited about, or that she could get or be proud of, or whatever. So, that was a good time.

I had finished all my requirements a semester early, and moved to Seattle [Washington]. I just had my Senior Essay to write.

01:07:33 Q: So this was in anthropology, your major.

Gottlieb: Yeah, so I did what ended up [to] be a sort of Honors paper on Political Movements in Peru and Guatemala and kind of a politicization of native populations. It was really super interesting. It's even interesting to me now when I look back on it. Pretty impressive that I pulled that off as someone who really had no sense of what scholarship was. But it was really interesting to me and it kind of pulled together the politics and all that kind of stuff. So that was fun.

01:08:16 Q: Now did you do field research for this?

Gottlieb: No, it was all book research. I wish I had done field research. I do now. So anyway, but then I went to Seattle and at that point, the Venceremos Brigade was recruiting people to go to Cuba to cut sugar cane, and I had known people who had done that, and so both Mark and I applied, and he wasn't chosen and I was. So I went to Cuba. And that was totally transformative.

I had been to Europe, but I had never been to a real developing country. We met people from Vietnam, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe, North Vietnam, North Korea, not North Korea at that time, all the sort of revolutionary governments sent people to the Venceremos Brigades, and we met with them and also there were brigades from all over the country meeting and then gathering together—white people, black people, Latinos. And it was in some ways a very crazy scene—

It was—what year was it—1971—and so the liberation movements of Blacks and Latinos, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican-Chicanos and whatever had never really been in the same place and were not exactly on the same page, so there was a lot of strife among the North Americans, and we were there in Cuba sort of being ambassadors for our country, but there was—Anyway, for some reason, I was able to handle that craziness, and so for the first time since high school I had a role because I could really—I could talk to everybody and everybody trusted me, and I think also because I don't need any sleep, and we were sleeping—

01:10:51 Q: Good criteria for a doctor.

Gottlieb: Totally. So we're in these tents with a million people, and we're working like a million hours a day; I mean we were cutting sugar cane. It's hard work. So what was hard for other people wasn't actually hard for me so I had something left over to be a kind of ambassador between the groups, so for the first time in a very long time, I felt like, "I could do this. Here's what I can do. I'm not like the person who is going to stand in front and sort of pound down, but

I can talk to people and figure things out and solve problems and whatever.” It was an amazing experience.

01:11:37 Q: And how long were you there?

Gottlieb: So we were there two months, and then one week on a boat, coming back, which is also when Angela [Y.] Davis was freed, and we were on the boat when she was freed out of jail.

There was a lot of stuff going on. It was just great, and I met people in Cuba and I was taken seriously as someone who had ideas, and I didn’t have to be anybody that I wasn’t. My own sort of shy, quiet style somehow worked there.

So I made really good friends with a medical student who took me under his wing—a medical student in Havana [Cuba]—and a couple of times I went to hospitals with him, and I saw a baby being born. So, you know, I was twenty-one, I was in a revolutionary country, and here was a revolutionary baby and I’m surrounded by revolutionaries. I went to the psychiatric hospital and I said, “This is what I want to do.” And I also realized. So, at that point, I also met people from places where anthropology was used in counter-insurgency research. There was a project called the Phoenix project, I think, where anthropology researchers would go and find out sort of how societies were structured, so they could train—it was used in Vietnam, it was used in Korea, Cambodia—and of course the world was black and white at that point, and I’m thinking, “Well, I don’t want to do that. I’m not going to be one of those people, you know, anthropologists, who

go and find people, sort of how a society works, so that my government can go in and unravel society and take it over.”

01:13:38 Q: This was all under the aegis of the U.S. government?

Gottlieb: Yeah, yeah. USAID [United States Agency for International Development], so that—of course there was more to anthropology than that, but that was my sort of black and white version of it. But also I realized being in Cuba—there were a lot of things which were happening very well, like their health care system, their educational system, but it was a Third World country, and I also realized that going to a place in the Third World and writing notes was not probably what was going to work for me.

