

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Lilly Soohoo Louie

2015

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Lily Soohoo Louie conducted by Frances Connell on August 9, 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: Lily Soohoo Louie

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Frances Connell

Date: August 9, 2015

00:00:07 Q: This is an interview taking place with Lily Soohoo Louie, at her niece's house in New York City, on August 9th, 2015. This is for the Barnard College Voices Oral History Project, and the interviewer is Frances Connell.

Okay, so Lily, we usually begin by asking you to talk a little bit about—well you can begin wherever you want, but we usually start about your childhood, a little bit about your family, where you came from, where they came from, as much as you want to share.

00:00:52 Louie: Well, I'm glad I'm here in Chelsea, New York, which has changed, because I grew up in Chelsea, partly. Actually, I grew up in Baltimore, on Eutaw Street near—I guess it's the market area now, and near the bus station. And kind of journeyed myself by bus—no actually not [laughs]. My parents relocated, they worked in a—my father had come from China, and his father before him. His father had ended up in Boston, and then they had a friend in Baltimore. So my father worked for this family, and they had the only Chinese restaurant in Baltimore at that time [laughs].

And so we were there until I was about five, and then we moved up to New York, which was sad for me because it kind of was fun there, because there were a lot of little places to—you know there's space. And so we moved a place in Chelsea that, you know, was—well, you know we were living in a basement apartment basically. But now I understand that basement apartments

with garbage cans in front are the thing [laughs]. So we were before our time. But it was fun, but it was just not a lot of space. And then my mother had a laundry, and my father worked in a restaurant uptown, which I guess was in the theater district, because he'd come back all the time with, you know, playbills, or other things, you know anecdotes about things that were going on. And the city was—not that I explored it. My father—it was all second-hand knowledge. But, you know, my father just said, “Oh, these people that were wearing this or that,” and, you know, we'd just get little stories, little vignettes.

And then we were subject to urban renewal. So even though my parents lived on West 26th Street, and then we moved to another place on 9th Avenue and 23rd Street. And, you know, it seemed, that was great, but then that was also subject to urban renewal because they decided—the union, which was progressive at that time, the garment workers union, decided to build these high rises that are all along Chelsea now. So all those wonderful high rises unfortunately made me and my family decide that they really—this is the second time they'd been shuffled about, and that's about all you could do. Then we moved—they thought, We should go to Queens, because that was like going to be Nirvana for, you know, going to school. And that's what everyone wants to do, is go to schools that were great. I mean it was not, like, phenomenal, but, you know, people thought that that's what they should do, the best for their children, and, you know, even though it meant a little more commuting, and how do you start saving up.

And then they got their first little home. I imagine it's the only home they ever got, but, you know, that was the American Dream, you get your home and you decide that's where you're going to be. And that was in Jackson Heights. And actually I truly feel that the best time of my

life was in Chelsea, when I was between five and twelve, [laughs] or six and twelve, because I had odd friends, but you could be odd. And I realized that was probably the best time in my life, because I had—

00:04:15 Q: Could we stop a second? Tell me, what is an odd friend?

00:04:17 Louie: You know, I had friends whose parents were bohemian artists. And you'd come back, and it's like a nudist colony, but [laughs]. I didn't even think about this then, it didn't bother me. I mean they'd just all be, you know, au natural, you know, who the siblings, when you went to their house and, okay, [laughs]. And then of course there were people who—you know it didn't matter, there were people who just did different things. Like my mother had a laundry and people would come in with interesting stories. There'd be the women that she befriended who was really like an aunt to us. I mean she came from the Midwest to follow her dream, and her sister wanted to be a dress designer, and they were from a farm somewhere out in Wisconsin. And they included us in their lives, and told us we should take ballet lessons, and took us to dance classes to watch while they were doing dance. And I mean I think I never would have been exposed to all this, but it was—you know it was a miracle.

And, you know, they did things that probably were not protocol, certainly not to an Asian family. The woman became a mistress to somebody else, [laughs] I mean but it was okay. I mean she included us in her Christmas party, and we didn't think second—we had no second thoughts about it. We were her only family at her Christmas party with herself and her partner. And she made us pretty little tissue holders. I mean she was very crafty. I mean they just made wonderful

pretty things for their tree, everything was just done by hand because, you know, they were designers. And I don't think it mattered to my mother, or—you know we were the only people who came to her Christmas.

