

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Loren Wissner Greene 2015

Edited 3.1.2016

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Loren Wissner Greene, MD, MA, conducted by Michelle Patrick on April 10, 2015. This interview is part of the Barnard Class of 1971 Oral History Project.

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

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project

Interviewee: Loren Wissner Greene

Location: home of Michelle Patrick,
New York City

Interviewer: Michelle Patrick

Date: April 10, 2015

00:01:43 Q: Why don't you start by—say who you are and—

Q2 [videographer]: —and spell your name.

Greene: Okay, I am Loren, L-O-R-E-N, Wissner, W-I-S-S-N-E-R, Greene, G-R-E-E-N-E.

Q: And you're the Class of 1971, Barnard College.

Greene: Yes.

Q: And you're being interviewed by Michelle Patrick, on April 10th, 2015.Greene: We're in a time capsule. Did you know that *Back to the Future* was supposed to be about 2015?

Q: No!

Greene: Isn't that cool? Here we are! I know Michael Fox, too.

00:02:41 Q: Oh, okay. Does he need a script? We'll do that later. So, Loren, can you tell me where you're from, where you grew up, what kind of family you came from—professional, working class, academic?

Greene: Sure. I grew up in Queens until I went into high school. In 1964, I got into what was then called [The High School of] Music & Art before it became [Fiorella H.] LaGuardia [High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts]. And my mother was teaching in Great Neck. Both of my parents were teachers. And the choice was, I could go with my mother to Great Neck South High School, or I could commute for almost two hours from Queens to Music & Art. I decided I didn't want to commute, and I wanted to go to the great high school she had told me about, in Great Neck. So I started high school in Great Neck, and I had just skipped a grade in junior high school in New York City, and I thought I was really smart, because I was in this "SP" [Special Program] class. So I signed up in high school for all the "smart" classes, meaning Honors English, Honors this, Honors that.

And all of a sudden, there were kids older than I was, who were really smart, and a year older than I was. And all of a sudden, I had a bit of humility when I realized there were smarter kids around who were a year older than I was. I got myself out of Honors English, into regular English, which was hard enough. And other subjects, so I didn't have to be pretending I was a whiz kid a year older than I was, because I couldn't handle it otherwise.

So I started high school that way and the kids were quite smart, in my regular classes. In Great Neck, we were commuting. I commuted in a car with my mom and with her friend, Charlotte Redlener. And the reason why that's important is Charlotte Redlener had three sons, and my mother had three daughters, and we were all commuting in these carpools back and forth. Sometimes with one or the other of her sons. One of her sons, Irwin Redlener, went on to become the person who works with Paul Simon, who started the homeless vans for kids' health with the Children's Health Fund. And he became, I think, chairman of

pediatrics at Montefiore [Medical Center], then professor of Clinical Population and Family Health and director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, and one of ten members of the National Commission on Children and Disasters after 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina - but he was in my car, and as a matter of fact I had one of his brother's sweaters for many years after these days of carpooling together. . This was 1964, and I was commuting with my mother and her friend Charlotte, and it was very embarrassing.

[00:05:23.25] Q: To be with your mother?

Greene: To be with my mother! To go to school with my mother every day. And I could not stay after school to participate in afterschool activities. So, I insisted, and I don't know who else insisted, but maybe me as the oldest of three girls, that I didn't want to commute anymore in a car, and that my parents should buy a house in Great Neck, not thinking what that meant financially to my parents.

Q: If they loved you, they'd buy the house—

Greene: If they loved me. This was '64 and they bought a house in Great Neck, mortgaging up to their gills to afford a house in Great Neck in those days.

Q: That's really sweet.

Greene: So we had the house in Great Neck, and we moved in in October, so I only had a month-and-a-half of commuting, before I could hang out after school and start making friends, as opposed to meeting my mother after school to drive home to Queens. So that was

a big success. I kind of told my parents what I wanted, and they sort of tried to do it, which was kind of amazing—

Q: You have very indulgent and adoring parents.

Greene: I did. And they were very nice. My job was to do well in school, and their job was to get me what I wanted in a sense, but it wasn't at all as angry or demanding as that. But I think that they wanted to move to Great Neck too.

00:06:34 Q: They were both teachers?

Greene: Both teachers. My father taught English in Queens, at the first agricultural high school in Queens, called John Bowne High School, near Queens College, where you had to have a B+ average to get into high school there. In those days. It's not the same place anymore.

Q: To learn agriculture?

Greene: And he used to bring home eggs and tomatoes and lettuce, and I don't know what else. But I remember the eggs and tomatoes and lettuce that he would bring home from school. So we'd have fresh eggs from the chickens at John Bowne High School.

Q: Then he had to commute? Because you didn't want to.

Greene: No, no, he would have commuted anyway. We lived in Laurelton on the south shore Queens, near JFK Airport, where you could hear the sonic booms of the airplanes. We moved to Great Neck on the North Shore of Long Island, so it was closer, I think, for him to commute to his school. My mother had to learn to drive in the meantime. I didn't quite

understand what was happening, but my mother had learned to drive just before when she started working in Queens schools before she had a job in Great Neck.

00:07:36 Q: So, this high school that you ended up in, you were pretty comfortable there?

Greene: I was comfortable, but I had to find my niche in the high school. That took some time, but—

[00:07:47.06]Q: What was your niche?

Greene: I found a group of kids, and eventually by my senior year I was really into this niche. We used to make an underground newspaper which we called *Planet V News*. And the caption was, “It’s V, not Five.” We met every Friday night to watch *Star Trek* together. It was just fun, and I really liked it. This crowd of kids was semi-intellectual, and we would merge with the more intellectual kids, and we would go on things like peace marches together. It was like left-wing intellectual—and fun. *Star Trek* and *Stranger in a Strange Land* and “grokking” and all [term from *Stranger in a Strange Land*].

My mother taught in an inter-age classroom, which is very important—

[00:08:39.21] Q: What is that?

Greene: She taught three grades with one and then two other teachers in the same large room. It used to be fourth, fifth, sixth grade. Then it became—when they moved sixth to middle school—third, fourth, fifth grade.

Q: Like a Montessori school.

Greene: No, it was a regular public school, but she started the concept of an inter-age classroom. If you were doing really well in math, you could meet with one math group that was doing a project, and if you needed more help, you got help in another group. You could be all over the place in different groups, and there were always different projects in groups, and they were moving around.

One of my two younger sisters actually ended up in her classrooms for some of the time. That was kind of awkward in certain ways, and I guess nice in certain ways, but my mother went out of her way to show that she wasn't favoring her, that kind of thing. But there were three teachers in the classroom, and the two other teachers in the classroom eventually bought two houses up the block from my mother's and father's house. On Halloween, the elementary kids loved to come to trick-or-treat on their teachers' block.

00:09:39 : Greene: Eventually we had three teachers in a row on the block, and all the kids from the classes would know where to trick-or-treat and where to hang out on the Christmas holidays. Because up the block, one of my mother's friends Maureen Miletta always had a big Christmas thing of caroling in the street with choral singing and instruments, so we would go from house to house and know where everybody was. In the meantime, I had my friends, we were hanging out—

Q: Sounds like you were having a great time.

Greene: I had a great time in high school, but I was studying very hard, and I was also very busy competing to make sure I was at the top of a class of kids a year older than me, because

by then it was daunting and I had to be in the best classes with the best kids, and I was really into the competition of it all at the same time.

So my mother's good friend's sister was Helen McCann, who was the chairman of Admissions to Barnard College—

00:10:39 Q: Oh, I remember! Helen McCann—

Greene: Helen McCann was Maureen Miletta's sister. Maureen had gone to Barnard when her older sister, Helen, was already there. So Maureen Miletta got my mother interested in my applying to Barnard College, which I hadn't really paid any attention to in those days. It wasn't my original decision to apply to Barnard College—

00:10:59 Q: What colleges were you thinking of?

Greene: I was applying to Stony Brook. I wanted to go to Cornell School of Agriculture to become a veterinarian, and I always loved things with animals and nature and everything else, and that was kind of my plan, to go to Cornell or go to Stony Brook. My parents didn't really have enough money to afford Barnard College, so the deal was that if I went to Barnard College—and I think the tuition was under \$2,000 a year in those days, they didn't have enough money to afford \$2,000 plus room and board—that I would have to get some loans and they wouldn't pay for room and board, but I lived within fifty miles of Barnard and Barnard wasn't offering any housing, if you remember, the freshman year.

Q: I do. Was fifty miles the cut-off point?

Greene: That was the radius. It was a radius of fifty miles, and so we were within fifty miles. Before I started, there was a tea party, or something like that. A wine and cheese, iced tea thing on Long Island, at some fancy house on Long Island, that I went to that summer. So in August, before school started, I met some of my “new” friends from Barnard College, who I became friendly with. But I was always friendly with them, including Mary Gorayeb, Cathy Biddick, Maureen Stratton, and Mary Gordon.

[00:12:40.13] Q: I’m not knowing any of these people.

Greene: It was the group of kids who had gone to Catholic school in Queens or Long Island. And they seemed to be very tight friends, and they had a very strict education with certain books that they had to read. I remember this meeting was very influential, because they had read *War and Peace* and *Crime and Punishment*, and I hadn’t read any of the stuff. Although I was in some great classes in Great Neck, for some reason I hadn’t gotten to the point where I was reading these books, or I wasn’t reading these books for fun. I was reading, but I hadn’t read them. So I remember before I went to Barnard, I had to read *Crime and Punishment*. That was my assignment to myself because of this meeting. I couldn’t show up at Barnard without having read—

[00:13:27.27] Q: You were a little competitive, huh?!

Greene: Oh, I was always very competitive. But I had to read *Crime and Punishment* before I could show up at Barnard because of this meeting.

Q: You couldn’t hold your head up!

Greene: No, all these girls going to Barnard were *obviously* far ahead of me in their reading, and whatever I knew, it wasn't enough in terms of reading. So I was busy reading, reading, reading before I got to Barnard. So I had read *Crime and Punishment* before I got there, as if that was a prerequisite for some reason.

Q: It *seemed* to be, at the time.

Greene: It was *my* prerequisite that I'd given myself. So anyhow, I showed up at Barnard College and—

00:14:03 Q: And this is when? Interview or freshman week?

Greene: The Long Island party was for admitted students at the end of the summer before we started.

Oh, my interview! That's actually an interesting story. So Maureen Miletta got me in touch to fill out an application to get an interview, and my parents—I got into the other schools, so my parents said, "If you go to the other schools, we can pay for room and board, but if you go to Barnard, we'll only be able to help pay for the tuition, and you'll get some loans," whatever, they weren't going to pay for room and board. But somehow or other, I think Maureen talked my mother and me into my going to Barnard, when I got into the other schools.

So I applied and I went to my interview and the interview was with Helen McCann, Director of Admissions. And I kept thinking, what if I hadn't interviewed with her, would I have really gotten into Barnard? I was busy questioning—these people are reading *Crime and Punishment*, maybe they deserved to get into Barnard more than I did. I was getting a little nervous about that. She asked me what I was reading for fun, and right then I was in the

middle of the J.R.R. Tolkien series. So she said, “Well, why is it so much fun?” And I said, “Well, all my friends are reading it, and we write each other notes in school in Elvish [invented language].” And she said, “What do you mean?” One of my friends had transliterated Elvish into phonetic language. So she said, “Write me a note in Elvish.” So I’m the first and only, probably, person, that applied to Barnard College, to write a letter of thanks to the Director of Admissions in Elvish. With the translation of what I had written in English.

Q: And a few thoughts about *War and Peace*!

Greene: I hadn’t read that yet! I was up to that! But anyhow, I had read *Crime and Punishment* by then so it was okay. I was reading *Crime and Punishment* at the same time I was writing thank you letters for my interview in Elvish.

Q: So you got in everywhere—

Greene: I am the only Elvish writer who ever got into Barnard College, I assure you.

Q: Maybe not! You never know. It’s been many years.

Greene: Well, maybe somebody else had read all of Tolkien by then, too. Anyhow, that’s how I got into Barnard College.

So I got into Barnard College and my parents and I had decided that it was better I go to Barnard, and I started by commuting. The first thing I did was sign up for activities. It was very, very important to me, because I wanted to meet people and know people. The most important activity I did sign up for and stay in—I had signed up for some more activities which I dropped and were less important to me—was PACT— P-A-C-T— Program to

Activate Community Talent, which was part of Citizenship Council, do you remember those names?

Q: No, I signed up for going on dates, and more dates.

Greene: Well, that was a good social activity! So anyhow, in PACT, you were supposed to volunteer for two afternoons a week and I only had, with my very busy schedule, because I was signing up for too many courses also, I could only do one afternoon a week. So Juan González, who is now I think a reporter for *The Daily News* or something like that? He was in charge of Citizenship Council and Don Kedell was in charge of PACT.

[00:17:31.21] Q: Yeah. Was he at Columbia at the time?

Greene: They were at Columbia at the time, and probably a few years ahead of us.

Q: Yes, he would've been.

Greene: Juan was in charge of Citizenship Council. He said to me, that if I could only do one afternoon a week, I should be the telephone coordinator for the day. And I said, "What's that?" That meant that if we took kids from the community on trips every Wednesday afternoon, that I should call up the other volunteers on Tuesday evening, to make sure that they were all showing up, so we had enough volunteers every Wednesday for our thing. So every Tuesday night, I would call up Norman Greene, among the other people I would call up. And he sort of thought—we would have these long discussions—he sort of thought I was calling him up once a week to have a long discussion. It became fun and we became friends. Every Wednesday, we would take—together, the two of us—would take a group of kids who were "underprivileged" from the neighborhood, who were mostly minority kids—kids of

color, they would be called nowadays—from the neighborhood, which was then not such a wonderful neighborhood as it now is, a little bit south and east of Broadway, on trips to the Statue of Liberty, to the Museum of Natural History—

00:18:49 Q: And you decided this worked so well that you'd get married!

Greene: Well, sort of, that's what happened. So anyhow, Norman was dating somebody else from our class at the same time. I'm not going to mention her name, but she's interesting.

Q: I'm not even sure I would know the name.

Greene: You might. But anyway, I don't want—so she was the kind—first of all she had blonde hair, and she wore a little black velvet headband, so she looked kind of like Walt Disney [animated film character]—

Q: I'm sure I didn't know her.

Greene: —*Alice in Wonderland*. You know Walt Disney, with the little headband and the blonde hair? Norman was really smitten with the blonde hair and the little headband, with long straight hair.

Q: I didn't know we had anyone like that in our class.

Greene: She was. Anyway, he would call her up, and she would have a date for breakfast, a date for lunch, and a date for dinner.

Q: Oh, she was on *my* track!

Greene: So she would fit him in. I think all her food was catered by the dates at Barnard. I don't know if she needed any food money whatsoever, because she would have a different date and she would kind of fit him into her schedule.