So for a while I thought, maybe I can be a nurse, have a skill, and be an anthropologist and figure out some other way to be an anthropologist. When I came back, I worked in a hospital. There were no nurse practitioners at that point, and I realized that I am not someone who is going to take orders. That’s not who I am. And then my science person came back, and I realized, I can do this. I had to take all the pre-med courses, because I hadn’t done them but I had done them in high school. It was nothing for me to take those courses.

01:14:47 Q: So you were in Seattle then?

Gottlieb: So I was in Seattle then. We ended up for other reasons moving to Portland [Oregon], actually connected to the Strike because one of our good friends—so in the Strike, some people were arrested twice. We weren't, but people who were arrested in the second round of building occupations were initially kicked out of school and then were let back in. But he had initially gotten accepted to Reed [College], and as he was going to the airport, Columbia called and said, "You can come back. We were just kidding." And he kind of said, "Screw you. I'm going to Reed." And he was sort of a charismatic person, and a lot of people from Columbia, Columbia and Barnard, from our class actually, moved to Portland. And some people are still there. And it turned out that we ended up knowing more people in Portland than in Seattle, so we ended up going to Portland. That's where I took my pre-med classes.

So, but, being in Cuba and cutting sugar cane and just having that whole experience and just feeling validated for being able to be me within—whatever—what I still conceived of as a revolutionary movement, was a really important turning point and that's where I kind of got interested in medicine.

01:16:20 Q: So, I want to continue there, post-Barnard, post-medical schools, but let me go back and ask one question. Did you have any mentors among the faculty at Barnard? Or even within the movement?

Gottlieb: So, well, Dr. Rossman and Dr. Klass in anthropology. And then Dr. Gustafson in Russian, even though I wasn't interested in Russian. I mean I took Russian because my in-laws

were from Russia, and he had actually been my father-in-law's student at Yale, so he was just sort of a go-to person. I didn't actually understand the concept of mentors in a way. So they were sort of go-to people when I needed support or had some questions. I mean, as someone who is a mentor now, I realize. "God. Boy did I not take advantage." Yeah. So, I made my way. I was sort of topsy. I kind of found my own way in this world of higher education, which—I don't know if I would have made different decisions. I probably would have had—I probably would have made my decisions more thoughtfully, if I had had someone to think them through. Yeah. That's the answer to that question.

01:17:47 Q: Okay, so let's go on from there. You're in medical school. Where were you then in Portland?

Gottlieb: So I was in Portland in pre-med classes, living in a collective and so everyone else was doing quote-unquote political work at the time, and the hippie movement and the politics movement had kind of blended, so it was all sort of the lifestyle, you know, how I eat was political. It was that kind of stuff. I would have to say it was another time when class was not utmost in people's minds because people were living such a privileged life. They weren't working and they were living off of food stamps. I was the only one in the house working, actually earning money, but I was also going to school, and I could never not work. I could never not work and earn money. I don't have that kind of confidence that it is okay to not have money coming in. People were living off their parents. Anyway, I— my parents couldn't give

me any money anyway—But I was sort of a hippie. I knew I was different, but I was also part of that.

01:19:05 Q: A pre-med hippie. That's an interesting concept.

Gottlieb: Pre-med hippie. Right. Yeah, people, somebody whom we knew from Columbia, actually attacked me for wanting to go to medical school: “You’re just going to become part of the—.” Whatever. And I remember thinking, “This is your problem.” So I can understand why he would say that, but this is your problem, not my problem. Anyway, that was another point in history when I felt a little different from people because of my class background, I think. But anyway, so I was doing pre-med and living with hippies and doing what people did during that period of time. I would say that drugs were never a big part of what I did, because I wasn’t that interested, but people were doing those things as well.

01:20:02 Q: What about sex?

Gottlieb: You know, I had basically this relationship since I was fifteen, with a few little breaks which in retrospect were necessary if we’re going to make it to sixty-five, but which were painful in the moments, painful growing pains, but basically a pretty dull life in that realm.

01:20:35 Q: It’s definitely overrated.