And there was a person who was older, and I probably thought—you know, an older gentleman who was retired from, I guess, something. He was a seaman, he said. And he took us to—he said, “Well, I'd kid of like to take you all to Freedom Land.” That was when Freedom Land was like the only amusement park in this area. And I don't think my mother and father thought—they thought he was a nice guy, and he wasn't a—suspicious of any man who has no children who wants—he just wanted to have some children around with him. And it was, you know, he'd take two or three kids from the neighborhood and we'd all go out, and, you know. He'd take us on an outing to something in the neighborhood, and we'd just go and come back. And there was nothing that happened. I know; I have a very good memory [laughs]. So, you know, things were just very easy-going. I think all the suspicion that comes today—I don't think anyone would have done that, you know even have that openness about it.

And like, there were people who were stewardesses, or Playboy bunnies on the side [laughs], I mean it was—wow these are great materials, a book is hatching, now that I think about it, now that I'm at my retirement stage. I said, These are great people that I've met. I mean it's kind of like, “Streets of New York,” you know, just like “Streets of San Francisco.” But it probably was at my doorstep but I didn't know that then.

And then we moved to Queens, and it was very nice, and it was more of a Jewish community, and everyone was more structured, in terms of what they wanted. And then everything was totally different. I mean when I left I was in like a combination of fifth-sixth grade, and I had gone to the local Chelsea elementary school, and I had a really good friend named Charlotte. And Charlotte actually came into my life a lot later in San Francisco, ages later we're talking about, four decades later, or three decades later. And we were really good friends, we did a lot of things together, but we kind of lost touch because you go to Queens, you're not—[laughs] you're not going to come back here. And what happened was Charlotte looked me up when I was in San Francisco, ages later after I had children, and just wanted to tell me that she was gay. And it didn't matter, because I remember our friendship was very tight. But I think she just felt she had to come out, and find everyone. And I think that was what was nice and natural about it.

And then going to Queens was good, I mean Queens is—I mean it gave me the opportunity—I mean I think probably everyone there wants to excel. It wasn't so much as artsy, and you know, as flexible. And, you know, I had good friends, but the thing everyone's much more competitive, but I don't know if it's because of our ages at that time. You know, once you're past twelve and you're thinking of middle school—not that my parents—

My mother was not a dragon mom. She couldn't figure out all that. All of that had to be—if we wanted to be ambitious it would be because we wanted to do it. But they did say we had to excel at school. They certainly did not take me to Kumon or all the other things that people do today, which I think are over the top. I think I tried Kumon with my own children one week, and they rebelled and I listened to them [laughs]. And I said, “Well, either you do it on your own or you

don't do it on your own." But I mean, I remembered because—the reason I relented was when I went to Chinese school in the old days, and chug-a-lugged from Queens to Chinatown in New York. I did it and then I rebelled, and my parents listened to us that we could not—we were very good at arguing our point of view [laughs] about how much it would take time to commute, and that it really made no sense.

And in retrospect I should not have rebelled about that. But, you know, I'm very good at stacking up all the points on my side, [laughs] so I subsequently became a lawyer because of this. But managed to get my time off from me doing Chinese school, I don't know if I put it to good use doing anything else, but, you know, we were doing other things. Like my sister was very artsy so we'd all get into artsy projects with her. And that was fun. And I didn't pursue dance even though I was exposed to all this dance. You know, it's expensive, from all these lessons and everything. So, you know, it was a choice of what you did.

But junior high school was fun in Queens. I had a good friend. But I feel bad about the fact that I didn't know what it was. It was probably about that period in life of, you know, being a pre-teen. I mean in order to get with the in-crowd—I feel ashamed of myself because Ethel was a big German girl, and everyone would make fun of her. And we were close friends, but then, you know, if you wanted to be with this other girl who was the in-crowd, Linda. She made you outcast—you had to make a decision, and it was tough. So I felt bad because I didn't want to make fun of her but I kind of faded off from our friendship.