Anyhow, he kind of got the drift that she wasn't *as* interested in him as he was interested in her, and there were some other dates going on, but it took him a while to come to this conclusion. But meanwhile, Norman and I were having nice Wednesday afternoons taking kids on trips. Then I got mono.

00:20:32 Q: When would this have been?

Greene: November.

Q: November of freshman year?

Greene: November of freshman year, on Thanksgiving morning I came downstairs and I said to my mother, "I think I have mono." My mother said, "Well, you just think it's fashionable to have mono." And I said, "No, I really think I have mono." Anyhow, subsequently my face swelled up so my eyes were little slits. I couldn't swallow anything. I had such a bad case of mono that the GP [general practitioner] who we saw came to my house. I don't know if anyone ever does that anymore.

Q: They used to though, then.

Greene: And he would make me go to North Shore Hospital, to get blood counts, CBC's [complete blood counts], to make sure I wasn't developing leukemia. He was really concerned, I had a really bad case of mono[nucleosis]. So I'd go there and I learned to say

“CBC” and “complete heterophile,” which was the medical code word—and they would do mono tests, too—heterophile is the mono test, but they’re not so accurate even today. But my heterophile test hadn’t turned positive for a long time, so it was still kind of “leukemia-question mark versus mono” for the diagnosis.

Q: Your parents must’ve been beside themselves.

Greene: They were beside themselves. On the other hand, I stayed home between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Q: That’s a long time to miss.

Greene: I was really sick, and I really couldn’t handle it. I remember they had *The Three Faces of Eve* on TV, for five days, and it was sort of like, all I could do was get up and watch *The Three Faces of Eve* for an hour, which I learned to do because it was on Channel 13. It was sort of the mono movie in my head. Part of the mono mind experience was to watch this thing, and I’ve never seen it since then, but it sort of was incorporated into the whole thing of mono.

Q: It would be interesting to see if any memories flash if you saw it now.

Greene: Oh, absolutely. But I had never heard of the movie before, I had never seen the movie before, and I’ve never seen the movie after.

Q: A woman in distress.

Greene: Yeah, which—isn’t this the one with the split personalities—which people are still arguing about, whether there is such a thing.

[00:22:49.11] Q: Well now it's called some disorder—

Greene: Split personality—no, dysthymic something or other.

Q: Detachment disorder. I don't want to waste time on it, but it is where something traumatic has happened in your childhood, so you develop another personality that is stronger to deal with the bad stuff, and you remain safe.

Greene: Kind of like *Psycho*, but [laughs]—

Q: You don't see things that aren't there, or hear things that aren't there, but in general, you just have another personality that is tougher and stronger and has strategies for dealing with whatever agony the “real you” cannot deal with.

Greene: So what happened because of my mono was, Norman started calling *me* up, because he wasn't hearing from me on Tuesday nights. We arranged to have our first date when I could travel. Because you can't travel in crowded conditions like subways or you might rupture your spleen, which gets very swollen after mono. So that was the very strict rules of it all, so I think I couldn't go out with him until the end of January. I had come back at the beginning of January, whenever Christmas vacation was over—

Q: You missed a lot of school.

Greene: I missed a lot of school. The good news about mono was I was allowed to drop all of the classes I wasn't doing well in anyway, because I was so busy doing everything, including enrolling in too many classes, including being very active with PACT and running around trying to join WKCR, the radio station, and doing other things which really were not that

important to me, except that I wanted to throw myself in and meet people and get involved and probably go on dates, but they weren't so forthcoming *yet*. But then we started going out.

So I dropped courses, and I ended up doing very well in the courses that I had left because I could sit and read, because I didn't have to go into school until I could really travel. And by then I was doing well in the courses which I had left, but the courses I was doing badly in were now pass-fail or I could drop. It was one way of dealing with first semester and not making too much of a mess of it.

As a matter of fact, the second semester was when we had the strike. Again, I was still not quite learning my lesson about doing well in school, because I was like, all of a sudden this is college, this is exciting. I was running around and doing too many things. I like to tell people I made the Dean's List, except it was the wrong Dean's List. I had a 2.12 average in my freshman year. I remember that because—

Q: But the first semester—

Greene: No, no, it was still not so great. I don't know how but I managed to do badly, anyway, despite this, but I would have done more badly, had I not had mono. Anytime anybody asked me anything about it later, for interviews, I was able to say I had mono and I was really, really sick. And I was really, really sick, but I was also running around being too involved and taking too many courses, and taking too many after-school activities and staying up too late, and basically doing too much.

Q: You were just excited.

Greene: It was exciting! It was fun, but I was really on the wrong Dean's List. And I ended up after that making the right Dean's List, I graduated cum laude, and I should have almost been almost magna cum laude, had I not had the first year. The first year was a disaster for me, but I love to tell people that I was on the wrong Dean's List at one time in my life.

00:26:34 Q: Tell me about all of these things that you were running around, these extra things, these extra activities. You had the thing where you took the kids, what else?

Greene: I know WKCR was—

Q: Oh, the radio station. Were you DJ?

Greene: I think I was a wannabe DJ, but I didn't really become a DJ. I was doing something to help on it, but I can't even remember what I did except hang around the station.

Q: Did you get to pick music?

Greene: I don't think I did.

Q: It was just great to be at the radio station—

Greene: It was just great to be at the radio station and think this was cool. I had never been in a radio station before. I can't remember what else I did—

Q: Were most of the people at the radio station older? Upperclassmen?

Greene: I think they were upper class people.

Q: There you go, that pattern of wanting to be with the people just slightly above you.

Greene: Probably. The other thing I remember, and you probably remember this too—do you remember our gym photos? I want someone to talk about our gym photos, if it's not me.

00:27:25 Q: Oh, our posture—our posture assessment!

Greene: So they made us pose in our underwear—

Q: No, not our underwear.

Greene: Underwear.

Q: What about those little silly outfits with the little skirts?

Greene: Shorts.

Q: They had pantaloons on them—

Greene: They had boxer pantaloons, and our bras, that we had to stand and get posture photos in. That's become quite a scandal.

Q: A scandal, really?

Greene: I mean, I didn't know that it was a scandal at the time, but since then, they've had scandals. The Seven Sister schools all had these posture photos of semi-naked women in their underwear.

Q: Because we were supposed to be ladies.

Greene: No, but they collected those photos. Where are those photo archives? Someone ought to get their hands on our photo archives. But they wrote some articles about it subsequently.

Q: I didn't know anything about this. All I knew was that I got a "Fair" in posture, which I thought was really—I thought I deserved an "Excellent" in posture.

Greene: I had "Fair" in posture, and I deserved it. At any rate, I hated gym. I hated doing anything in gym. I thought it was a waste of time and I tried to figure out ways of getting out of gym. I found creative ways of getting out of gym later on.

Q: Yeah, me too.

Greene: You know how everyone has nightmares that they forgot they signed up for math class? Some of my nightmares were that I forgot that I signed up for a gym class. That's how bad it was.

Q: Balkan folk dancing, anyone?

Greene: I signed up once for yoga, and I didn't like incense. I really don't like smelly smells, and I stopped going to yoga that I had signed up for and I was getting trouble for not going to yoga. I would have tried yoga, but I didn't want to have burning incense, and I didn't like fake mysticism either. It just struck me as wrong. I wanted to learn yoga, and I wanted to learn the postures, but I didn't want anybody burning anything, and I didn't want to have fake mysticism attached to it.

Q: I ended up snoring at the end of each class. But we had to have a three-year gym requirement, which is an awful lot.

Greene: Did we have three or four?

Q: No, three.

Greene: It was three?

Q: Yeah. Still, that was more than—

Greene: One semester I had Royal Canadian Mounted Police exercises—someone told me you could sign up for Mounted Police exercises, and do it at your own home?

Q: I didn't know about that one.

Greene: That was a good one.

Q: On the honor system?

Greene: On the honor system. I was really good at Canadian Mountain—I don't even know what I'm talking about, but there was a book of Rocky Mountain exercises and you had to show them that you were going to do the book of Royal Mounted Police exercises. That was all you had to show.

Q: I didn't know about that one, I would have signed up.

Greene: I was really good at it.

00:30:33 Q: Archery? Anything fun?

Greene: With the sports department? No.

Q: Because you were looking around to meet people and have fun, I thought you might have found some way.

Greene: So what I did find was to have two majors. Very creative way to go to Columbia whenever you want to take a course. You could always create a conflict at a moment's notice, because there was always a course at Columbia you needed.

00:31:00 Q: When did you declare your major?

Greene: I guess at the beginning of the junior year, we had to do it. But I spent my sophomore year interviewing people about what I should major in.

Q: Random people?

Greene: I don't know. If I had known you really well I probably would have interviewed you about what I should major in. It was really annoying to people.

Q: Well, that would have been the blind leading the blind for sure.

Greene: I just kept on asking people. I don't know why I was so interested in asking people their opinion of what I should major in, but it was a real topic of my conversation. That must have bored a lot of people.

00:31:34 Q: You were just very interested in other people. I think of you as being very interested in other people.

Greene: I was.

Q: And you still are.

Greene: And their opinion. I guess it weighed on me very heavily, but let's see. I'm trying to get back to Norman. So Norman and I started dating at the end of January, when I was allowed to expose my spleen to crowds or whatever I was allowed to do. Our first date was "Elvira Madigan."

Q: Oh, I vaguely remember that, but not so well.

Greene: Well, Elvira Madigan was Mozart playing in the background, where they're starving to death—this couple, romantically is starving to death, and they decide to have a joint suicide. Now Norman of course became very incensed by this and said, like, "Why don't they go get some food somewhere?" But it was very, very romantic. Anyhow, that was our first date. It was interesting to me, was a violent, upset reaction Norman had at the same time.

Q: This is a passionate man.

Greene: Yes, who was very upset that this movie was so created to make them starve and commit suicide together, rather than go get something to eat already. He said, "There are many creative ways they could have earned something, or gotten some food, or stolen some food," or whatever he was saying. I can't remember anymore but it was just very funny.

[laughs]

Q: He couldn't live with it.

Greene: I was just sitting there, going “Ohhhhh, Elvira!” And Norman saying, “Why don’t they get food already?!” (laughs) But I liked that in him.

Q: Sure! Absolutely. There’s the solution to a problem. A problem, there’s the solution!

Greene: Right, the solution. So anyhow, that was our first date. I don’t remember all of our dates at that time, but it seemed like he liked me, I liked him. It was just very smooth sailing. There were people who called, people who this and that. But each time we had a good time together, and it wasn’t that it was progressing so fast or so slowly. It was just consistently progressing. Norman was gratified that I liked him. He would call me up, and we’d talk, or I’d go out with him. It was just sort of like, “When can I see you next?”

00:33:55 Q: In your mind, when you came to college, how did you think your romantic life would blossom? Or when? Were you going to be a virgin when you got married? Were you going to fall in love?

Greene: Oh, no. First of all—oh, that’s what I left out. So one of my first friends was Madeleine Kitaj. I don’t know if you know Madeleine. Also, I’m very friendly with Ellen Tucker, who I knew from high school, though she was a year ahead of me in high school. She led the folk dancing club in high school, among other things, so I knew her from that. Ellen went for a year in Israel between high school and college, and ended up being in my class, instead of being a year ahead of me. So I was friendly with Ellen, and I think I introduced Ellen to Madeleine, who I met very soon when she came to Barnard. And on Madeleine’s floor in Hewitt, there was a person who usually wasn’t sleeping at Barnard, she stayed with her boyfriend—

Greene: Okay. so there was often an empty bed in Hewitt. For some reason, they (the administration) used to every now and then checked beds, to make sure that people were really sleeping in their beds, in those days. So I not only got her bed whenever I wanted it, I also got her meal card in case. But if she came back—

Q: You had to vacate.

Greene: It was her bed. Not my bed. But anyhow, that was the room next door to Madeleine's room, where I could sleep whenever I wanted to sleep. She had a roommate, this person who was always not there. The roommate tolerated me too, but I would have my sleeping bag in Madeleine's room and I would grab this person's bed any night I wanted it. So I stopped commuting so much. Now I was staying there. I could go out on dates, I could have social activities.

00:35:52 Q: That was second semester?

Greene: Yeah, I think I am talking about second semester, because I was commuting mostly first semester. Although probably it started during first semester before I got mono. I think I started staying later and later at Barnard, sleeping in this person's room and using her meal card, and having meals in the dorm. It was like I had a dorm room for free, and I was actually helping her because I always accounted for the person in the bed. So I was the person in the bed if they ever did bed counts, and I had her meal card and I could eat there. But I would give her back her meal card of course if—it's her bed.

Q: It's perfect.

Greene: I also had a sleeping bag in case I just wanted to sleep on the floor, I could stay there too. But that wasn't as nice as sleeping on her bed. I liked having a mattress with my sleeping bag. So basically I kept some clothes in Madeleine's room and I became Madeleine's great friend, and I was friendly with everybody in Hewitt as if I—people actually thought I lived in Hewitt.

Q: Well you sort of did, part-time.

Greene: I sort of did a lot. And then I got mono. So after that point, after mono, my parents arranged for me to move in with my grandparents on the West Side. My grandparents had an apartment on West 71st Street and Broadway.

Q: So closer?

Greene: Right, much closer. And the nights when I was staying in the dorm, I would say I was staying with my friend Madeleine in the dorm, and I'd come back to my grandparents' house. I would go back and forth between West 71st Street and Barnard College, which was a lot better commute than commuting from Long Island. I'd have to go walk from their house to the Great Neck Long Island Railroad station, take the Long Island Railroad into Penn Station, take Penn Station subway from 34th Street to 116th Street.

Q: Awful. But now you found a shortcut.

Greene: I found a shortcut.

Q: You were getting closer and closer to the hub.

Greene: I was almost living at Barnard. I was practically living at Barnard. And then came the spring strike.

00:37:49 Q: Did the spring strike come as a surprise to you? Were you involved in any of the many demands, requests, petitions, marches that led up to the—?

Greene: I think I was going down to Washington for an anti-Vietnam march.

Q: That was October.

Greene: Oh, so that was October of our freshman year?

Q: And then there was another one in 1970.

Greene: I was at both I think. I became friendly with someone in my science classes who was one of the pre-meds. She got married really early too. Her boyfriend at Columbia had an aunt who lived right across the Potomac in Virginia, so we all went down on some bus to Washington and stayed at his aunt's house in sleeping bags and everything, and went marching together.

00:39:04 Q: Was Norman in on this?

Greene: Yes.

Q: Were you already in love with Norman?

Greene: Oh yes. It was just gradual. But I never sat there saying, "Am I in love with him? Am I not in love?" We were just great, great friends by then and kept on having great, great dates by then, and we were in love. I mean, whatever it meant for us at a very early age. I

was still seventeen, at Barnard. He was two years older than me, but he was one year ahead of me in school.

00:39:32 Q: So what was your love plan? How did it go?

Greene: It just kept on going. I don't know what to say—

Q: But you didn't have any preconception? When you walked in those gates and it was freshman year—

Greene: Oh, I think I was going to get married somewhere along. In those days I felt like I was going to get married.