Gottlieb: Yes, but it was definitely going on around us. People were—quote-unquote smashing monogamy, and it was—at different points—I mean I knew I was too insecure to actually do that, but I also knew on some level that I wouldn't do that anyway.

So, yeah. I think there were times when I didn't know if I didn't do things because I was too insecure, or too old school and backwards looking, or if I was actually smarter than everybody. And I kind of thought both in a way. But whatever it was, there was—so drugs, sex, all that stuff were a very small part of my period when that was a big thing, what people were doing. And at that point, people had already died of drugs. So, oh what's his name—Chris, he went to Columbia, he was in Sha Na Na. He had overdosed and died. People had died. Abby Kaplan, she didn't do drugs. She was beaten up in Washington and died of head injuries.

People had died of decisions, so I took that kind of stuff very seriously, the fact that my peers could die was sobering to me, about what it meant—and the Townhouse—that people made decisions and we didn't get to just keep on living, just because we were who we were and were on the right side or whatever, or that we were smarter and more liberated than other people. People pay a price for it and that was scary to me and honestly I didn't feel that brave. I didn't want to risk my life. So, and I don't know how other people processed. So Abby was in the women's group at Barnard in my last year there and she was killed, beaten up and killed at a demonstration, maybe in 1971, I think, in that fall. So, yeah. I knew this stuff was for keeps. So, yeah. Anyway.

But Portland was great years, and Columbia and Barnard were definitely the foundation of it because we were there because so many people from Columbia and Barnard had moved there, and had passed through, of course, because no one was doing anything except traveling and visiting friends, whatever. But in the meantime, I was doing pre-med—and didn't get into—so University of Oregon had a residency requirement and I didn't meet it, even though I lived there. So it was very hard to get into as an out-of-stater and I didn't get in, but I got into two medical schools in the east and ended up going to Tufts [University], so—

01:24:00 Q: So back East again.

Gottlieb: Not thinking that I would stay east.

01:24:03 Q: And Mark—

Gottlieb: So, he was still in Portland, spent another almost full year in Portland before he came back. He had gotten involved in a carpenters' collective that ended up changing his life, in that he became involved in the Carpenter's Union, and he is now the head of it in New England, but so that sort of formed his trajectory as he fully rebelled against his parents, who—as they would say —“You can be anything you want when you grow up—you can be a professor of sociology, you can be a professor of history”—and he said, “I'm not going to be any of those things.” Anyway, so I moved to Boston, still, so started medical school, recognizing that the years that I was out made me be—I was in a different cohort. There were a few older students, but the students who

had gone straight through had not gone through—were not part of the student movement. It was such a short time in history which was a really—you know I think, I mean, I don't think I was any less narcissistic than anybody thinking, we're it, we're the generation, this is so big, at some point. It was big and important, but it was also little, and it was very short, that cohort of us that feels a certain way about the world and sort of had that experience.

01:25:38 Q: And acted on it?

Gottlieb: Pardon me.

Q: And acted on it.

Gottlieb: And acted on it. We were really different, and the word that I became aware of, very early in medical school, was accountability; that it's not like people weren't nice, and I think people go to medical school mostly for good reasons, altruism, I mean some people want to earn a lot of money, but I think people want to be good people and do good things. But the idea that your life is accountable to something bigger than yourself? If I had even said that to my classmates, it would have been as if I said something in some other language. It wasn't part of what formed them, and it's not like I'm better than them. It's just what formed me. That's just what I was formed by. That's lifelong and that was different. I made a few friends there. I think I always make just a few friends, and I still have those few friends.

I would say that the demands of medical school were such that—like I knew everything that happened in Vietnam, but 1974-1978 a lot of things were happening around the world, including in Central America, and I don't really know those things in the same way. I just couldn't keep up with that. So I knew all that stuff happened in a certain way, but it's not sort of inside of me in the way that earlier things were. But, becoming, you know going to medical school definitely was, and as alienating as some aspects of it were—So this was before a lot of educational reform in medical school—students still in gross anatomy lab threw body parts around, you know, gross stuff that people would not get away with now, because we're kinder and gentler and people are oriented to this, and we recognize how traumatic it is to cut apart a body, but in those days it was still the bad old days.