And then there was the other thing—I mean I think the advantage of New York is just I knew the girl down the block whose parents had a Greek grocery store. And I’d probably learned all about Greek food. I love Greek food. It’s just great things that happened. And the German deli, that was fun. It wasn’t Ethel’s parents, but, you know, he was very nice to us, and I swear probably the best German salad I ever had in my life. So I don’t know what the secret was and I hadn’t learned it yet [laughs], so—now that I’m in my new retirement I will try to discover what that secret is. I know, it’s vinegar, sugar and, some things that I should not eat right now, but either way [laughs]—and beer, probably [laughs], the secret to anything German is beer.

So I think high school was competitive. I mean I think the problem with being in Queens—maybe in New York. I don’t know—it was competitive, I probably—I got into the Bronx High School of Science, decided—and again, I debated, and then I said—and these other specialized New York Schools, and I said to my parents, “Oh, I don’t want to commute. That makes no sense. I’m not commuting, because I have a valuable use of my time“ [Laughs] And so, you know, the ultimate American dream, you make it to these schools and you should go to the Hunters, and the Bronx Sciences. But no, I’m not going to commute that long.

So I went to the local high school. And it was still competitive. I mean everyone there is not all new immigrant families, but a lot of teachers were Jewish, and their children there—everyone had a plan. And I had this really stupid—I did not know what college you would ever apply to, nor did I even think about college until senior year. I mean suddenly I said, Well I guess you have to choose ten or seven, or really narrow it down to six. And that’s all you had the ability to apply for. And then I had a great math teacher. I had a great French teacher, not that I was good at

French, I don't know why I won the French Award. But I mean all these other kids had traveled abroad and stuff. So somehow I got a copy of Molière [Jean-Baptiste Poquelin] as my French award. So I've been trying to [laughs] read it in French. I haven't done that yet, but I said, Well I got a French award. But to be honest, I speak more Spanish from two years of Spanish than five years of French or four years of French. And I had the most beautiful—I mean probably the reason I speak better Spanish is that I had this wonderful Spanish teacher who looked like Audrey Hepburn. So, you know, you want to emulate her in every way. So—and I use my Spanish more, cause I'm in immigration law, so, you know, it just comes easier. Also, I liked eating and shopping, and so having Spanish does come in handy [laughs].

But, you know, when I did the application to college it was because, well I'd won—you know every New Yorker who's bright gets these scores on the New York Regents, and you get—you have to decide if you want to stay with a New York school or not. But there's a lot of money at stake, you know there's thousands—well at that point tuition was two thousand dollars not whatever it was now. So now it's like sixty or forty for tuition, and something for—whatever. So it's either you buy a car or two, or buy a house or you go to college. And then two thousand dollars was a lot of money, but still the scholarship, I think at that time was close to half of it. Between that and some other scholarship I got from the Rockefeller Foundation, it was more money. And Rockefeller, of course, wants you to spend your money in New York with their scholarships [laughs].

So I made a decision it would have to be a New York school. So I combed all the New York schools and decided—well then my parents, of course being Chinese, felt that I should stay in an

all-women's college, because, Wo, you're not going to go to anything coed. And then I did my research a little bit, and I applied to Barnard and Vassar. And I guess there was some other women's college upstate in New York. And Upstate New York, I realized that was too far a trip. And maybe I applied to Cornell, but, you know, I said, Oh, how would I get there? My parents don't have a car." So I narrowed it down to Vassar and Barnard, and [I didn't want to go to] Vassar for their welcome to the applicants. And they had a wonderful tea, and I felt it was so stuffy. I said, I can't—I didn't know anything about tea, but it was nice to have tea, [laughs] and all the pastries that went with it. But seriously how can I live in a—? I mean everyone was wearing perfect suits, and I remember how I had to shop for a little suit just to go to their thing. And I think I spent all the money I ever spent on clothes just to buy this little suit. And I said, Well I don't know if I'll every use this suit. And the Vassar alumni were all wearing pretty hats, you know, I don't have hats [laughs]. Oh, and the pretty little purse too. I was going, Oh, I don't know if I can do this.