Q: Did you feel like you were going to marry the first person you fell in love with?

Greene: I didn't think about it.

Q: Seriously?

Greene: I seriously didn't think that Prince Charming was going to arrive on his horse the first minute, but I just thought that I'd have lots of dates and that I would be really attractive all of a sudden.

Q: So you could pick.

Greene: So I could pick, or whatever. But we were just great friends and everything was going really well. There were some important moments in our relationship I remember. One day, it must've—oh, before I get up to that, I was going to say in the strike of 1968, the two of us stayed two nights in Avery together. Until we kind of wanted a shower. I mean that was

more important than politics. Norman was really annoyed with me at one point because I was working in the building—what was it called, where the Student Council was? It was a big building. Which got torn down and they built a new big building as a student center in the same place with lots of ramps and stuff.

Q: I'm not placing it. Is it on Columbia's campus?

Greene: On Columbia's campus next to the library, there was a building that was the student council, student center, student whatever.

Q: Carman Hall? I can't remember.

Greene: No, Carman Hall is a dormitory. That's where Norman lived in his freshman year, before I met him.

Q: Is it the building with Lion's Den in it? That used to have Lion's Den in it? Remember the Lion's Den?

Greene: Yes, I think so. It was the student building of some sort, but then it became a new student building after they tore it down and they redid it with new architecture with lots of open staircases with lots of interesting ramps. It is there right now as a student center.

Anyhow, in that building, they had the central organization for the strike. I remember going there and working on the phone lines, and answering the phones, "Strike Central." And feeling real important that I was answering the phones—I had no idea why I was answering the phone—

Q: There were many things to be coordinated. Food—

Greene: Right exactly, but I would answer phone lines, and the greeting was supposed to be, answer “Hello, Strike Central.” Norman called me up once on Strike Central, and he said, “Loren, what are you doing? You sound so stupid and officious answering the phone, ‘Strike Central.’” [laughs] It was sort of like we were the center of the universe. That’s how we felt, we were very self-important. If I have any major criticism of us: the world was watching and they were watching us, and we were the center of the universe—

Q: We were for a while.

Greene: —or the center of *our* universe. We were pretty important.

Q: We were very important.

Greene: We were self-important, and our strike was really important, and I think it was like the major social activity of the world. Beyond being whatever it stood for politically—it was really a social world.

00:42:55 Q: How did you get swept up? Oops—[spills her drink]

Greene: All my friends were involved, and I was involved in it. I liked the politics of it, and it was pretty exciting.

00:43:15 Q: At what point [refers to spilled drink] did you—somebody said, “Get out of this cafeteria! There’s a strike! Come over to Hamilton Hall!” So I did.

Q: I didn’t plan, I didn’t know—

Greene Q: It meant exactly what you thought, except she really was a radical.

Greene: I know, I know, but I kept on thinking—and she was so cool, she was like an SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] woman beyond anything. I was not exactly aspiring to be *that* cool.

Q: No, I wasn't going to be that cool either.

Greene: It was much too cool for me. I didn't want to drop out of school. I didn't want to organize the universe. I just wanted to be cool, but not *very* cool. [laughs]

00:44:25 Q: You spent two nights in a building, were they the first two nights?

Greene: I don't remember. I think it was the second, third night, or something like that.

Q: Because the blacks and the white students separated.

Greene: Hamilton Hall had a different thing. As a matter of fact, I didn't even know about the separation until later on. As a matter of fact, when I found out more about the separation and more about the politics of black and white and everything—I think it was when they had, there was a meeting to celebrate some anniversary a couple of years ago. Which year was that? Was it '67? The '68 anniversary? Or was it the '70 anniversary?

Q: No, it was the '68 anniversary.

Greene: So it must have been in 2008 that they had the anniversary.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

Greene: So I went to that, at Columbia, which was very interesting. They had all kinds of different people speaking. They had a documentary film they were showing, and I got to, for

the first time, hear much more of the black experience and how students were told that they couldn't do this and they couldn't do that, or they were signed up for black roommates because people assumed that they wanted a black roommate. I had no idea that any of that was going on. I mean, I assumed that anyone who had a black roommate who was black wanted a black roommate and had asked for a black roommate. But I didn't know that blacks were kind of assigned to each other, for being black. I didn't know—

00:45:50 Q: Well, not everybody. It depended. Did you have any black friends?

Greene: Yeah.

Q: At Barnard?

Greene: Yeah, not my best friends. I mean I had friends, you were my friend too. But I mean, they were friends—

Q: Was there anybody saying, “They're building this gym, it's going to have an entrance for students and an entrance for the community and that's segregation”? Was anybody keeping you abreast of what the issues—

Greene: I didn't even understand that point. I just thought it was being built for Columbia and the community was being kept out. I didn't hear about two entrances. I just sort of thought, “Columbia is taking over the black community and not offering any facilities to people in the community.” That was the way *I* understood it, but I didn't understand two entrances. That sounds like the new condos of New York City right now.

Q: But what it sounded more like was the segregated South.

Greene: Right. But I didn't even hear about segregation. I just thought, "Columbia is taking over this land." I did not hear at that point—

Q: Well, Columbia taking over the land and the law of eminent domain. That was very much talked about, so you would have had that uppermost in your mind. I'm just wondering how—
Were you in Hamilton the night the split took place? Or did you go straight to Avery?

Greene: I went straight to Avery, but I don't know if that it was the first night, and I don't think I understood what Hamilton was doing at the same time.

Q: None of the buildings knew what—we didn't have—

Greene: It was a lack of communication. Nobody texted on their cell phones, saying, "Hey come over here to Hamilton!" I was just doing my own thing and Avery seemed like a cool and friendly place. There were people I knew in Avery, people Norman knew in Avery. And Avery was kind of fun and they had nice drafting tables to sleep on.

Q: Oh, that was the architecture.

Greene: Yeah. It was a practical building to go to because there were places to lie down on.

Q: Also I think it was one of the least dogmatic.

Greene: It was kind of friendly. No one was bossy there. I think somebody had told us another building was bossier, and you had to do this and you had to do that. This just seemed cool and friendly, and kind of fun. Then after two days Norman said, "Let's get out of here. I really want to take a shower." So I got up! I mean—

Greene: [laughs] Right. No, but, I was going to take a shower. One thing I didn't like was being grungy. I was never good at being grungy. So it was kind of with as much fervor/interest/attitude that we went into the building, and kind of with as much political attitude that we went out of the building. Which didn't mean we weren't going to take a shower and eventually go back to a building, but meanwhile we found a nice movie to go to.

00:48:31 Q: What movie was this? "Elvira Madigan?"

Greene: No, no it was at the Beacon Theatre, I think, "The Heat of the Night" with Sidney Poitier and Rod Steiger.. We went to a movie and then meanwhile the bust happened on campus. And therefore, because of lack of a shower—

Q: You weren't a serious enough revolutionary.

Greene: I wasn't a serious enough revolutionary! I was having fun with the revolution. I mean, I was serious enough to go into a building, and serious enough to agree with the demands. As a matter of fact, Norman knew Gus Reichbach. Did you know Gus Reichbach? Did you go to that reunion? Oh my god—

00:49:03.06 Q: I did, I was at the reunion. As a matter of fact, I spoke at the reunion about why the schism between the black and the white students. But this is not my interview, so you have to keep talking.

Greene: Okay, so Gus Reichbach. One of the strikes had a demand of "Free Gus Now." Do you remember that?

Q: No.

Greene: You don't remember that thing? Okay, anyhow, I think it was with the '70 strike that it was "Free Gus Now," was one of the demands. Anyhow, Gus Reichbach went on to become a Supreme Court judge, I think in Brooklyn. He died a few years ago. Norman knew Gus, as a lawyer, and I got Gus through Norman to come speak at one of our reunions. He had been busted. I think he was in, what's the library? Low Library? I always get the two mixed up. The one that's up the stairs. Is that Low?

Q: Low, yeah. The one down the stairs is Butler.

Greene: Okay, so he was in Low Library, where the majority coalition had cordoned off the library. And I believe Gus Reichbach had been in Columbia Law School while he was in Low Library.

Q: It was mostly SDS.

Greene: Yeah, it was SDS and the people who were more serious were in Low Library, in one of the demonstrations. I can't keep track of whether it was '68 or '70. Maybe it's '68.

Q: '68 was the really big one where we just went in and refused to leave. '70 started—

Greene: And the Majority Coalition surrounded Low Library, to prevent the tuna fish sandwiches from getting into the building

Q: Right, starve 'em!

Greene: So that was one of the things Gus said in his speech. I hadn't realized that till Gus Reichbach had said that in his speech at our reunion, one of our reunions that I had arranged. And I became friendly, to a certain extent, with Gus Reichbach and his wife, who is also an

attorney, who worked for I believe Brooklyn Legal Aid or something like that. So that was another digression.

Anyhow, back to Norman and me. I guess by the end—we got married after our sophomore year.

Q: Did you?!

Greene: And so by the end of our—

00:51:48 Q: Did you find the pill? Because the pill was available, but only if you were a married woman or over a certain age. So you had to find it underground.

Greene: Birth control pills?

Q: Yes.

Greene: That's not true. But I was also busy—"Free Our Bodies, Free Our Selves, Free Abortions on Demand."

Q: Oh, I know. I had to go to *one* doctor on Park Avenue, and his name was—Dr. Sorotkin? Anyway, he would prescribe birth control pills. Because you certainly couldn't get them in Barnard Health Service. And you had to either be married or over a certain age, neither of which I was, but this one doctor must have treated—

Greene: A gynecologist I went to, who was near Barnard College, that some friend of mine recommended to me, who was treating all the Barnard students who were all coming in—

Q: Sorota! The ones that Sorota wasn't treating, because certain doctors—

Greene: Well, actually, I was a virgin, went into him, he took care of that. He inserted something and that was my—

Q: That's exactly what happened to me. With Dr. Sorota. He said, "Oh, you *are* a virgin."

Greene: And he took care of it. That was the end of virginity. It was a very sexy moment with the doctor. Anyhow, he said, "You can't take this" or something if you're a virgin.

Q: Mine didn't say that.

Greene: He must have—I'd like to figure out who this was. It might be Sorota, that sounds vaguely familiar. But it might not be. Because I had a feeling he was on Broadway.

Q: This was Park. The difference between Broadway and Park is—

Greene: I would have noticed, but I can't remember anymore, except I knew to go to this doctor, and that was the end of my virginity, so to speak. I had a mechanical end to virginity, in this doctor's office. Who insisted that's what you had to do.

Q: Oh, mine didn't insist. Mine was just "examining" and—

Greene: Well, you come for this, and you want to get a pill, and so I guess I took high-dose birth control pills, which were really dangerous in retrospect.

Q: I know. Did you get a big bust?

Greene: I don't know, I just remember that, in retrospect, medically I understand these were really bad stuff with high-dose estrogen that we took.

Q: Well, they were just starting out.

Greene: And I went home and I told my mother that I was taking birth control pills, I remember. She said, “Well, at least you’re being honest.”

Q: At least you didn’t cry.

Greene: Well, I hadn’t had sex yet. I just taking—

Q: You were planning! I know.

Greene: I was planning everything else in my life!

Q: You were planning and that was smart.

Greene: Right, so I wanted to be on birth control first, but that’s how you got on birth control pills. You went to this doctor, you got the birth control pills after he took care of your virginity. I don’t think it was so bad or big a deal, but I thought that was the process.

Q: It wasn’t very romantic, was it?

Greene: No, it was metallic.

00:54:51 Q: So you knew that you were in love with Norman and time passes and—

Greene: So Norman and I were in some park, like Riverside Park or some grassy place near Columbia. I can’t remember where exactly. He puts a ring of grass around my finger, and says, “Why don’t we get married?” or “Do you want to get married?”

Q: When is this?

Greene: This is at the end of my freshman year. It was very, kind of earthy and sweet flower girl. It all was falling into line but it wasn't anything particularly crazy. On weekends, we were often visiting my parents or his parents, although sleeping in separate bedrooms, appropriately, as our parents would tell us to. I remember that he was at his parents' house with me, and he told his mother that we were going to get married. It was kind of matter-of-fact: "We're going to get married." And his mother and his father said to us, "Where's the ring?" And it was kind of like, you know the poem, "The Owl and the Pussycat"—"What shall we do for the ring, the ring? What shall we do for the ring?" It's like, we didn't have a ring! We didn't know that you had to have a ring to get married.

Q: You don't.

Greene: It wasn't like, "We don't have an engagement ring." It was just that we were going to get married and the best engagement ring I had at the time was the ring of grass he had given me.

Q: And this is second semester freshman year? Or first semester of—

Greene: No, it was the end of the freshman year. It was the beginning of the summer, maybe. Our big dilemma was, in the summertime we couldn't be together, and we wanted to be together. So we tried to figure out ways of being together. Norman and I were always getting jobs by then. That was another thing I was always doing, working, because I wanted to save up money to have a dorm room. "A room of her own." So I wanted to have this dorm room, but I had to work. My uncle worked for Riverside Research Institute, and that may mean

nothing to you, but it was kind of a conservative think-tank that did some war planning, among other things.

00:57:08 Q: Did you know that?

Greene: I sort of did, and I felt extremely guilty about it. I didn't want anyone to know that I was getting my job working at Riverside Research Institute, but they paid me very well and it was a good job. I was doing these crazy biology experiments which don't make any sense in retrospect—and they had nothing to do with war. I'm not saying that it was anything evil, but the place had a lot of defense department contract people who were there, who I probably knew and liked and they were friendly nice people, except I knew that they weren't doing everything that I wanted people to do.

Q: What did you do there?

Greene: I translated French articles to English that were scientific articles. My French was lousy but I did my best. But scientific articles you could translate better, because half of the words are English words which have “I-Q-U-E” at the end of them or something like that, so you could recognize them. It was mostly just trying to figure out where the verbs belonged. It wasn't that complicated, but it took me hours, and I don't know why that was so important. But I was translating mindlessly articles that were biology articles, and I was doing some scientific experiments on blood coagulation, and it wasn't that bad but I was getting paid real money.

Then on top of it all, I started tutoring geometry. I was tutoring geometry to Rabbi Cardozo's daughters. Rabbi Cardozo was the cantor and also the rabbi, it got confusing, of the Spanish-

Portuguese Synagogue, which is a block away from where my grandparents lived, on Central Park West in the Seventies.

00:59:02 Q: Is that how you met him, through your grandmother?

Greene: No. I think it was through the Barnard-student-job list. I found the listing and I said, “This is terrific— someone wants a tutor.” He had two daughters who were really good artists, who had problems with math, so my job was to entertain them and show them how geometry really had a lot to do with art. They passed all their tests and they did really well and they were getting, I think they got B’s in all their math courses. Mrs. Cardozo, the Rabbi’s wife, made me great meals that were very kosher, while I was doing all of this. It was a lot of fun and I got *five dollars an hour!*

Q: Which, then, was an *enormous* amount of—

Greene: Oh my goodness, that was very good pay, and free dinner, and it was a block away from my grandmother’s. It couldn’t be beat. It could go on for three hours and I’d make fifteen dollars. I mean, that was big money in those days. I was busy saving that, and I was working at Riverside Research Institute. Especially during the summer I was working full-time there, then during the year I was working part-time there. Although I never really wanted anyone to know that I was working there because I was afraid—

Q: It had a bad rep.