I remember the first day of school somebody said, “Man, this is the first class that has twenty percent women.” And remember, actually probably a couple of years later, finally doing the math and realizing—oh, but there are still, it's still like four [sic: five] to one. Very few of us coming through, and a few women role models, but very few. It wasn't easy to be a medical student then, and it wasn't that easy to be a female medical student then.

01:28:48 Q: Yes, one of our classmates who went to medical school, and she went straight through, and she remembers the way they decided to shake up the mostly male class was to show them pornography movies so they could better understand women.

Gottlieb: Yeah, that's how—yeah, our GYN [gynecology] assignment was—so the lecture, the one GYN lecture, was clips of pornography and then somebody doing a pelvic exam—now it would be sort of America's funniest home video—but then it was—There was a woman. She could have been dead; she literally could have been dead. She wasn't but she could have been dead. She was like this slab on a table completely passive, and some man comes and sort of drapes her in this way that is supposed to be respectful, completely objectifying her, and does a pelvic exam with a total straight face, doesn't say what he is doing, whatever, and then pornography. And then dermatology was also pornography slides, which I—the activist in me tried to do something about, and I got in a ton of trouble.

01:30:01 Q: You did speak up.

Gottlieb: Yeah. So she would have been even earlier than me and it probably would have been worse, because there would have been less of a vocabulary for talking about this. Yeah, and now it is more than fifty percent in most classes and I feel like—yep—we were the pioneers.

01:30:29 Q: So where did you go from there?

Gottlieb: And I did a residency at Boston [Massachusetts] VA Hospital. Lots of men. Very few women patients. But it was a great residency.

01:30:43 Q: This was in psychiatry?

Gottlieb: This was in internal medicine. So I knew that I wanted to work in a community health center. I had no idea what that would mean, but I knew, because the community health clinic movement was just sort of being born as I entered medical school. So I knew I wanted to do community health.

At that time, people didn't talk about primary care, but I knew I wanted to work in a health, in a community setting. And what I really loved in medicine was surgery. I loved it. I loved being in the hospital, I loved being there all hours, I loved—you know I sew. I was good at it, but I knew I didn't want that life. And I had no vision of how that might fit into what I thought my purpose was, serving communities and stuff like that. Now people go into surgery and then travel all over the world and do global health; there was no version of surgery except that you were there in the hospital, with mostly awful men. So anyway. So I would have loved to have done that, but I also just loved taking care of patients and I think I made the right choice, in doing what I do.

So I started working in community health centers, when I finished my residency. The one in my neighborhood where I wanted to work only had a very part-time opening, so I worked at actually one of the two first health clinics in the country, initially—

01:32:21 Q : And that was at—

Gottlieb: Columbia Point. So it was started by [H.] Jack Geiger in Boston. So he started two, one in Bolivar County, MS [Mississippi] and one at Columbia Point [Boston]. Jack Geiger. So, I worked at the Columbia Point one until the one in my own community had a real opening. So I've been there basically my whole career, for thirty-four years.

01:32:57 Q: Have you seen a lot of changes? Has the money been flowing?

Gottlieb: You know I've seen lots of—So, I started medical school in the post-Great Society era when there was a lot of money put into community health centers, for all kinds of good reasons, and not such good reasons, but anyway, there was largess, and then I kind of came to when the Republicans were in power and then suddenly there was no money. And that was kind of a stark change, because the model was based on a public health, community health, community assessment model, and then suddenly we have to have systems that are financially accountable, without actually the wherewithal or the infrastructure to do that. So it was quite a rude awakening, not just for me, but for everybody in the health center movement. I went to public health school at that point because I felt like—I also had had three kids in the meantime, so my brain—

Q: By the way.