And so—and Barnard has their tea, but it was a little more casual. And then I was smart enough to realize with Barnard you actually had all the courses at Columbia that were coed, that you had this big horizon. Well now I was smart enough to bypass my parents' choice of going to an all female college [laughs]. So why would I want to be at Vassar being bussed over to some places for a social life, and being narrowed down to a social life—although I've met many Vassar graduates currently, and they've been very nice. Probably it just was not going to be the right fit for me at that time. So then I came to Barnard—

00:17:46 Q: Let me just stop you there for a second, 'cause we're going to go into Barnard in great detail, but let me just pick up a few things back. So, you had one sister?

00:17:49 Louie: Actually I had three sisters. I'm the oldest of three sisters. And to be honest my father thought we shouldn't go to college. We were all women, it was difficult for him to have all women, and every male Chinese person wants to have a male child, no matter what. It's their future, that's what it is, is what will happen to their legacy. So it was difficult. Yeah, he argued that we shouldn't go to college. Or if we went to college we should go to a city college just like everyone else, and learn a craft and get married. And actually he had lined up some people from the restaurant that I could marry, who needed a green card. And certainly—or there'd be somebody else, but obviously you could just get married. I mean it's just—it's just easy.

[Laughs] And he figured I was probably semi-attractive enough, or maybe I was more attractive then, and it would be fine, "We could find you a candidate." And then I said, "Well I have three sisters, so there's lots of other sisters to marry, if you really need to marry off somebody."

[laughs] That's terrible to my sisters. But I said, well—I'd come to their defense later on, but I figured I needed to get a head start on this. But yeah, I figured I had a few more years ahead of them, and if I could argue my way into this then it'd be perfect [laughs]. So I'd be their advocate later on.

But somehow he relented, and said, "Well, if you found you way to figure out the finances," because, you know, he didn't make a lot of money. His paycheck was probably forty dollars a week. I mean I saw a stub, and it was like—it wasn't a lot. So he wasn't going to have money to give to me, and I'd had to figure a way with jobs. And I did. I got a job as a switchboard operator

and things like that. And that was another episode of my life that was enlightening [laughs]. It was a switchboard operator in a fashion house, and everyone was gorgeous. You know all the models walking around, [laughs] and I was a little mouse. But you certainly can hear everybody's conversations and knew what was going on. So I was too smart. [Laughs] But I was like Lily Tomlin and the switchboard. You did plug into things and you did have to press everything. And it was a good skill to learn, to be honest. I even did the, I think, the Barnard or Columbia switchboard later on in life somewhere, as a part-time job. And then I got this job that paid very well working for some accountant, because he thought—

00:20:37 Q: This is all while you were in high school or what?

00:20:39 Louie: This is all when I was in high school. I'd just have to work weekends, and do tax returns, and how boring. But actually I think of the skills I learned I'd probably do that more than anything else, even to make money. So I guess it wasn't a bad craft to be honest.

00:20:56 Q: So you were doing people's tax returns?

00:20:58 Louie: Yeah, cause he—

00:20:59 Q: That's a good job.

00:21:00 Louie: Yeah, it was a great job. I got paid more than I got paid when I got finished college [laughs]. I mean it just pays you well for the season. I guess he was generous. He was an

accountant who worked for New York State, and that was his, I guess his side job. And he needed somebody to be there when he wasn't there. So I would just be there, and be typing, and then after a while he realized I could do them all [laughs]. I could figure it all out. [Laughs] So he said, "You could actually do all these simple returns for people. And you could do the complicated ones!" And I said, "Yeah, I guess, it just comes naturally."

I swore I would never be an accountant, never, never, never, after this. [Laughs] I mean I realized the pressure of all that, the time-line and everything. And everyone comes the last moment. But lo and behold, in my other profession everyone comes at the last minute too. So, it's just the way people are [laughs]. I just didn't know. But at least it gave me enough money to go to college, and I was working from sixteen to eighteen, doing that on the season. And I worked very hard during that time, and I guess that was my use of free time of not going to Chinese school or other things, right.

00:22:16 Q: Well did you have time to do any activities in high school?