Greene: Yeah, I was working at a conservative science think-tank. I wasn’t doing anything evil myself, but just the same, to be working for the military-industrial complex was not

exactly what I wanted to do. Anyway, but it was a pleasant enough job and I was making big money, although I didn't like French and I didn't like translating French. But, for money—

1:00:34 Q: Did you get the ring?

Greene: So we never got the ring. Anyhow, so we're getting back to the ring. Norman's parents said, "You can't be engaged unless you have a ring." So we said, "Oh." Then the next weekend, I think we were at *my* parents' house for some reason, and for some reason, I *think* Norman called up his mother. And she said she wanted to speak to my parents and say hi, because they had never met.

Q: Oh, they'd never met?

Greene: No. His parents live in White Plains and my parents live in Great Neck on Long Island, and they had never spoken. She gets on the phone with my mother, and tells my mother that we're engaged.

Q: Your mother had not been informed?

Greene: We hadn't told her because, not because we were hiding it from her, but we understood from his parents, you can't be engaged without a ring.

Q: So what happened?

Greene: So that comes back to "The Owl and the Pussycat"—"What can we do for the ring, the ring? What can we do for the ring? So they sailed away for a year and a day to the land where the bong-tree grows"—and that's where they got the ring.

Okay, so anyway, my mother started almost crying. Like really emotionally, “How come you didn’t *tell* me that you were engaged?” And we said, “Oh, we thought you had to have a ring to be engaged.” It was so silly! We were such kids.

Q: I know, it’s adorable really.

Greene: It is a quite cute story, but we thought you couldn’t be engaged. So anyhow, we were engaged. As far as my parents were concerned, nobody needed a ring. As far as his mother was concerned, she was willing to give me a ring that she had to give to Norman to give to me to have a ring. I never wore it, it sits in my vault to this day, but I have a ring from my mother-in-law from my engagement. So I do have a ring but I never wear it. Because I never wanted to go around New York City with expensive jewelry on.

Q: Any jewelry?

Greene: Especially in those days. No, I mean real jewelry. I wear jewelry all the time. I have three bangle bracelets—

Q: People I knew who used serious rings would turn them—

Greene: Right, and I could do that too but it became, you know—especially in medical school I wasn’t interested in wearing rings and turning them around and taking them on and off. What I was worried about was *losing* the ring, so I have rings but they all sit in the vault. In case you want to be impressed, you come visit me in my vault.

01:03:01 Q: You can display them. When did you decide that you wanted to go to med school?

Greene: Well before I get up to that, I got married at the end of sophomore year. It was a month before I was nineteen. I was eighteen by then. We got married in June and my birthday was in July. It was two months before Norman's twenty-first birthday, so Norman had to get his parents' permission in New York State to get married. I didn't need my parents' permission. There was a document that Norman's parents had to sign because their son was underage, he was twenty and you had to be twenty-one.

Q: But not you. You could have been—

Greene: No, females were emancipated at eighteen. I could do whatever I wanted at age eighteen.

Q: So during your sophomore year, are you studying? Or more planning a wedding?

Greene: No, by then I was studying like crazy. I was the best student in the world because I now had Norman to tell me that I should study, and he was really intent on studying. And I didn't have to look for a boyfriend. It was a very practical solution to being a good student because I had an instant social life. We'd study, study, study, we'd go out for a movie, we'd go out for a \$1.19 hamburger at Tad's Steakhouse. And we'd go back and study some more, and it was very pleasant. I'd study in whatever library he wanted to study in, and he'd study with me wherever I wanted to study. We'd study together and then we went to another movie.

Q: And you must have felt so blessed, compared to your roommates and friends who were agonizing over various people: were they going to call or not?

Greene: Right, and they were splitting up with their boyfriend, or looking for another boyfriend or whatever they were doing, or they were pregnant and getting an abortion! I had

everything under control, and I didn't have to worry about the boyfriend thing, which was a big deal. I wasn't envying their lives, it was just all working out. Norman was fine and he was fine with me, and I didn't plan on making him look for me. I was just available, he was available, and we were very happy together. It was just simple and straightforward, it wasn't very complicated. I think when I was in my late twenties I turned to my mother and I said, "How come you let me get married so early?" And she said, "Well, in those days you could have been arrested, you could have been on drugs, you could have been pregnant, you could have dropped out of school, and all you wanted to do was get married. I figured it was fairly harmless."

1:05:47 [pause for a break]

[Second audio file begins here]

[00:00:05.13] Q: So, where were we? We were engaged—

Q2: You had just gotten married.

[00:00:13.19] Greene: I had just gotten married. I'll tell you about my wedding because it's funny. I have two younger sisters. The wedding was in my parents' backyard, in their house in Great Neck, which sounds like a huge mansion. It's not a huge mansion, it's a nice house with a nice backyard. The night before the wedding, my mother suddenly thought, "What if it rains?" No one had thought about that before. She had arranged for the catering and Norman's parents chipped in for half of the cost of this wedding. It was in the outdoors, and I remember telling my mother that if she was going to get some musicians to play, I said, "They're not allowed to play 'Alley Cat.'" Do you remember that horrible dance? Anyway,

they were not allowed to play that. They were not allowed to play “Sunrise, Sunset” from “Fiddler [on the Roof]”. I had a list of songs that they couldn’t play! Anything else they wanted to play, but I said, “These songs are forbidden.” It’s funny because now “Sunrise, Sunset” means a lot to me, and it’s funny that that was on my forbidden list.

Q: I don’t know “Alley Cat.”

Greene: You didn’t miss anything on “Alley Cat.” But if you didn’t know “Sunrise, Sunset” you’d be missing something. As you get older, it’s a sentimental aging song of life and dying in any culture. It’s a good song, but “Alley Cat” was horrible. I remember those two songs, and I think “Hello, Dolly” was on the list of other songs that could not be played at my wedding.

Q: You don’t have to explain that at all.

Greene: Okay. There were certain songs they couldn’t play, but they could play whatever they wanted to. We had a lot of music with folk dancing and a hora and this and that. They played some show-tunes and that was fine with me, as long as they weren’t on my list.

It was in the backyard and it was a sunny day and I think it went well. There were about a hundred people at the wedding in the end. But the real wedding happened in my parents’ house, not outside. Then the people came afterwards and they asked when the wedding was going to start. But I didn’t want to have a lot of people at the wedding ceremony itself for some reason, because I think I was fairly embarrassed that I was getting married at that stage. It was just a little wedding with a bigger party in the backyard.

Q: Sounds perfect.

Greene: It was fine for me in those days. One of the funniest pictures of the wedding is of the Rabbi who married us, with a flower called an *Alium Gigantium*. Do you know what that is? It stands for giant onion. It's a purple flower that happens in June. It's like a lollipop, except it's spherical on a large stick. It's in the onion family and it's a compound flower with lots of little purple onion flowers. It looks like the Rabbi, in his yarmulka in the photographs, has a horn, like a unicorn horn. Like the Lollipop Kids in "The Wizard of Oz," or someone sticking a giant lollipop out of his head in all the photographs. It's really pretty funny when you look at it.

Anyhow, the party was outside and it didn't rain. I have two younger sisters, so by then, when my next sister got married—a bunch of years later, but she got married maybe six years later. She also got married fairly early, but not as early as I did. She also had it in the backyard, but this time they had a tent, in case it rained, because my mother had some foresight because she didn't want to have another night worrying about rain. When my youngest sister got married, she also had a tent, except it was the year of the thirteen-year cicadas. They were crunching down on top of the tent, and crunching under the floor of the tent, because they had enough coverings. There were cicadas all over the place.

Q: Was it a hex? Did the marriage work?

Greene: She's still married, yes. She had a crunchy wedding, I don't know!

Q: You should advertise that backyard. Anybody who gets married in the backyard—

Greene: I remember my mother had done all the precautions for my sister, but she didn't think about the cicadas. You know the cicadas happen in all prime number years? Did you read about that?

00:04:20 Q: No, I didn't know that. Prime number years.

Greene: There are seven-year cicadas and thirteen-year cicadas, and I think nineteen-year cicadas. They think that they've evolved that way so they don't have predators. Or the predators don't eat them off when they emerge from their—

Q: What, do the predators forget they exist? Like, "I haven't seen one of those in a while"—

Greene: Yeah. "I haven't seen a cicada in while, I'm not going to have them as my major prey," so when they emerge in huge numbers, every prime number term, they're different cicadas that have different number niches.

Q: I've never seen them emerge.

Greene: It's fascinating. Look it up on Google. The cicadas have evolved into being prime number years.

Q: That's pretty fascinating.

Greene: I think that's amazing. So, back to me, then I was a junior. By my junior year, I have Norman being my instructor.

00:05:15 Q: And Norman's out of school now, right?

Greene: No, he was a year ahead of me. He's two years older than me, but one year ahead of me.

Q: So he was a senior.

Greene: And he's an English major, and he said to me, "You know what, you're not taking enough English classes. Because you're too much in other things." So I was the first—I had to compete in an essay contest to get accepted into the Colloquium of Great Books, because Norman had decided I needed a better round of literary education. I got into the Colloquium as one of the first Barnard students admitted into this class at Columbia. The Columbia students had to compete for this class too. So we read all of these Great Books, and there I was with Michael Wood, from the English Department, and Frances something from the Classics department in this class, writing essays on Great Books. And reading Great Books on top of my crazy schedule, which consisted of things like organic chemistry—at Columbia, not at Barnard, because I liked the science classes at Columbia better. Even though it was much harder, and it counted for two courses for the Columbia students, where Barnard would only give me one credit for a course. Because the lab was so intense.

I liked it at Columbia, because I had taken some of the courses in science at Barnard in those days, and aside from Freshman Biology, which was fabulous, with [David] Ehrenfeld—I fell in love like everybody else with Ehrenfeld in my class. But the other Barnard courses in science were really horrible. Chemistry with Professor King and Mrs. King. Do you know anything about this?

Q: I tried to avoid science as much as possible.

Greene: You had to take it to be a biology major. I was only planning on being a biology major. I was not planning on being a pre-med. So Ehrenfeld in my first year was really important to me, because he had gone undergraduate to Harvard, gotten his MD from Harvard. His father was a doctor and he was going to be like his father, except he hated medical school so he went and got a PhD in animal behavior from Florida.

00:07:21 Q: So that's where your idea of being a vet came from—

Greene: So I was thinking, Oh my god, I want to be like Ehrenfeld, and forget about all this pre-med stuff. I want to study animal behavior or environmental something or other. That's what I was thinking about, rather than medical school, except I was taking all the courses with the pre-meds. I got into the competition, which is part of the story, part of my recurring story. At any rate, I took the chemistry 1-2 in my second year with the Kings. It was called "Chemistry 1-2" with Professor and Mrs. King. Mrs. King had a PhD, but she was called Mrs. King. She ran the lab and Professor King was her husband, which was part of my undoing later on. I did okay in the course, but I hated the course because they treated us like little girls. When you left—

Q: This was at Barnard?

Greene: At Barnard. When you left the lab, they would sign on the last line of the last page you had written on, so you couldn't add anything or change anything, or improve anything, or have any additional thoughts about anything. That would be considered cheating. So we learned how to write tiny, so we could add small. We did everything in the class to get around that, but in the meantime, I just didn't like somebody telling me that I couldn't think about

something after I had done something, and change something if I wanted to correct something. And that anything I did to think about something was cheating or wrong. The whole demeanor of the whole thing, their expectations of you, was that you were a cheater if you thought about something. It was so wrong to me, and I didn't like being treated that way. I had never been quite treated that way, until this class. I was determined to take organic [chemistry] at Columbia instead of at Barnard.

Meanwhile, I started taking anthropology classes at Columbia, and then at Barnard, because they were so interesting, except I could never find the time—which was on purpose—to take Introductory Anthropology. I think for any major, you're supposed to take a two-semester introductory course in the major, but I never found time to do it. I was taking advanced Anthropology courses instead of beginning Anthropology, and loving it, and thinking this was fun too.

So, this is what I wanted to get to. At the end of my junior year now, was when we had the next strike. I was married. I was becoming a pre-med because I was caught up in the competition. After I graduated and I had gotten into medical school, Norman said to me, "You don't have to go to medical school just because you got in, but I think it's a good idea to try it out, and if you don't like it you'll drop out." And that's how I started medical school. Very literally, I had won a prize. I was going to medical school because I had won a prize, so I was going to go to medical school.

00:10:18 Q: What prize did you win?

Greene: Getting into medical school. It was a competition to get into medical school. I won a competition. And I'll tell you about the competition, because I think it's really a very timely story. That's kind of how I went to medical school. It was kind of like, "Let's try it out. If you don't like it, you'll go back and you'll think about anthropology graduate school, or you'll think about going to school in animal biology. But try it out for a year." The tuition at medical school was probably less than \$5,000 a year, even when I graduated. Q: Did you go to Columbia med school?

Greene: No, I went to NYU [New York University]. But I'll tell you about that because it's part of the story. Anyway, at the end of my junior year, we had our second strike. And at the second strike, we had a student meeting at Barnard about who should speak before the Barnard faculty on the three national demands. Do you remember this?

Q: I don't remember what the three demands were.

Greene: One of them was "Free Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers." One was "Get Out of Cambodia Now"—and I have no idea what the third one was, but it was something like that—these national demands—but I do know two out of three. I've never learned what the third one was, although somebody told me, but I forgot it again. I know two of the three national demands.

Q: I'm impressed.

Greene: I think two students who were chosen, or chose ourselves to go speak before the faculty. This is the end of the third year. By then, I had taken a course with Norman for the first time in my life. We were taking—maybe that was in our second year, I can't remember.

We were probably not married yet, so maybe it was at the end of our second year. We had taken a course together in Art History at the Metropolitan Museum [of Art], on art and architecture of ancient Egypt, which counted towards my anthropology requirement. Norman had taken a course before on Greek art and architecture, so he was glad to take this course with me. , so we found our course together; it was like our Tuesday night date at the museum. It was a lot of fun. That was our first time, and the only time, we've taken a course together.

Okay, I'm coming back to the national demands.