Gottlieb: By the way. So the world had changed and what was needed for what I was doing to be successful, sustainable required a skill set that I didn't have, which was sort of planning and

understanding of health care finances and stuff like that. Plus I had gone straight from—well, I had my first child in my last year of residency, and then two other kids, and I felt I didn't have a brain left, you know, I couldn't really think. Public health school, I probably could have done without public health school but with three little kids, I had to have the structure, so I went to public health school sort of part-time just to get that skill set. And became medical director, and started not only doing clinical stuff but like program planning and policy stuff. So, yeah, it was really—it wasn't like an evolution—where we went from Kennedy and the legislation that established the community health centers, the Great Society, to where we were. It was like—chop—block grant and restricted funding and all this stuff. It was really stark.

So, I saw that change and then other changes, somewhat more for the better, people actually valuing primary care, so that what I did wasn't just sort of the lowest level possible field in the medical profession, to people actually recognizing that there is no system without a primary care system. So I've seen that, and that's good.

So I am part—my health center is affiliated with Brigham and Women's Hospital, which is part of Harvard, so I've been part of Harvard Medical School for many years now. There's a whole interesting history to that because they're Harvard and have their own value structure. What they value is not necessarily the community and not necessarily primary care, so that's been a sort—how do I advocate for what I do in a system that doesn't really see it and doesn't really value it? So that's been interesting. The same political skill set—there's always a place, a struggle somewhere to apply it to, and that's been one of the recent struggles.

01:03:54 Q: So in terms of, well, that's a lot to do, in relation to your children, your husband, all that—were there other particular political-social movements or causes that you have been involved with, in the course of your career?

Gottlieb: Um.

Q: I mean, that in itself has been a major cause.

Gottlieb: I think the health center movement. I mean, it is a movement and I consider myself to be part of that, and it's taken a variety of forms, and I think that to literally work there and devote my whole life to that is one form, is a different kind of activism because it's what I do, it's what I do for a living. But I would say that many of the decisions that I have made have kind of been connected to that, so becoming medical director and getting involved in community health to try to have that voice speak more loudly, as a policy, as a kind of organic extension of that.

So within that, HIV [Human Immunodeficiency Virus], I mean we were among—it's hard to go back to that time when nobody understood what HIV was, but at a community health center, we started to see women with HIV, women who were monogamous with HIV, so how did that happen? Uncovering how that happened and recognizing there was another kind of epidemic going on, we could do that because we were there and we saw it and we asked the right questions, so to become connected with the HIV movement early on, when it was still connected

and identified as a gay men's movement—you know—issue and to begin to articulate that it was really something more than that, that for sure, but something more than that. So that has certainly been a political movement that I have identified with. I felt like I've played some role in that in helping to define what that was and what that meant, particularly for minority communities. And other aspects of public health, too.

So Boston had a very interesting history, where in the early '90s, it was identified that there were severe racial disparities in infant mortality, and as the medical director of my health center, the roots of that were actually fairly clear to me from the kind of work that I had to do. So I'm an internist, but as a medical director I really had to learn about all the things that the health center did—pediatrics, obstetrics, midwifery, and when we had bad outcomes, I had to look at them, and the bad outcomes we had in our midwifery practice were very much related to social conditions, so nobody used the word social determinants at that point, but that's what it was. You know, you read through records and you realize that this woman, whose baby died, had six phone numbers during a very brief pregnancy. This is not good. This is a marker of something bad. So from the vantage point of really understanding community health the way I had to do my job, when that kind of publicity—so someone did a series of articles in the Boston Globe about racial disparities and it mobilized the city around racial disparities, and what that actually meant. And because I was doing what I was doing, I could play a role in that.

So I had been trying to tell my health center hospital, we need to do this, they were completely blind. As soon as the Globe series came out, they were like, why don't you come and speak at the

State house, why don't —Fine, I'll do anything. Get me the money. Give me the money so I can do the program that I've been asking to do. PS, for the past five years. You know, whatever, but that's how it goes. The being part of I think helping to define what social determinants are, and I gets back to class and racism and things that were my earliest sort of understandings, feels totally —it's all the same, it's all connected—and to be able to play a role in that on a policy level, but also just on a day to day level with my patients feels very integrated. And then to be able to teach that, so I teach at the School of Public Health and I teach medical students—

01:42:19 Q: At Tufts?