00:22:18 Louie: I did bowling. I'm an expert bowler. I'm a star bowler [laughs]. But bowling is not as popular, until now again, but that was fun. And then I did—

00:22:32 Q: So it was a bowling team?

00:22:34 Louie: It was a bowling team. We met and then I guess afterwards, the greatest thing in life is to go to White Castle. I loved White Castle. That was my treat [laughs]. I'll have to

confess. And White Castle was twelve cents at that time, maybe, twelve cents or eight cents, but it was twelve cents, and now it's close to a dollar. Okay, so it was twelve cents. And so that was what we did. We'd do that, and we'd get the awful milkshake from White Castle, and we'd go bowling. I didn't do anything too athletic. You know, this is the city. And I did volleyball, but volleyball and I did not agree after a while because I don't like being hit on the head. I just had this phobia, the ball comes at me—

And then I did the Math Team. I was always nerdy. I was the only girl on the Math Team. And unfortunately, I don't understand why, but all the boys somehow got stage fright whenever they would get on TV or something stupid like that. And I really don't know how I had the answer to any of these things. It goes beyond me how I had the answer. I mean seriously you can't tell me that I really knew the answer.

00:23:51 Q: But you did!

00:23:52 Louie: I did. And there were all these men, boys—I'll say the boys. They acted like boys, and they were boys—and myself, and we won one or two contests, even against some place like Bronx Science. [Laughs] And I don't know why either, because we just got the right questions, you know something happened, the light bulb went off in my head. And I remember when I took calculus in high school, it was terrible. I got into a sweat about it. I'd kind of get into an inspirational moment and start coming up with the answer at three A.M. in the morning and write it on the back of the calendar, and then I'd fall asleep and I don't know what I did. And then I'd submit the answer and it seemed to be right. Okay, well it was great, okay for a while

[laughs]. And then I thought, Okay, maybe I could be a math major in college. And I went and took the class at Columbia, 'cause Barnard actually had coed calculus. And all these brilliant little—I guess you're supposed to say they're brilliant men at that point. They all came—only because they went to Brooklyn Tech [Brooklyn Technical High School], and Bronx Sci [The Bronx High School of Science]—I don't know why they flunked the exam. And I guess they curved it, and so I ended up with a B and they ended up with a C or something. I mean I—

00:25:07 Q: You were a math wiz obviously.

00:25:08 Louie: I don't understand that period. I mean seriously I don't even understand it either. I think it's just that somehow the questions that came were things that I could answer. But I decided, no, I can't be a math major, this is just—

00:25:19 Q: Even though you had this amazing record!

00:25:21 Louie: I don't know if I did or not, but I thought, it's not challenging enough when you can do it. And I'll tell you, to be honest, when I took the computer classes—

00:25:30 Q: Wait, and it wasn't challenging enough because you could do it. So therefore you ruled it out.

00:25:35 Louie: Right. Yeah, I guess maybe it also seemed boring, and maybe the people in the class were boring, [laughs], you know, a combination. I don't know if they're that boring,



probably right now they're all wizards and CEO's of major computer companies. I have no idea. But, no, it was just the class was just—I mean the classes at Columbia are mass classes, which is just not fun. You just sit there and go through it. The TAs are there. And it wasn't inspirational. Even if you feel it you're swimming. And I think that what I was doing was not what they taught me, but you came up with the answer or you didn't come with the answer. So I didn't think I was being taught anything. So I figured, well at this point—

And then I took, and I'll confess, I took the computer classes. This heyday of the computers, the big computer with the little punch cards. I really couldn't get it. And I really couldn't stand all these permeations, the punching. I always punched things wrong, and re-punch, and I said, Gee, I can't do this. I'm not as good as other people who can do this punching, and the logic of it. I guess I get distracted. I'm a multi-tasker. I can't do things that are really straight on. So, and I've been accused of being too much of a multi-tasker in my life. My kids think that my cooking is a disaster because I'm a multi-tasker. [Laughs] I'll be on the phone and the computer and on the stove at the same time.

00:27:10 Q: I think you sound like a typical Barnard woman.

00:27:17 Louie: Right. So that's part of that.