Greene: She was thinking of going to med school and somehow or other, it changed at the last minute. After I spoke before the faculty, I got a phone call or a message from David Ehrenfeld , my freshman biology teacher, who gave me a great grade and liked me a lot. I liked him a lot and I was working—I was a lab assistant for somebody, I don't think for him, but it didn't really matter. He told me that I was going to be blackballed for medical school, because I had spoken before the faculty. It was very straightforward. I said, "All I spoke about was to tell them the three national demands, as if they didn't all know it." They didn't have cell phones but they certainly knew what the national demands were. They weren't ignoramuses. I don't remember that I did anything more radical than speaking before the faculty. And he arranged for my recommendation letter for medical school to be taken from the pre-med committee, who were Professor and Mrs. King—who were really conservative and were in the audience when I spoke. They really hated me for speaking before the faculty, and they wrote the recommendation letters for medical school. They were going to blackball me from medical school—so he (David Ehrenfeld) transferred my medical school recommendation letter from the pre-med committee (the Kings) to the anthropology

department, because I had so many credits in both subjects that I had to now switch my major and make sure I was an anthropology major.

My job was to become an anthropology major. His job was he took care of this transfer of my recommendation letter. And (political science) Professors Peter Juviler and Dennis Dalton—who were liberal, amazing people, but I didn't know them well—they had taken on my cause specifically, and the anthropology department wrote my letter of recommendation for medical school. That had never been done before also. The job of Professor and Mrs. King was to co-sign their letter, and not change their letter—and that was the letter that went out to medical school. Because I had done well in all their chemistry courses anyway.

Q: They had written a good letter but—

Greene: The anthropology department wrote a great letter. They loved me.

Q: Until you made this speech.

Greene: No, they hadn't written the letter yet. This was at the end of junior year, when they write the letters for applications to medical school.

Q: I thought they were the ones who had blackballed you.

Greene: They (the Kings) were *going* to blackball me, but he knew this already. I don't know how Ehrenfeld knew everything, but he had transferred it to Juviler and Dalton, and the three of them [Ehrenfeld, Juviler, and Dalton] had a big meeting about me and said, "Well, she could major in anthropology also." I was going around, as I said, interviewing everybody: "Should I major in anthropology? Should I major in biology?" It was a very big, very

important question of the day, what I should major in. It didn't really matter. In the end I had credits for both, and I could have majored in either one, but it didn't really matter. I took the test in biology, which qualified me for—I had a dual major in the end, but it didn't really matter. The anthropology department, for the first time in Barnard history, wrote the letter of recommendation for medical school.

00:15:49 Q: So what did they do with the Kings?

Greene: The Kings co-signed the letter. They were told that they couldn't change the letter.

Q: How did they do that?

Greene: I don't know. I think Juviler and Dalton watched over the Kings. I don't know. In those days you never saw your letter. I've never read my letter, but I know that Ehrenfeld told me what went on, and I thanked Juviler and Dalton who I didn't really know. I certainly thanked the anthropology department—I knew everybody in the anthropology department.

Q: So it must have been peer pressure.

Greene: They caved in, because they didn't have anything bad to write about me. I guess my grades, I mean I know I got a B+ or something like that in chemistry. There's no way they could say, "She's a lousy student," if she got a B+ in chemistry.

Q: Yeah, "She's a fierce radical and a terrorist."

Greene: Yeah, I mean now I'd be a terrorist I suppose, for doing something like that. But whatever the terminology was at the time, probably "radical." I never particularly joined SDS, I was just going along with the social movement, more than I was politically so

informed—it was just what I was going along with. Anyhow, there were only about twenty or twenty-one pre-meds from our class at Barnard. I don't know if you know that. At the time. People subsequently went to medical school, but at that time there were only twenty or twenty-one pre-meds. One of them, got into some sort of car accident in Central Park as a pedestrian.

Q: This is coming back to me.

Greene: She had some sort of brain injury so she had to drop out of being pre-med.

Q: Yeah, I remember this.

Greene: I don't know why, but I've seen her subsequently. She's kind of a fun, cool person, but she was not a pre-med.

Q: But she had been. That was the sad thing.

Greene: She had some sort of brain—I guess post-traumatic stress, I don't know, or a real concussion I think she had. She couldn't be a pre-med at that point. Meanwhile, I wasn't even sure why I was pre-med anymore, except that they were making it so difficult for me to be a pre-med, that I was fighting to be a pre-med, because of this whole thing of being blackballed. So it wasn't just competition, it was now like I was going to be a pre-med and show those horrible Kings that I was a pre-med at that point. It became my political statement to be a pre-med at this point. I remember after I graduated, the Anthropology Department used to invite me back to show how anthropology was useful in my life to become a pre-med, or something like that. I still don't understand what the topic was, except they were very excited.

I was taking so many courses in everything. I was taking the Colloquium on Great Books course, writing essays. I wrote an anthropology essay for the Colloquium that I was very proud of, and that I still want to find, on a Claude Lévi-Strauss analysis of *The Castle* by Kafka. I still want to read that essay, because I thought it was so amazing, but I have no idea what I said except, you know, “Lévi-Strauss, positive-negative, right-wrong, left-right.” I don’t know, whatever it was, analyzing the whole forces of *The Castle* as an anthropology analysis of *The Castle*. Norman thought it was amazing. I got an A on it. It was amazing, but I have no idea what I said.

Q: When you look it, it will come back to you.

Greene: My senior thesis, which I had to write, was an analysis of the creation myth of the Cherokee Indians. Norman and I traveled down to North Carolina, I guess the summer before my senior year. We took his parents’ car and went down to all of North Carolina, and we went from the coast to—

00:19:43 Q: Was that your honeymoon?

Greene: No, our honeymoon was—

Q: Right, you were a sophomore.

Greene: I was taking calculus in the summer after my sophomore year, and it was right before the midterm that we got married in the summer, because calculus started in June. I remember. We wanted to get married in July, but you couldn’t have a Jewish wedding in July because there’s a time of the destruction of the temple called Tisha B’Av where you can’t get married.

Q: Okay.

Greene: So, anyway, not that I'm so religious. I certainly wasn't. But you couldn't get married in July, so we had to move it up to June in our heads, and of course it was in my mother's backyard, so the catering space was available. I was a June bride, but it was in the middle of calculus. We got married and, I've forgotten why, but after I got married—it must've been a Saturday night or Sunday day, because you can't have a Jewish wedding on a Saturday day, but if the days are long, and I think we fudged it a little bit or something like that, for some reason we had a couple of days off. We went to Montauk for our first honeymoon. That was our first honeymoon. We stayed at Gurney's Inn, but then we had other trips together. No kids, we'd take trips whenever we could get somebody's parents' car and take a trip.

So at the end of my junior year we drove across North Carolina on this vacation, and I discovered the Cherokee Indians' places near Asheville on these hills in Great Smokey Mountains National Park, and the "passion play" that have for the Cherokee Indians. I decided, because I had taken a course in mythology—I loved that mythology stuff of anthropology—that I was going to write about the creation myth of the Cherokees. I gathered together as many versions as I could of the creation myth of the Cherokee Indians. I went to the Museum of the American Indian, which was probably in this neighborhood on Convent Avenue, in those days before it moved downtown. I got several versions and I xeroxed pages—you know in those days it was twenty-five cents a page, mostly black or whatever it was—I was a real expert on xeroxing. So I had that version and this version. I spent a lot of quarters on getting different versions together. I did a Lévi-Strauss analysis of the creation myth of the

Cherokee Indians. I was really into Lévi-Strauss, different versions. I loved that stuff. It was a lot of fun. I was still thinking I was going to become an anthropologist, except by then I was so involved in the fight to go to medical school, that nothing was going to stop me. Even if I just went for a year and tried it out. Even if I didn't like it, I was going to go to medical school.

So, I'm just trying to think of what else was very significant. Oh, in that strike, I don't know of any occupying buildings or anything like that.

00:22:49 Q: In the strike of 1970, no. It was not a huge, dramatic thing.

Greene: Except it made me go to medical school, and nearly forced me not to go to medical school at the same time. That was the most traumatic thing of that strike, but that was the most dramatic thing in sending me to medical school.

Q: Which you won.

Greene: But I couldn't even think of why I wanted to go to medical school, except I was so determined to go to medical school after that. I was going to go through hellfire and water for it.

Q: You weren't going to let anybody hold you back.

Greene: As a matter of fact, my first year of medical school, which was after I graduated from Barnard—I went right to medical school, but the summer before we were sitting on top of some mountain in Canada in Algonquin Provincial Park, on one of our canoe, camping, whatever trips that we took—I remember sitting on a mountaintop with Norman, saying, “I

don't really know if I want to go to medical school. I just wanted to win and get into medical school, and now that I've gotten in, should I go?" That's when Norman said to me, "Well if you go, and if you don't like it, you can drop out."

Okay, before I get to medical school, I want to say about my interviews, because I think it's really instructive about—

00:23:57 Q: Your med school interviews? Okay.

Greene: So my med school interviews. One of the first interviews I had was Harvard. They didn't let women into medical school much in those days. It was terrible, horrifying.

Q: One or two—

Greene: Yeah, they would have a few token women, who would be amazing. So my Harvard interview was racist and sexist.

Q: Tell me about it.

Greene: So they said to me—there were two people in the room, maybe one of them was a psychiatrist. I still don't know. I think that they always had a psychiatrist in the room, that's what I was told afterwards but I didn't know then. I was told they had stress interviews, and they would ask you to do things like open a window and the window wouldn't open; things like that. That's what I was prepared for. That's all the information I had, and that there would always be two people in the room. I think that's all the advice I had, was that they could do a stress interview and they might ask me to open a window or do some other impossible task, and see how long I would strain at opening a window that didn't open.

So I go into this room, and they sit down pleasantly. Then they ask me if I thought I was one of the superior applicants. That was the first question.

Q: How exactly did they ask you this?

Greene: Well, "Do you think you're a superior applicant?"

Q: Odd question.

Greene: Well that was one of the first questions. I had to think about it, and I said, "Yes, I guess I am." They said, "Why do you think you're a superior applicant?" I tried to say, "Well, I've done this and I've done that, and I majored in this and I majored in that, and I've taken literature courses while I was taking science courses, and I was carrying a heavy schedule, and I wasn't paying much attention to what you get a good grade in, I was just taking everything and doing well in a lot of things." I by then had a very good average, except for my Dean's List of prior times.

Q: And that's long gone.

Greene: Which I would explain to everyone by saying, "I had mono that year, and then we had a strike and it disrupted my education." I could explain my freshman year.

Q: You were a star and you knew it.

Greene: Yeah, I was very good by then, and I was very confident by then and I was taking courses and I could talk about anything, if they wanted to talk about literature and anthropology, or biology. I could talk about anything. But they would say, "Okay, you think you're a superior applicant."

The next question, or set of questions, was: “Do you think that the superior people in this world should outnumber the inferior people in this world?”

Q: What kind of question is that?

Greene: These were my Harvard interview questions. I started thinking, “Well, yeah, I guess so, sort of,” but I was trying to figure out what that even means. I couldn’t think about what they were thinking, and why they were asking me these questions. Then I thought that maybe this is sort of a racist question? I couldn’t figure out who’s superior, who’s inferior, and what this is about. But I was trying to play good little girl and answer the questions politely, and not react to them. Because I was so busy thinking they were going to ask me to open a window or something like that. I thought this was a trap question, but I didn’t know how to answer the trap question. And yet, I wanted to be nice and pleasant, and not say, “Hey, are you getting into some crazy elitist thing?” or, “What does this question mean?” And objectively, do I want to have more superior people in the world, or more inferior people in the world? I couldn’t figure out what it was about.

Q: What did you say? What did you answer?

Greene: I said, “Yeah, I guess so,” after I had sorted this out for two seconds in my brain. I couldn’t figure out the question. I was trying to see where this was leading to. So they said, “Well, when do you plan to have children?” And I said, “Well, I hadn’t planned to have children for a while,” and I was married already, so therefore they seemed to think that this was an appropriate question to ask me, although I thought it was highly inappropriate. But I didn’t say that, because I was playing good-little-girl. So then they said, “Well, if you think

the superior people in the world should outnumber the inferior people in the world, don't you think it's your position to have children so you can produce superior children?"

Q: They just were messing with you.

Greene: Oh god, were they messing with me! But I didn't know what to do because I had put my foot in my mouth at their interview already, and I didn't know how to deal with it, because I was so busy being good-little-girl that I didn't answer them. Anyhow, I didn't get into Harvard.

So, shortly after that, I got into NYU. So I got into NYU, and I knew I was in NYU. After that, I had my Mount Sinai interview. My NYU interview was pretty straightforward. My Mount Sinai interview started out the same way as the Harvard interview, as if they had read the script.

Q: You mean, "Are you a superior person?"

Greene: "When are you planning on having children?" I was I think the first—

Q: Oh, they went right to the children!

Greene: They went right to the children, and when was I reproducing or something, or if I was a great applicant and having children. It was like, in fast speed, we got up to the children, really fast. And I looked at them and said, "I'm sorry. Would you have asked me these questions if I were a male applicant?" And they said, "Maybe not." I said, "Well, I'd prefer to answer the questions you would ask of a male applicant."

Q: Good for you!

Greene: That's what I said! That was the first time I said it! And I got into Mount Sinai. I still think, that if I had had the gumption—well, I don't know if I would have gotten into Harvard, but I just know that that was what they were looking for. I had no idea. I was so busy being good-little-girl and answering their questions.

Q: You were prepared. You knew you could answer their questions.

Greene: I knew I had gotten into NYU. I knew I had—

Q: Your backup.

Greene: Yes. My backup. So if I didn't get into Mount Sinai, screw them. I didn't really care. That's what I should have done with Harvard, but I hadn't gotten into NYU, and I hadn't experienced this whole thing, but I was standing my ground. After that, Norman had gotten into another city, and I had gotten into NYU.

00:29:47 Q: Now what was he in? Norman?

Greene: Law school. He had taught for a year between college and law school. He was a teacher, and now he was going to law school, like his grandfather, and everybody was happy with him because he wasn't being a teacher and he hated being a teacher, because it was chaotic in those years. He was a substitute teacher,

Q: Sort of like now?

Greene: It was worse, but anyway. If you want to hear Norman's story, he could tell you all about it.

Q: Just as it affects your story.

Greene: Okay. So Norman was applying to law school, I'm applying to medical school. We have to get into a city—the same city. Norman was interested in applying to a law and literature PhD joint program at Buffalo. The two of us had interviews at Buffalo, and I had gotten into NYU. Now I've also gotten into Mount Sinai, I'm feeling pretty cocky about the whole thing, and I had gotten into all these medical schools, which are notches on my belt already. I'm getting into medical school and it's really hard to get into medical school when you're female to begin with. In my class at NYU there were only twenty women out of 170 students. It was very hard as a female to get into medical school in general.

But, so now we're on the train to Buffalo. I don't know if you've ever taken the train to Buffalo.

Q: Never.

Greene: When you get to the Buffalo station, there's a statue of a big buffalo. It was one of the funniest things I've ever seen in my life. Here we are in Buffalo, I've never been before, taking the train with Norman. We got there and we figured out, in the days before cell phones, where to go to the law school, where to go to the medical school, where we were going to meet at six o'clock after we've both had all our interviews. I guess we had taken an early, early morning train and gotten in in the afternoon, because I don't think we slept over in Buffalo that night. Our plan was I think to take a train back that night, late at night, and come back to New York. A sleeper train or something, I don't even remember what our plan was, but our plan was to meet at six o'clock at night.