Gottlieb: At Harvard. So to be able to do that and then have that impact on another generation, so I'm still not a scholar. I don't do a ton of scholarly writing. I do a little bit. But that's what I can do. I can teach people and have done a ton of teaching, and I love teaching, and I'm teacher of teachers and evaluator of teachers—and that's become a whole another thing, but I think it all stems from that I have something to teach that I really care about and if you've got that, you learn to do it well, because it matters.

01:43:07 Q: And it goes back to that sense that you're not just one entity, that you do have responsibility to help the rest of society, which has obviously been a huge core theme in your life. So do you want to say anything about your kids?

Gottlieb: My kids. I have three kids. Well, so one thing I will say related to my whole trajectory and women and whatever, so I had my older daughter when I was a resident because—why did I do—because I’m crazy—

Q: Take on another job!

Gottlieb: You know, like a lot of people, “Oh, it’s going to take me a long time to get pregnant so I’ve got to start now.” It’s like such a fallacy. So, I was a third year resident. There were no policies in place. I was the first woman resident to have a child. There were absolutely no policies. I had a seventeen day maternity leave, and luckily Mark was home writing a book, so he

—

01:44:03 Q: So he writes in addition to—

Gottlieb: Yeah, he’s much more of a scholar than I am. He actually did everything his family—other than getting a PhD—he is totally everything that they would have wanted. Plus, he’s a labor leader. He’s the head of the Carpenter’s Union and he’s written several histories of the Carpenter’s Union. He wrote a history of a political campaign in Boston around [Massachusetts Ballot] Question 2, a ballot initiative. He writes more than most scholars. It was just in his mother’s milk, whatever. That’s what he was meant to be, but he is also the head of the whole regional New England Council of Carpenters, and he’s a political leader and whatever. That’s what he does. And you can bet that I don’t have many colleagues who do all that. But anyway.

01:45:00 Q: But he was at home at the time of your first child.

Gottlieb: He was at home writing his first book, which worked out super well. He would bring her in and I would nurse her and—what the heck—I’m going to work, I’m going to run Codes, since I was a senior resident. She came to Codes and would be at my breast. This is just the way it’s going to be. I was not that shy. I had to do it, whatever.

So then when my son was born, I was already working at Brookside. They still didn’t have a maternity leave policy for doctors, but luckily a nurse was pregnant at the same time, so they gave me the same leave that she had, and then when Eva was born, I said that” if you don’t give me three months, I’m going to quit.” Because at that point, I had three under five, so they gave me three months, but I still had to be on call.

So, but I lived three blocks from my house—from my work, my health center, so that really helps. So my father died in 1989, my mother moved in with us in 1993 and lived with us until she died, five years ago, and was a major part of taking care of the kids. Because, as an Italian woman, she had no purpose, she was withering away after my father died. So she made my life possible and she also started a whole life in Boston. That’s a whole other story, but anyway.

So that is sort of how my kids came about, and they’ve all been—they were in public schools. My older daughter had a rough time, which I won’t get into, so it’s not been clear sailing. I could

not write one of those Christmas letters about how perfect our family life is, but we're sturdy and we're good. So she's a psychologist and works at a community health center, part-time and part-time at a practice. She's amazing at what she does, because it is a life calling. This is what she should be doing. She has a degree in creative writing and is a wonderful writer and integrates creative therapy into what she does. So she's pretty cool. She doesn't have a life partner. She just broke up with her boyfriend and hopes she gets one. I don't have any grandchildren, but do have a grand-dog. She's my oldest, and everyone lives close by, so she lives in the neighboring community.