00:27:18 Q: Okay, so let's go back. So you're going to public school in Queens, and now you're getting ready to go to college. Who would you say probably was the most influential during

those years in your life? Who—maybe you thought, “I can be a college student. I’m that caliber,” etc, etc.

00:27:35 Louie: I think because my math teacher, and the language teachers were very supportive. I think other teachers, some of them were awkwardly competitive because their own children were applying for college. So this is kind of awkward because I know—one of my best friends then, her mother was a teacher, and she wanted to go to Barnard and probably felt that I probably shouldn’t apply because she wanted to go. I mean she didn’t get in. I know she made kind of—it made me feel bad. And I think that was difficult too, because you know—but she had other choices too. I mean it wasn’t her only choice, but I think she had wanted to be in the city, and to be at Columbia and Barnard together. So I guess our friendship kind of faded away because—and I think that’s what was difficult. I think the whole of phase of becoming more competitive between each other, your friendships become frenemies. And then she finally achieved everything she wanted. I mean she’s very successful. And I remember seeing her name with somebody else’s—and I think that’s part of it.

But I think if it weren’t for probably the math team, and that boosted ego that you could do it in public, you know doing programs—I don’t know. I got into these programs at the Rockefeller Foundation at NYU [New York University] to do these things in the summers. Because the summer doesn’t conflict with tax season [laughs]. So you could do your summer as you wish, and you can still get substitute jobs during the year. So I did these summer programs, and they were interesting, and I think I felt I could—I loved the city, and I mean I didn’t do all the fun things I do now in the city, because I somehow—I don’t know they were just not on the horizon

or I just didn't research it, I guess. How stupid for a person who's that smart—kept that narrow. But I guess no one does this. Maybe I just didn't know people who left Queens to come back into the city.

But I think the teachers were really supportive. And I was surprised, because now that I've been a parent and I see how the whole school system works—and the whole whatever, dragon mom, the whole bit—every mother has a PTA [parent-teacher association] agenda, and they're all like Gypsy Rose Lee's mom. I mean everyone is a stage mom, or an academic mom. I could see that my mom was not part of that scene, and that all these other moms had—this is a semi-suburban school. I was just lucky. I was just lucky that the teachers took an interest, because obviously they were probably pressured by all these other parents who knew how to work the system. And that they took that interest.

I think I've been very lucky that I've had teachers, even as a child, like even here in Chelsea. I loved my second grade teacher, Miss Jacobs, and she was unmarried and older. And she's just so—bright red hair, and she'd take us home, and take us to a little museum. I mean I really thought she was wonderful. And then she got married [laughs] later on when I was at fifth grade. Oh, gee, there would be no more time with Miss Jacobs. But she took an interest in us. I mean the teachers really, at that time, took you home, and included you in their lives after school. I can only say, when my daughter ended up, after college, teaching in Japan, that is what they do there too. Teachers are a part of extended life of the children, and they're respected. And I was just very lucky that I had like the second grade teacher.

Third grade was difficult because, you know, there was this whole boy/girl phase in third grade [laughs]. So the girls got a little funny towards each other. And so I didn't think third grade was fun, except that I remember looking at this boy in front who had the longest eyelashes in the world, you know. Asians have very short eyelashes, and Antony had—I even know his name, Antony Romero. I don't know what happened to him [laughs]. Every girl was like, “Oh, his eyelashes!” [Laughs] I hope he became a screen star or model. I mean he was damn good-looking [laughs]. He probably changed his name, because with a name like that [laughs]—but then, you know, like—at that time there was Project Head Start, or—I can't remember what some of these teachers that came—the teacher's aids that came from Bank Street [College] of Education. They were kind of bohemian, but they took an interest in the students. We did things after class around here. And I think if it weren't for that I don't think I would have felt confident enough to advocate for myself.

00:33:10 Q: So you really were an advocate for yourself. I mean the whole—you grew up in this kind of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural city and people and different communities. Were you ever, like, self-conscious? Were there other Chinese Americans that you were with, or—?