So my interview at Buffalo mostly consisted of, “Oh, you got into NYU, why are you coming up here?” And I said, “Well, my husband is applying to law school, and if this is the only city we both get into, we’re coming to Buffalo.” That was a good enough answer for them. I did get into Buffalo, but in the meantime, Norman went off to his law school and PhD interview at Buffalo, and he got into Buffalo.

Q: So you both got into Buffalo?

Greene: Yeah, so meanwhile, at six o’clock at night, we came to our chosen destination place, and decided we were hungry, we want to eat something. There was no food in Buffalo at six o’clock at night, so we wandered around and wandered around, and finally at 7:30 we found a pizza place which was closing and served us their cold pizza that they were going to throw out anyway. I said to Norman, “I don’t care where you get into school, I don’t care where I get into school, but we’re not going to Buffalo.” This is not civilization! You have to have food at seven and eight o’clock at night, and if you don’t have food at two o’clock in the morning, that’s okay with me, but you have to have food at eight o’clock at night. In any civilization. This is not civilization in Buffalo.”

Q: Perfectly reasonable.

Greene: This was just the summertime. I have no idea what happens in the wintertime in Buffalo, but I wasn’t waiting to find out. So we came back to New York knowing that we weren’t going back to Buffalo no matter what. Then we both got in to the same city.

Meanwhile Norman got into NYU Law School, so we were both going to NYU, and that was that, because I didn’t get in—they lost my application at Temple [University] or U of P

(University of Pennsylvania), and I don't know what happened. They literally lost it. I called them up and they couldn't find it. I went down to Philadelphia with him, and I don't remember which school I interviewed at, but they couldn't find my application at the other school in Philadelphia..

[00:33:28.17] Q: Not a good sign.

Greene: No, it was pretty weird. I was thinking I'll go to Temple if he got into U of P, and we're going to do this and that. Anyhow, I think in Philadelphia nobody had an application for me, or whatever. Anyhow, we both got into NYU, so we both started out at NYU. Most of my studying in medical school was always done at the law library because I couldn't stand to find out that somebody knew more than me or less than me or what page they were on in their textbook.

[00:34:00.21] Q: So you had to take yourself out of the context—

Greene: As a matter of fact, students thought I was a law student, because I was—

Q: You were just as well.

Greene: I was just as well. Plus I was commuting from way uptown because now we had an apartment on Sickles Street, which is near Dyckman Street, at the top of Manhattan near 200th Street. I think Dyckman is 200th. I'm all confused, but anyhow, I was always commuting from up there.

Q: That worked out pretty well.

Greene: So we both went to medical school and law school, until I got an apartment through NYU housing for my third year downtown.

00:34:40 Q: Are you pretty clear on the fact that meeting the love of your life early on helped you dodge a bullet?

Greene: It helped me dodge all kinds of bullets. It let me be a student. Honestly, I don't know if we're all biologically driven to find a mate or whatever at this certain age, but the hormones supersede our brains or something like that. But no, I was going to go find somebody, and if I didn't—that was more important than school. School was a big social whirl, and the strike was a big whirl world. I'm not saying I was so politically astute, except I was liberal enough, left-wing enough, to want to be part of it.

Q: It was hard *not* to get into it.

Greene: It was an emotional, fun, spring—it's no coincidence that all the strikes happened in the spring. I really think it's like we get the scent in the air and we all go follow our noses or something into these strikes and scents and political action. I mean, no one goes in the middle of the winter to have a strike.

Q: No, that's true. You can't hang out on campus in the cold.

Greene: Right. Well, it's like, I had a dog until I was—my dog died right after our wedding that year. He was my best friend in the whole world until he died. Anyway, my dog Oliver died, but every spring, somehow or other he'd sneak out the door and go on a wild surge or something, sowing his wild oats or something like that, and come back all covered with ticks and mud, and smelly as anything. I learned how to take ticks off a dog in my high school

years, because he'd just have his spring flings. I always thought these strikes were like our spring flings.

Q: Crazy.

Greene: They were wild. They were social. They were fun. And we thought we were very, very self-important.

00:36:37 Q: So you never really socialized or fraternized with people who would go on to become Weathermen [The Weather Underground Organization]?

Greene: Well, I knew of some people who were. As a matter of fact, some people who were political then became very prominent. A lot of the people at the [*Columbia Daily Spectator*] became very prominent, too. I wasn't on the *Spectator*.

Q: Did you know how serious these people were? Did you know that you were with some people who were actually plotting the radical overthrow of the government?

Greene: I guess it dawned on me, but honestly I think I was kind of naïve too. I mean it was fun, but I didn't want to destroy anything. If that sounds antithetical to what I'm saying—I just wanted to have fun and make a change and end the Vietnam War and the Cambodian incursions or war or whatever it was called or not called. Stopping the gym seemed like an *absolutely* right thing to do. It was kind of following in the steps of the Civil Rights Movement.

Q: It absolutely makes sense to me, only much later, years, decades later, that I discovered that we did have—first of all there was CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and secondly there were people who were scouting around for the Weathermen.

Greene: I also think there were people *inciting* people to do more.

Q: Oh yeah, provocateurs.

Greene: Provocateurs. We had all kinds of provocateurs, and I'm glad I wasn't that involved that I could be caught up by a provocateur, so to speak. That's why I always say that I was suspicious of certain people of trying to incite and be more-radical-than-thou or something like that. I'm also glad that I was involved with Norman, because I think I might have gone off a deeper end had I not been involved, in a search for more activity, more social activity, more fun, more political activity, until who knows. Norman really rescued me from getting arrested, in the sense—not that he was saying, “Let's not get arrested. This is the night of the big bust.” We had no idea it was the night of the big bust, but we went to get showers and go to the movies. At the Beacon Theatre. I saw more movies at the Thalia, and I remember sitting in the aisle even. Do you remember sitting in the aisle at the Thalia?

00:39:01 Q: I don't remember sitting in the aisle of the Thalia, but I certainly remember the Thalia.

Greene: Sometimes there were not enough seats, so we'd go against fire laws, standing room only. We actually sat in the aisles and watched movies. Ingmar Bergman and other international films. It was such a fire trap, but that's how we did it.

00:39:17 Q: So your experience at Barnard was a pretty wonderful one, wasn't it?

Greene: I had a great time at Barnard I felt like I was able by two majors, and that sounds funny, to go around in selecting my friends.

Oh, I didn't tell you about my sophomore year! That's what was left out. So my sophomore year I saved up my money and kept on working, and I earned money to pay my own rent in Plimpton Hall, which was the opening of Plimpton Hall.

Q: Yeah.

Greene: Were you in Plimpton Hall?

Q: Yeah.

Greene: That's what I thought. Okay, so Plimpton Hall, we had our own government. I got elected Minister of Justice, so I was supposed to set up all the rules. All the rules were that we had complete anarchy. That was my first act: I abolished all the rules! That was my first act as Minister of Justice.

Q: There was one rule: You had to sign your guest in and out, that was it.

Greene: Right, and there were no more, "The guests can't stay overnight." They could live there. So anyhow, Ellen Tucker, who was my friend from high school, was in my suite.

Madeleine was across the hall because we couldn't get her into the suite, because I was later on the list, because I was still classified as a sort of commuter, but now allowed to get into Plimpton Hall because they had this new dormitory that was open to me, that none of the dormitories had been open to before. I didn't get first choice of suite because I was kind of

getting in by the grace of Plimpton Hall. Ellen was with me and she was a “commuter” too, so also late on the list. So, we moved in with the construction and everything still going on.

Q: I remember the walls weren't there!

Greene: Some of the walls weren't there.

Q: On the first floor!

Greene: So in the corner, in the biggest room, was a senior. She got the big room because she was first to choose, and she was a senior. She never came out of her room all the time, except to comment that we should get guys out of the suite and things like that. Every now and then, she'd make some comment, and she'd also walk around in her pajamas all the time. I don't mean that she was lewd or sexy, I mean she—

Q: She was depressed.

Greene: So the four of us, the rest of the suite, because there were five women in the suite, would cook together. One of the people in my suite, was in charge of cooking along with Ellen, because they were the best cooks. The two of them would always be cooking and I would be doing the dishes, which I didn't mind. They were better cooks than me, I had Ellen as a friend and Madeleine across the hall, and Mary Gorayeb who was from the Catholic school crowd who I really liked across the hall. I mean the Catholic school crowd was always the people who got me to read books and stuff like that, to keep up with them. That included Mary Gordon, if I didn't say Mary Gordon. It was Mary Gordon, Cathy Biddick, Mary Gorayeb, Maureen Stratford —did I say that already? And there was Maureen Strafford, who ended up going to medical school later on, but she wasn't in the original “pre-med twenty.”

Q: The only one of those people I really knew was Mary Gordon. I didn't know her well, but she lived across the hall in Hewitt to my friend Leslie. I barely knew her. She was very short.

Greene: But she was going to be a writer even then, I think. She was an English major, or a medieval studies/classics major, I can't remember which major she was. I was kind of awed by all their knowledge of literature and everything. The Catholic school crowd was just well-read. And well-regimented to read all of these classics and modern things. They had a very good background. I think they had all studied Latin, I hadn't studied Latin. Norman studied Latin in college, and I always thought I should study Latin. I hated French. But I had started French way back when—we had to take three years of college language, or satisfy three years of college language. So I started out—I think I had enough French—oh, this is a funny story. I hated French in high school, and that was my worst subject *always*, for many, many years. I think the instruction was horrible, but just the same, I was doing really well in everything else except for French. I just said, "Forget it. I can't do languages."

We had to take a, what's it called, an SAT? Before it was called ACT or something. I forget what it was called.

Q: It was a proficiency test.

Greene: An achievement test in a foreign language, to go to Barnard. Which is nearly why I thought I couldn't go to Barnard, because I didn't think I could pass the achievement test in French—but I did. I just want to tell you the secret to passing an achievement test when you don't know a damn thing.

Q: Tell.

00:44:53.25 Greene: It was quite amazing. There'd always be two answers that were very similar, like one was "Belle" and one was "Balle." B-E-L-L-E and B-A-L-L-E, and you knew that one of those two had to be the right answer. And "Belle or Balle" resembled a little bit the other two choices. So you'd pick "Belle" or "Balle" that looked a little bit like answer #4, and you'd get a 530 in the achievement test.

Q: You figured that out just while taking the test?

Greene: I figured out that I had to do that, because I couldn't understand a damn thing under pressure, in French, or else I would fail the French test. That's how I did the achievement test and I got a 530 on it.

Q: That's very impressive!

Greene: I'm very impressed with how I did it, but I didn't know a damn thing on that test. I swear, I spent the whole test figuring out the answer by looking what it—two would really match each other, and one of the two, a little bit looked like a third thing, that they were trying to confuse you with, and you'd pick that answer and do pretty well.

Q: Well, now the secret's out!

Greene: They don't do the achievement test like that anymore. So, I started out in second-year French now. I passed my achievement test for whatever level that got me to. It was really hard. All of a sudden, everything was in French. I went to the library once a week, and I xeroxed the same passage in English and I read it in English, then I learned the vocabulary in French. I spent my time learning the vocabulary, reading it in English and learning the

vocabulary. Because when you're taking so many science courses, so many English courses, so many anthropology courses, you can't spend time on French.

Q: Well, you got through.

Greene: Oh yeah, and I did really well. My first semester in French, which I couldn't drop—because of the language requirement and even thought I wanted to drop it because I was sick with mono—I got a D. So then I got a C, second semester. Then I got a B. Then I got an A. That was all because I got better at it. But also I took these courses with these amazingly smart, nice people. There was somebody who taught French mythology. I loved that course. I read it all in English, learned all the vocabulary in French, and went to a French tutor who helped me write my papers, because I still wouldn't have done them in French.

Q: I took one class in French, and I knew that I would fail it. So after one class I dropped it. For Italian, which I found out was easier.

Greene: I should have done that, but I was so busy finishing up the requirement, that—I mean *that* I hated, the whole French thing. The idea that I had to take French. As a matter of fact in medical school, for fun, I took Spanish. In the summertime, to learn to speak to people in the hospital in Spanish.

Okay, to get more up to the present, I thought that if you study, and you work, and you concentrate, everything happens. That was my fairy-tale—

Q: That's what they taught us.

Greene: Also that life gets simpler as you get older. That was another one of my fairy-tales, which doesn't exactly happen. Life gets a bit more complicated, but nobody tells you that. So after I was in medical school, I went to my residency. Then I planned on getting pregnant.

00:48:30 Q: Your residency was in—?

Greene: Let's see. In medicine.

Q: But you didn't have to choose a field?

Greene: Not yet. Well medicine is a field. It's a specialty. Medicine is a specialty.

Q: Oh, you mean like internal medicine.

Greene: Internal medicine is a specialty, as opposed to surgery or pediatrics or psychiatry.

Okay, so I went to medical school for four years, then I did an internship and residency for three years, and after that I was picking—I was going to do a fellowship and I decided on endocrinology. This was all *boom boom boom boom boom*, and then I was going to get pregnant during my endocrine fellowship. And then I *didn't* get pregnant during my endocrine fellowship. So this was, now we're talking late seventies. This was '78 to '80 when I was doing my fellowship and I wasn't getting pregnant. So when I wasn't getting pregnant, I thought if you go to enough doctors and if you do enough tests, if you do enough standing on your head—

Q: If you work hard at it—

Greene: Yeah, if you work hard at it, you get pregnant. And it wasn't working, and I kept on thinking the reason I hadn't gotten pregnant all of those years when other people had

abortions and miscarriages and stuff like that, was I knew how to use contraception. The dumb people, the inferior people who aren't so superior like I was, didn't figure it out. That they were stupid in some way and so couldn't figure it out.

So anyhow, I was getting pretty desperate, so I joined this organization called Resolve, which is an infertility organization. Then of course I became like vice president of Resolve in two minutes because I knew so much medicine. While I was doing my endocrine fellowship, I was reading all of the articles on infertility at that point. And at that point they started doing things like, in vitro fertilization started happening. Friends of mine from Resolve actually went to Texas or Virginia, which were the two places that started doing in vitro at that point, because this is the really early days. [Dr. Patrick] Steptoe had just gotten Baby Louise, and everything was happening. But you had to spend a month in one of these places like Texas or Virginia, to get pregnant. I didn't have a month because I was doing my stuff, and I was just trying to figure it out.

So I was reading the medical literature and figuring out how I could get pregnant if I just did this and this, and telling doctors what they should do to get me pregnant basically. Really getting concerned that I wasn't getting pregnant, and being active in Resolve in my spare time. I was having trouble and it was probably from the D.E.S [Diethylstilbestrol] that my mother had taken when she was pregnant, because I had concluded that by then. I decide that if I would get pregnant, it wasn't worth whatever exam I had to pass. I was taking various boards, but I told God, in my new superstitious ways that only happen in tragedies or in celebrations, because I don't usually believe in God in between—but of course I promised

God that I could flunk the exam if I could just be pregnant, because it was better to be pregnant.