My son, after—he graduated with a degree in history, and then he became a labor organizer, then he went off to [University of] Cambridge and studied over there, and decided he wanted to go to medical school. So he just finished yesterday, his third year at Brown [University], and he is going to go into primary care. And Mark says, “he did my careers, now he's going to do yours.” And then Eva is the youngest and she—she lives in Providence [Rhode Island], Eva lives in downtown Boston. She went to NYU, and at the point she got into NYU, she said, “Oh my God, I should have gone to Barnard. It's so interesting.” She applied early and got in, and she had visited Barnard, and then as soon as she got into NYU she realized, “I could have gone to Barnard.” So it's interesting. Like, I could have told you that. But, anyway. But she did fine there and went on to the [Robert F.] Wagner School [of Public Service] and got a degree in urban policy and planning, and she has this private sector job, but does public—so she gets a private sector salary and wears heels this big [gestures]—she's very tall and wears heels this big—you

know, Louis Vuitton hand bags, this kind of thing. We're all like, "Where did you come from?" and does very interesting large affordable housing, mixed housing things.

All of our kids have been affected by our politics and who we are. And they all in their different ways are accountable and see their lives as doing good. It really resonates, so we can joke about the Louis Vuitton bag, which she bought with her first bonus, but she's like a rabid dog when it comes to fighting for certain things. So it's just interesting. So, yeah, so those are my kids.

01:49:56 Q: So, just a few more questions, which could be answered at great length or succinctly, whatever. One would be—these ask for superlatives, which I could never answer myself—what would you say you are most proud of? In your life? Today? I mean you've had—in career, family, in any area.

Gottlieb: I would say that I am most proud of being able to listen to people very well. And I think I mentioned that is something that I trace right back to my father. And I feel it's—therefore, how I do things is shaped by that. So it is not an accomplishment. It's an attribute, I guess I would say. There have been enough tough moments as a parent that I can't easily say that I am most proud of being a parent or whatever, because there's a fair amount of pain there. So I can't say that exactly. And if I were to say it's my career, it feels like it leaves out an important part. I guess that's why I would go to something about who I am and how I do things.

01:51:28 Q: Good, good. Okay, what about spirituality and religion? What role do they play in your life. Were you involved with that as part of your growing up years? Have you raised your children in any faith? Does it sustain you in your activism, whatever?

Gottlieb: No, this is a really interesting question. So my father was Jewish, non-practicing, my mother was—

Q: Non-practicing?

Gottlieb: —But identified as Jewish in a secular way, and my mother was Italian Catholic, also non-practicing. So we grew up celebrating all of the feasts, not the fasts, but in a secular way in a place where people were very identified in their religion. So I think this sort of motif of feeling different—I would go to catechism with my friends, it was the Baltimore Catechism, and I wanted to be able to know what this was And—I would go to synagogue with my friends and if you're not raised in it, you're not part of it. I think that I would have been religious if I had been raised that way. So when I was growing up, it was a quest, but I never found it.

My kids went to public schools. When my daughter—my oldest daughter—was in fourth grade, she asked if we would get her a Star of David to wear. Nobody in any generation of our family had ever asked that. It turned out she was not only the only White kid in the school that she happened to be in, but she was the only Jew, and that one of the teachers was saying really anti-Semitic things.

So Mark's parents are Holocaust survivors. But also secularly identified. So she knew she was Jewish and she knew that was wrong, and she wanted to make a statement. So at that point we connected with a workman's cooperative *schul*, sort of like a secular school that all of the kids went to. We felt like growing up as such a minority that I wanted them to have some sense of being Jewish, that they could then figure out. So we did that, and that was a nice thing and most people in the schul are Jewish, but not all of them. Some people are like lesbian couples who wanted to bring their kid into something and this was welcoming, and neither of them were Jewish. Everybody came for this. So that's how we brought up our kids. And I think they identify as being Jewish in a certain way.

I think that I—spirituality is definitely a part of who I am and what I am, yeah in sort of a nonreligious sense. Meditation and yoga and relaxation and stuff I bring to my patients as well, and definitely at different struggle points in my life have been, have sort of loomed larger. So I think it is sort of like growing up before Title IX, like I would have been a jock and I would have been a deeply religious person. If I had been raised slightly differently. But I don't think—well, I couldn't just jump into a religion, even though I sort of tried to. So, spirituality. Sort of long-winded.