Q: That was the trade-off.

Greene: Right, I'd make bargains with God every now and then. Although, in my more rational moments, I say that if there is a God, God doesn't care if you pass or fails exams.

Q: That's a good point!

Greene: It's a very logical point, but at that point it seemed like I'd be willing to fail a few exams. Even board exams, like who cares, as long as I would have the baby. I went out and got lots of literature on infertility, and I found out that I was going through equal craziness of everybody else in infertility. I wrote a book, which has never been published. It's a cartoon book on pegasosaurs.

00:53:00 Q: Pegasosaurs?

Greene: Pegasosaurs pushing prams in the park. It was an illustrated cartoon book with dinosaurs that are pregnant. Anyhow, that should be published one day, because it's kind of clever. But anyhow, you could see where I was headed. but it was just a kind of cartoon vision in my head that I enjoyed.

00:54:01 Q: When did you go to get—?

Greene: To get to adopt? I was doing everything at once, because I'm a control freak about doing everything at once, so I was trying to get pregnant, trying to adopt, trying to do this, trying to do that. That became a big obsession. Then I also became really Jewish for a while?

Q: Because, of course—

Greene: Because that might help too. Who knows?

Q: God might be involved there.

Greene: God might be involved there. I studied Hebrew for a year, in case that was important, and went on a trip to Israel at the end of the year to reward myself to put a little paper in the Wailing Wall, in case that—

Q: You were covering all bases.

Greene: Covering all bases. Whatever I had left out—

00:54:43 Q: When did you go to fertility treatment? Did you go to fertility treatment?

Greene: All the time. But not—

Q: Did you try IVF [in vitro fertilization]?

Greene: Oh I did, later on, because I was still so—Oh, I finally did go, but after I adopted, because IVF was still so pie-in-the-sky, and so time consuming, that it was never really—

Q: Practicable.

Greene: Practical. Unless I wanted to drop everything, which I was considering doing at many times. But it still was so low-success rate. It wasn't just the time, it was really the success-rate that was weighing on me. It wasn't even the expense. It was—

Q: The cost-benefit ratio.

Greene: Yeah, it was like if they told me there's a fifty percent chance of getting pregnant, which there now is, at almost every place that's a good place. It's more than fifty percent in some places. But if they had told me at that time that there was a fifty percent chance of getting pregnant, then I would have been in Texas. But there was a very low chance of getting pregnant at most of these places at that time.

Finally, Alison is born at the end of September and we actually got the baby.

01:02:02 Q: Straight from the hospital?

Greene: I chose friends of mine who live in our building, who had adopted their second child from Korea, who had picked up the baby in the Beth Israel [Medical Center] parking lot, because I'm not supposed to meet the birth mother. But they got to meet the birth mother—and her aunt—and give us Alison. So there was Norman, in this coffee shop that doesn't exist anymore, to get Alison with me, and this other couple who had adopted were there. That's how we brought home Alison from the hospital.

Greene: I have two granddaughters.

Q: You have two?! Another one from Alison?

Greene: Yeah. Alison is thirty-two, she'll be thirty-three this year. Her first daughter is Jennifer. Her second daughter, Samantha, is five years old, almost six. So they're eight years apart, and my two daughters are eight years apart.

Anyhow, I got pregnant, had early miscarriages, then I had a *late* miscarriage, and all of a sudden I wanted a second baby, after my late miscarriage.

Q: Okay, I thought you were unable to get pregnant.

Greene: Then all of a sudden I started having early miscarriages. Then I got pregnant and I was five months pregnant when I had a miscarriage.

Q: Oh, agony. That's horrible.

Greene: So then, all of a sudden, I decided I needed 2.0 babies, not 1.0 babies, after the second miscarriage. We got a phone call. Actually, what happened was, it was the summertime. Norman got tickets to the show *Black and Blue*. Remember that show? This must be—let's see, Becky is twenty-four, almost twenty-five—so it was like twenty-four-and-a-half years ago. I got tickets to *Black and Blue*. My mother-and-father-in-law were coming over, Norman's parents. It was supposed to be that one of Norman's parents were staying home. Norman and I, and one of Norman's parents, and I think Alison were going to the show, for the four tickets. Somehow or other, Norman decided he wanted to stay home. It was complicated, but for some reason, he stayed home. We went to the show—I went, Alison went, and my in-laws went out to the show, and Norman got a phone call. That somebody knew I wanted to adopt a baby and there was a woman who had just delivered at Bellevue Hospital. Without any planning, without any anything, did Norman want this baby? He knew I wanted a baby, and he actually said yes.

So that night, my mother-in-law and father-in-law stayed in our apartment, and Norman and I walked over to Bellevue. Alison was now almost eight. We met with the woman, 01:14:38 Q: So what's, in your life, been the happiest you've ever been?

Greene: I think each time I got a baby, I was pretty happy. That was amazing. I would say that's even happier than getting married. I mean, married was like it just sort of happened.

Q: What you're describing is what we thought that life was going to be. I thought that's what life is going to be. I was *wrong*, but that's what I thought. You go to college, you fall in love, you get engaged, you get married. No suicide attempts or—

Greene: We didn't have so much drama. Life goes progressively in an organized fashion, although there's lots of disorganization that happens in life that you don't anticipate. I think that's what I—oh, so I applied to graduate school, did I tell you about that?

Q: You mean aside from medical school?

Greene: Yeah.

01:15:38 Q: After medical school?

Greene: Yeah, more recently. I went to more school from 2009 to 2012. I got my master's in bioethics. So bioethics, you have to write an essay as a sample essay of why you want to go to graduate school. My essay was on puberty delay systems.

Q: I know, you told me! You made this presentation at the dinner. You said you could delay—

Greene: I said that you could delay, through the drugs from *in vitro* and everything. You can delay puberty, just like you can control—you know, Lupron and similar drugs that can put you into a temporary menopausal state, could also delay puberty. They actually use this for children with unfortunate brain tumors and things that cause premature puberty. In other words, it's not very healthy to have a seven-year-old go through puberty. Not only do they

have to socially deal with all these crazy hormones, but also, they have very short stature because two years after puberty, your bones fuse at the ends, and you don't grow any taller. So you would have very developed seven-year-olds who all of a sudden are very short nine-year-olds, and stay that way once their bones fuse. You want to delay puberty in certain medical circumstances, so it's not as fanciful as it sounds. It's a real medical thing.

From that, I was thinking, or maybe before that I was thinking, from *in vitro*, I was thinking, if you could shut down estrogen and testosterone, if you want to, by giving these hormones from the hypothalamus, essentially synthetic versions of the hormones. My fanciful thing was, what about delaying these puberties until everyone is twenty-five and old enough to graduate from—

Q: I know, I remember your presenting this!

Greene: —from graduate school? And I said I would send out Puberty Delay Centers of America to the shopping malls across the country. P-D-C-A. Because I said nobody would ever send their first kid there, because nobody would ever believe their eight-year-old darling is going to turn into a fourteen-year-old lunatic, but there are enough second children in America, and people will be able to do planning, through my PDCA.

Q: Sounds like a good idea to me!

Greene: I thought it was a very lucrative prospect for endocrinology, because endocrinology is considered an intellectual, conceptual specialty. We don't have the procedures. See, the only way you really make medicine money nowadays is to cut or do procedures on people.

Q: Well, you could fix my thyroid—who knows what I'll turn into?

Greene: Right, but that doesn't make big money. You have to do big procedures to make big money. You have to stick tubes up people into people, or even better yet, put a robot to do the procedure.

Q2: I've had them all!

Greene: You've had them all? Yes, that's how you make big money, and as a matter of fact, at hospitals now you have a \$2,000 facility fee just to have a procedure, without even having the procedure. You're paying for the procedure *facility*. A facility fee, that's the right word. So you have a facility fee to do an infusion to do an injection to do a cutting to do a—and there's a five thousand dollar robot fee!

Q: Robot fee?

Greene: Yeah, because there's only one company that makes the robots. It's called Da Vinci. And if you have a Da Vinci robot doing your surgery—let's say you have prostate cancer and you want it done robotically, or some other tumor that they want, or some other cutting that they want to do robotically, the surgeon sits at the procedure console, and there's a technician who puts the arms or nurse or whatever of the thing—I think this is going to be the undoing of surgery, because they'll have people in India doing operations, sitting at a console. They don't know yet, it's going to undo them. But meanwhile the robot is cutting, and there's a \$5,000 fee for renting and maintaining the robot, keeping the robot healthy or something.

01:19:48 Q: Robot well-being. Well you really had quite a time there. Just chugging along.

Greene: Oh, so Norman told everyone that I was in graduate school, that he was married to a graduate student. Everybody said I was like a trophy wife if I went to graduate school. He's got a lot of mileage about being married to a graduate student.

Q: So what did you get, your PhD?

Greene: No, master's.

01:20:17 Q: So what now? Build a city in the desert? Desalinate the ocean?

Greene: I've been giving lectures in endocrinology. You get paid nothing for it, but I'm doing a lot of stuff.

Q: Go ahead!

Greene: Okay, so one of the most important things I learned in life, which has nothing to do with all of the above, is which I almost think would be a worthwhile exercise for everybody, is to tell you about yourself and never talk about your profession. Like who are you without a profession? What motivates you? What keeps you? What do you think? What are your values? Forget about your career—

Q: In groups? Family?

Greene: We'd have to talk for long amounts of time about ourselves and never mention our degrees.

Q: Among other parents?

Greene: Among other parents Because it's scary how much of your identity is linked to, "I'm a doctor," or whatever it is. People get into that to define themselves, and the question is who you are when you take off that coat. When you stop saying, "I'm a superior person and I should get into Harvard Medical School."

Q: Did you discover something?

Greene: You had to talk about what you care about, and what's meaningful to you and everything else besides, "I get my ego from being a doctor." What I care about: my kids, but I don't spend enough time with my kids. I don't spend enough time with my granddaughters,.

Q: Are they in the city?

Greene: They live in Rockland County. My daughter right now and her husband are living with his parents in Rockland County, They're saving up money to buy a house. My younger daughter is becoming a psychologist one of these days. She just got admitted to graduate school at Columbia Teachers College in a combination master's counseling and psychology degree. She's already my psychologist. I went to talk to her this morning, and it was just wonderfulQ: That's wonderful.

Q: So what is there—

Greene: So what is there in life? So what I like to do when I'm not doing all of the above that I've talked about, is I love doing watercolor painting. I love that. I go every summer, for a week of watercolor painting. Why don't I do it all year long? I'm too busy to do it all year long, and I need to carve out time to do it. If I don't have a carve-out time, I can't do it. But I've been doing that all along.

01:24:14 Q: What is there in life that you do not have, that you would want?

My mom died in March of last year, just a year ago. I have a lot of her estate junk, For some reason, I fit into my mother's clothes. So I have my clothes I didn't want to give away. My two sisters don't fit into my mother's clothes for various reasons. Anyhow, I fit into my mother's clothes, so I've kept a lot of my mother's clothes, and my mother's taste in clothes all of a sudden zoomed up before she died in the last three or four years. In recent years she acquired nice clothes that I don't want to just give away, plus they're my mother's clothes. So I have my mother's clothes, I have my clothes, I have too many clothes. We have papers about that estate. We have my ninety-five year old mother-in-law, who I still have to care for, who is in White Plains. We've set up all of these shifts to take care of her.

Q: You mean she's not in a facility? She's alone in her apartment?

Greene: Her house in White Plains, which is Norman's ancestral house that he grew up in. At age four or five he moved there.

Q: So you'll never be able to get rid of that house?

Greene: Right now, she's going to live forever. She's ninety-five, physically *wrecked*. Mentally, pretty good. Plays the piano for an hour and a half everyday on her baby grand piano—I'm not sure whether it's grand or baby grand. She plays simplified Chopin, which she has simplified for herself, so she doesn't have to play the parts which are too hard for her.

Q: That doesn't mean she's not going to die.

Greene: No, but it means intellectually, she's stimulated to go. Part of this is great stuff. Part of it is Norman feels incredible responsibility towards her that we have to go shopping for her every weekend.

Greene: Oh god, he writes articles all the time. He's written like ten law review articles in eight years. I mean, really good articles. He writes really well. He does good stuff.

Q: I always figured we could be friends, but we're too dumb for you.

Greene: No, you're not!

Q: And lazy!

Greene: Not lazy. Not dumb. Not at all. The point is, I guess, you asked me something to start out with, like my family? There's too much stuff about competition and smartness being a high value. Smartness isn't the whole thing.

01:28:01 Q: But look how it worked, really well.

Greene: Oh, it's a good motivator. Competition and smartness.

01:29:32 Q: Still, your life, as lives go, is pretty golden. Yes, the child thing, very, very, very hard—

Greene: Yes, it was very hard. And getting pregnant and not being pregnant was really hard. Infertility was really sucky. Q: That can't be unusual.

Greene: No, it's not. If I look at my, what they call craziness or anger or sadness or depression, about all of that, I'm like a study in infertility. I'm not anything unique or

creative about it. Everybody does their thing in a very similar pattern and you think you're being so creative and unique and you're not.

Q: And you hate people telling you you're not. Because of course you know you're the only person in the world that could possibly ever go through this.

Greene: Right. Is there anything else I should tell you?

Q2: Oh, one question you [directing comment to interviewer Michelle Patrick] used to ask that I always thought got good answers: What advice would you give? What advice would you give to yourself—

01:31:38 Q: If you could go back and see your young self walking through those gates for the first time, what advice would you give to yourself?

Greene: I don't know, I was just trying to think of what I would have done differently. I think a lot of the stuff, I needed to do exactly that way. I hate saying "exactly the same," that's redundant.

Q: No, that's all right. There's nothing you would have left out or done differently?

Greene: I don't know why we needed to be married so young, to tell you the truth, although it really worked out well for me because I wasn't calmed down to study at Barnard when I got there. It was like I had to deal with social life before I could deal with school life.

Q: I *completely* understand that.

Greene: And I didn't understand what I was going through, but I do understand it in retrospect, because otherwise it was really the way our lives were structured. Honestly, this

joke about puberty delay is what you really need in some way if you're going to create students who are just studying for a while and putting off everything else and social lives and everything else, whether it be gay or straight or anything else or bi or transsexual. I mean, that's what comes over their minds at a certain age, and I'm sure that's what was coming over my mind at that age.

Q: You were very lucky.

Greene: I was very lucky in many ways. In other ways, I would have picked a guy who likes to dance, or doesn't save as much as he saves. I mean there's certain things I could pick on, I'm sure he could pick on things about me.

Q: But not the major life stuff.

Greene: I guess the major life stuff, I've gotten.

01:33:28 Q: Is there anything that I haven't covered about you, about Barnard and you, about the effect of Barnard on you?

Greene: I really think that Barnard had to improve a lot. In many ways it has improved. Certain things about Barnard nowadays irritate me.

Q: Such as?