01:55:19 Q: No, an excellent answer. So, what if you could go back and whisper in the ear of the young woman who entered Barnard for the first time, or who left Barnard, what would you say to that young lady?

Gottlieb: I would definitely tell her to find a mentor, or three or five. Don't go it alone. That would be one thing. Did you say one thing?

Q: No, it can be anything.

Gottlieb: Another thing that I would say—so the one thing that I did do right— that I wish students would do more of is—do things you are not good at, try things out that are kind of scary for you. Take things that you've never done. I really totally believe in the liberal arts education. I really do, and I think is really good to not be good at things and to work your way through and maybe you will be good, and maybe you won't be good, and then you'll be humble and you'll understand what it is to have to work hard at something. I think especially really smart people, like kind of things come easily, and that doesn't always build character. So, yeah, do things that you're not good at. Do things you're afraid of. Do things that you think, I can never do that. Well, do it. Take one class in math. So, yes. So, I kind of did do that and I think that's good. Those two things.

01:57:08 Q: So, what do you see for the future? Are there things you have concerns about? Are there aspirations you still hope to achieve?

Gottlieb: Yeah. So for me, personally, I've spent my life at my health center working—I mean I do a lot of other things besides that, but I've been at the same health center for 34 years. And

there are lots of changes in health care, and I want to—so I came in at a time when people were really excited about community health centers. It's a different time now. And my generation is kind of gone. So what it means to be excited about doing this kind of work is different, but I want to make sure that people are excited about it and that it's an exciting place. And we're not there yet.

So I hope that I can be part of making sure that people will want to work at health centers, and that there will be sort of a new generation of people who want to do what I did, even though it is not really what I did.

01:58:08 Q: Because you were in a different part of the cycle.

Gottlieb: So, yeah. Stepping into that river thirty some odd years later. So that's something. And I have some junior colleagues that I am mentoring that I am hoping can sort of make it through those hard times now in transitions in primary care to kind of stick with it and do it, because then when you get to the end and you've been some place thirty-four years, it's a knockout. It is amazing to know people for that long, to take care of multiple generations of people. It's amazing. So, if you move around you don't get to do that. So I hope that. So I am supposed to, at some point, be promoted to full professor and Harvard does not make it easy. At every point I was the first person from the community to be advanced to that level. Again, I'm not a scholar. It's not something I've aspired to, but it is very important to people coming through, doing what I do, that you can get to be a full professor, cause it matters to them. So, that's going to happen.

What I need to do to make that happen is so hard, at every point it's been so hard. It's been a year and a half and I'm still gathering materials, gathering international recognition of what I did—it's like on some level I can easily say I don't, why do I want to do this? I mean my kids keep asking, "so what do you get out of that?" Nothing, I don't get any money, whatever, I get that. So I want that to happen and I hope that happens in the next six to nine months.

And I was just given a position—there's a center for primary care at Harvard Medical School—and I was just given a position to sort of create this position in community health, and all through the time I worked at HMS, I've done various things, and there have been sort of momentum and we get this going, and then nobody cares about it and then there's a conflict with something else in the curriculum, so it's sort of falls out the bottom. And then we try again, and we—so this is the first time where there seems to be somebody who actually cares that there's a sustained something around the work that I do. It's a little daunting, because I can't blame it on anything, I can't say, they don't care. Somebody cares enough to make this happen. So now I have to make something happen, that hopefully will be sustained.

And that's that. And the last thing is that I want grandchildren so I hope that all my kids, or some of my kids, get to that point, where, sort of in that cycle of my life, I can step into that stream, whatever that stream is. My friend Linda, in our class, is about to have her 11th, and that just seems so unfair. How come she has eleven? Well, she had four kids, so that helps, and she started

really young. So, anyway, that's something else. But that's out of my control. Everything else is sort of in my control.

02:01:50 Q: Okay, is there anything else we haven't touched on—that you feel should be included in this?

Gottlieb: Yes. I think not. Thank you for the opportunity.

02:01:46 Q: Well, it's fantastic. Thank you for sharing your life with us; with everybody. That's great. It's been wonderful.

Gottlieb: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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