Greene: Okay, first of all, the restrictive treating-you-like-a-little-girl stuff was garbage.

Q: Right, but that's gone.

Greene: No, but even from the posture pictures in our underwear, to the chemistry with the Kings or any of that stuff, and certain departments were horrible, and certain requirements were horrible. But what's interesting to me, I know people who struggled with the language requirement, which they still have at Barnard, but not as much. I think it's two years instead of three years. I know of a student who wanted to do speech, what do you call it—sign language—as her language, and they wouldn't let her. I mean, they're still busy with rules that probably are pretty arcane. I'm sure there could be a computer coding requirement to take the place of a language requirement. I think Barnard still has some stiffness and lack of flexibility in trying to maintain certain standards. On the other hand, they also didn't have enough basic offerings that I think were good at Columbia in terms of the contemporary civilization stuff, which I think was much better at Columbia. That's why I ended up taking this course in the classics and stuff like that, that I really wanted to take, because I really thought that should be part of a college education.

I think that the sciences had to be much more involved with discovery in the lab. When I took this really hard organic chemistry course, it was pretty exciting to be able to discover what was in your unknowns and stuff and really be working with things, and creating experiments. I think the best science course I ever took was by someone named Eric Holzman, at Columbia, who later on, he was very involved in the anti-Vietnam protests.

Greene: Okay, so he was one of my favorite, favorite, teachers.

Greene: Anyway, he gave a test like I've never seen before and I've never seen after. You could bring in all the books you wanted to bring in, all the notes you wanted to bring in, anything. You could have a desk piled high with notes and books, and he'd give you a test

which would be: “Devise an experiment to show _____; “How would you prove _____?”; “How do you prove that it’s not _____?” And you had to create an experiment, while you sat at the test. Unless you understood the material and could manipulate the material—it was an awesome test; I’ve never seen anybody think to create a test like that. It was probably the best test I’ve ever seen in my life, as opposed to this French test I mentioned taking with the “Belles” and “Balles.” But seriously, you had to think. It really treated you like an adult. I loved being treated as an adult. Still Barnard is very, what’s the word, pedantic?

Q: Condescending?

Greene: Condescending is the right word. In the way it treats its students, and they still have crazy, crazy rules and regimens. I became friendly—Harriet Mogul became the doctor.

Q: I didn’t go to the doctor much.

Greene: I don’t know why, but I ended up talking to the doctor, maybe because I was interested in being pre-med or something, I was asking her questions. I don’t remember being examined by her. But she became an endocrinologist later on and did a fellowship years after she was at Barnard. I’m friendly with Harriet Mogul. She was about ten years older than me. As a matter of fact, her son, Fred Mogul is on NPR, you can hear his name anytime on NPR. I’m an NPR junkie.

What was I going to say? They still have crazy restrictive stuff at Barnard, and right now—

01:38:01 Q: Would you say that was your most, your biggest disappointment at Barnard? The rigidity?

Greene: The rigidity, the lack of sensitivity, treating us as little girls all the time. I think the more they treated you as a little girl, the more I felt I had to rebel against being treated as a little girl. They set up a wall, and what's a wall for except to knock against? Or push over? It was really unnecessary. I think they could have had a lot more respect for us. I felt that I got a lot more respect, and a lot more sophisticated courses in biology and in science, at Columbia. But on the other hand, the anthropology department at Barnard at that time was fantastic, so I would go back and forth to take the best courses. I wasn't taking the easiest courses, I was taking the courses that I thought were most interesting. I took a horrible genetics course at Barnard, which was so antiquated. Then I went across the street to Columbia and took genetics all over again, with somebody named Sederoff, who wrote a textbook on genetics, which was the latest molecular genetics, way ahead of its time. And Holzman, the one who I was talking about before, wrote a textbook on cell biology. That was the first textbook on cell organelles and things like that, they were so superior as teachers

He was like one of my favorite, favorite, favorite, people. There were so many good people too, it just was that I didn't get to know them. Oh! I was going to say one of the worst courses I ever took at Barnard, because I thought I was going to go to law school after college, I just liked biology. If you had asked me what I was going to do, I would have told you I was going to become an architect or I was going to become a lawyer, or that I was going to become the first woman on the Supreme Court. I had plans, grandiose plans, but I was having plans. When I signed up for political science with a course called Urban Politics. The professor was writing a textbook on urban politics, and he read aloud from the chapters, and you had to take notes because the book hadn't been published and he was going to test

you on his book. It was like, “How the City Works,” and there was a comptroller and there’s a deputy mayor and there’s a this and a that. It was like—

Q: Deadly.

Greene: It was deadly, a structure of politics that I couldn’t care less about. I said, if this is what politics is about, then I’m out.

01:41:20 Q: All right, so those were your disappointments.

Greene: But I made some really good friends that I still keep up with at Barnard. I guess I had taken care of the boyfriend, so I didn’t have to worry about dating, so I could make female friends.

Q: It freed you up to have a life.

Greene: It was a whole other thing. One thing was taken care of. I really needed that to be a student, and I needed that to have female friends, I needed that to not have competition with everybody, and to do my own thing.

Q: I understand exactly what you mean. Exactly.

Greene: It was very uncomplicated. Although I have other friends who got married early, and some of them got divorced, and some of them stayed married. Ellen Tucker got married probably right after college and she’s still married. She lives uptown here, on a hundred and —

Q: Was she in Cambridge for a while?

Greene: No.

Q: For some reason I thought she was—

Greene: Madeleine, I'm still friendly with. She went to medical school later on in life.

Q: I guess the expectations were high.

Greene: Not to class. I liked to watch how people dressed. One woman wore real ermine and real jewels. She was a premed I think. There was somebody who I liked who was a math major who wore gold all the time. I don't mean real gold, I mean gold things. Sometimes tiger prints. I liked her. She wore gold sandals, which I thought was quite unique, and gold lamé things.

Q: Was she from the South?

Greene: I don't know where she was from, but it was just kind of distinctive. People had their distinctive—

Q: Yes, they did, they did.

Greene: I mean I was running around wearing my boots or whatever. Fatigue boots, like I was in the military. That was the first time in life we were allowed to wear jeans, because in high school I always wore skirts.

Q: You couldn't wear pants. Not even slacks.

Greene: Denim jeans, or bellbottoms, or whatever I was wearing. And then I wore a lot of folk outfits. I was in my Joan Baez period.

Q: We all were. because our skirts were up to it, right?

Greene: Right, our skirts were short, sometimes very long.

Q: They were just not a normal. They were either all way down to your calf, or up to your—

Greene: But I still have a lot of my peasant blouses. I went to a Hungarian store. Maybe it was even, did they have in the Hungarian Tea Shop place, did they sell blouses? I remember going to a Hungarian store and buying a blouse with flowers all over it. It's so sheer, the material. I could still wear it now, but with like a camisole underneath. It's like sheer material but with bright red and pink and—

Q: I remember a store like that, but it was on Broadway. That incense when you walked in, and then there were the sheer things, and water pipes.

[End of second file]

[Begin third audio file]

00:00:03 Greene: So I'll say that having two sets of—we and one other class had two sets of strikes. There's another class. Let's see, it must be the class before r us, right? That had two sets of strikes because nobody else would have had two sets of strikes.

Q: I don't know what was going on in the thirties. There were other really climactic times, but I don't really know about them. I read Mary McCarthy, she's writing in the thirties, probably there was a fair amount of political activity.

Greene: There was also a pre-McCarthy period in 1917 or so, when I read about that.

Q: Right, exactly. The Sanco and Vanzetti and—

Greene: Yeah, all of that stuff, but also people accused of being Communist way back when. A lot of strife I think in the post-World War II period, if I got it correctly, but I don't know that much history. I pick up history vicariously.

00:01:02 Q: The McCarthy era, right?

Greene: McCarthy I knew about when I was growing up. My parents were very aware of what was going on and I remember watching hearings on TV—

Q: Because they'd lived through that, but also the thirties, because a lot of people were active Communists—

Greene: So my parents were products of the thirties, and I always felt a Depression mentality in my life, like I had to save, save, save, I was always working, working, working, working, and I always had part-time jobs in high school, college, anything else. I was always working on top of everything else. I didn't take money for granted in the same way, or I didn't think it was going to come to me. What was I going to say about that? I grew up in a politically active household, where sometimes I felt like we would talk more about politics when I grew up than we would talk about feelings. I mean, my parents might have disputed that, but in sixth grade I wrote a paper on the separation of church and state. We had to choose a newspaper article—

Q: Would you have had it otherwise?

Greene: No, I loved it. I loved it, I loved it, I loved it. I was a violent atheist all through my childhood. I would argue with people. In kindergarten I got sent to the principal because I wouldn't say the prayer before milk and cookies.

Q: Well you just had a different point of view.

Greene: I would not say the Pledge of Allegiance when they added "under God." I remember this, I was all involved in the trial of Vashti McCollom, I don't know if you remember?

Q: No I don't.

Greene: She was an atheist. She wanted to get the Bible out of schools, and this was all the separation of church and state. This must be around 1961 or '62, when I was busy writing articles about the separation of church and state in sixth grade. I was very involved in every newspaper article—oh! One of the best things to ever happen to me was also one of the worst thing that happened to me. Talk about making lemonade out of lemons.

When I was in junior high school, when it was called junior high school, my father who was an English teacher always responded to my assignments. When I had an assignment to write a short story based on a current newspaper article—and this really influenced my whole life afterwards, I wasn't think about that before—he gave me a newspaper article on the Stanley Milgram experiment. You know what the Milgram experiment is? At Yale University, they had people who were test subjects and people who were testers, and the test subjects were really the actors. The people who were the testers were the real test subjects. They had to give electric shocks to people, from behind—

Q: Oh yeah. That came out recently, right?

Greene: A lot more information about it, and they've written and rewritten the results, and they argue for and against the Milgram experiment. The Milgram experiment was one of the initial experiments in deceptive psychology, where the testers were told that they had to give an electric shock to a person who had answered incorrect questions, and the shocks went successively up to higher and higher shocks. People screaming and saying, "Stop, stop, stop, I'm being hurt."

Q: Proving basically that people aren't so nice.

Greene: Well, proving that people take orders and all that. This was done I guess after the Nazis to show that people respond to orders, especially when it's given in an educational setting like Yale University or whatever. So in junior high school I got this article courtesy of my father to write this short story on, and I wrote a short story on it. It's called "Forty Minus Fourteen Equals XXX," because the last shock was XXX. Out of the forty people that were in the test run, all but fourteen complied with giving shocks to people. So that's the title of the story. Anyway, I gave it into my English teacher, who didn't like me. I had a feeling that she did not like little white kids who were smart alocs in their class.

She gave me a C on it. I took it back in tears and showed it to my father, and my father said, "This is really good. Take it to the head of the Creative Writing Department in your junior high school." So I took it to him—and actually the teacher was black, who was in charge of the English Department Creative Writing. 00:05:48

Q: The teacher was black, and he was a man?

Greene: And the head of the Short Story Department was black also. When people were called black and not African-American. So anyway—

Q: So how did that turn out?

Greene: So he loved the story. He submitted the story to the New York City short story writing contest, and I won second prize in the New York City short story writing contest, based on this story.

Q: Which must have really endeared you to your teacher even more.

Greene: Well, not only that, but I also learned that teachers aren't always right. That teachers don't know what they're doing. Maybe she didn't understand the story. And that I could be valued for doing it, and it made me really incensed to have this teacher, who made us spend the rest of the semester doing charting of sentences.

Q: Diagramming.

Greene: Diagramming sentences. Like where the adverb had to go on a slant, or something like that. It was the rest of the semester, and I decided this teacher is trash already, because of this. Anyhow, so there I have a prize from the Urban League in my house. I won second prize for this story. I got it from—who was it? Whitney Young?

Q: Whitney Young.

Greene: Right, gave me the prize, personally, in my junior high school, for second place in the New York City short story contest, and that was the beginning of my bioethics writings.

So anyhow, I still remember that story, and I love telling people that story, that just because you get devalued doesn't mean you should be devaluing yourself.

Q: That's a good story.

Greene: It is a very nice story.

00:07:26 Q2: What about the agent provocateur story you wanted to get to?

Q: Remember, you wanted to address that. During all the political—

Greene: So during all the political things, I was also getting very suspicious that some people were trying to provoke us to be more active, to be more political, to perhaps be more destructive. I didn't think of this as a total anarchy in any way, but I was thinking that some people were trying to get us more violent, destroying things. I don't know. I wasn't interested in destroying things, I was interested in changing the university, or changing the mentality, and certainly ending the war, as if occupying the university was going to end a war. I didn't know, but I was really against the war, and I felt that it was worth even going to prison for, although I never went to prison for anything. But I did understand the mentality of the Civil Rights Movement of '64 that people would—I thought they were heroes, the people who went to—I had no intention of being a martyr, but to go to jail was something I could conceive of in those days—

Q: There were heroes then.

Greene: They were heroes, but I didn't want to be a dead martyr. But to go to jail, I would conceive of going to jail in those days, and whether it would ruin my reputation for the rest

of my life wasn't something I was conceiving of, but I remember a sense of almost guilt or disappointment that I *wasn't* arrested like the rest of my friends were, or feeling that it was sneaky that I had left. But I wasn't leaving out of sneaky mode, I was leaving out of showering and hanging out with Norman.

00:09:08 Q: We had a shower in Hamilton Hall. I discovered it. I went looking in the tunnels for what there might be.

Greene: And you found a shower? Well the other thing I was going to say—Hamilton Hall was a dormitory, right? Or it wasn't a dormitory?

Q: No. It was just a lecture hall, but it had tunnels and in one of the tunnels there was a shower. You know, you had five minutes for a shower. You had to get in and out in five minutes, because there were so many people. But the idea was everybody had to shower every day, because otherwise we would be really unpleasant [laughs].

Greene: So how many days were you in there?

Q: Eight.

Greene: And you got kicked out of Hamilton Hall?

Q: The police arrested us—but we did not resist. There was a talk, we knew the police were going to come. Are we going to do passive resistance? No, we'd seen enough people kicked in the teeth and—

Greene: So you were arrested? You went to jail.

Q: Yeah. But we did not resist. When they came, we let them lead us out. One white student, got into my cell, said, “Oh you chickens, you should’ve fought back.” And I just said, “Shut up.” Because there was no point in getting brutalized. We’d occupied this building for eight days. There was no point in getting the tar kicked out of us. As they knew, we *knew* that they would kick at us. She didn’t know that *she’d* get beaten up, because people like her, they didn’t usually get beaten up.

Greene: So she did get beaten up?

Q: Oh yeah, she had a big—yeah, and she was really angry about it, but any black person could have told her, “This is the sort of activity that leads to getting beaten up!”

Greene: Well see, I had no idea that Hamilton was only the black place, until I went to this 2008 reunion. I didn’t know about that.

Q: It started out, everyone was there. But then there were people who were throwing candy bars around and putting up Mao posters—

Q2: We’ve got to stop.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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