00:33:25 Louie: No, actually I was not in a Chinese-American community. The areas I grew up were Baltimore—you know it was black and white, so we were only one or two only Chinese families. But we had this wonderful—another family, that was great. Just had wonderful families. I had a neighbor upstairs that took—we've known each other our entire lives—when I was a baby—her name is Gloria Merini. She was an adopted girl. Her parents were older parents, and she—that's her married name. I can't remember—my sister moved back to Baltimore

afterwards, and we hooked up again with her. And she had lost her husband, but she was just part of our lives all our lives. Here we were, just a Chinese family, and she'd come and babysit occasionally for my mother when she was visiting, not that we had a lot of money. But I mean she was adopted and she was part of our life, and she continued—there was just no, no barrier. Yes they say a Chinese family would make Chinese food for them, right, but it was not like anything where it was very articulated that there was a bias against us. And then when we were in Chelsea it seemed like everybody was different. You'd have—

00:34:53 Q: Sounds like it.

00:34:54 Louie: You had the bohemians. You had the lawyers who were, I guess, the up and coming lawyers and their family and their lives, and they were very nice and sophisticated. And they even like included you in a few little things, you know, occasionally. And, you know, it wasn't like—Oh, well they knew you were the laundry girl. But it wasn't so much that we shouldn't have our kids play with you. And I think the only thing is when we came to Queens there was just class-stratification at that point. And then you felt you were not part—I don't know if it was—it's partly class and partly being a different ethnic group.

The other classmate of mine that went to Columbia, was Louis. Obviously he was Hispanic with a name like—well maybe not, but he was Hispanic. And we both came and went to Columbia, and we knew each other, but he decided—he had this more rebellious—you know he had to be part of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] group and all that other stuff, and it was something probably that I didn't totally understand. But he was also an ambitious politician at

that time in his life. But, you know, it was just, everyone else was just really concerned about their ranking, and I guess it was very competitive. And I don't know if it's—because everyone knows Asians can be smart and it was tough being—and, you know, people resented you and they made you feel bad if you did well. Like if you were first in class, and people did cheat on you. I mean they cheated from your papers, or your tests. And I think that was a dilemma because you felt you were not right if you did not let them cheat from you.

00:36:50 Q: That's quite a pressure. My goodness.

00:36:51 Louie: Yeah, and I think that's always—and obviously you did not want to feel disliked, I mean totally, so you would just let it go. I mean I know the kid who graduated second in class, who obviously—I don't know where he went but he probably went to something wonderful and successful, and I won't even look him up. But obviously he cheated on many people. I mean that was the way he got by. I mean not like he cheated on a girl. I mean whatever. I think he just basically looked at everyone else's papers and exams to get through. And he's capable, I mean he was a smart kid, and I'm sure he's a smart whatever he is right now.

00:37:36 Q: Sly

00:37:37 Louie: Yeah, he's a sly kid. But I met many sly people in life. I'm a lawyer [laughs] so it's not like I haven't met them later on in life. It just prepared me earlier [laughs]. And how do you confront it? I don't know. But I mean I think that's where I started to feel this awkward pressure of being an outcast, in that people—

00:38:03 Q: So obviously you're one of the smartest people in the classroom. You're able to get through these tests, you're even bored because you're so quick. And people were expecting you to help them in a sort of illegal way.

00:38:16 Louie: That's hard.

00:38:17 Q: That's very tough. Plus you're working, really in an adult job here.

00:38:21 Louie: Right, no, and I was an adult, too, for my parents. My parents they spoke English, but they didn't do well, writing. I mean if there was an issue with the utilities or anything else, or you know the bank, anything, I'd have to do that for them, and I had to do that for their friends. I had to do their tax returns, I had to do their friends things. Any paperwork that they had, they had a confrontation with any agency, or—my parents would volunteer me [laughs]. I mean my mother was a teacher, and she'd have these former students look her up when they emigrated here. And they're wonderful people. I mean they stayed life-long friends, and they revered her all the time. It's not like my mother was a—she was just really an elementary school teacher. She went to a teacher's college in China for two years, and then—

00:39:12 Q: Where in China was she?

00:39:13 Louie: In China, in Guangdong (Canton), in the south. So she went to a missionary school. And then she came back home and she taught in her village, you know a one-room schoolhouse. And they revered her. And, you know, she left, and then they looked her up here. And, you know, some married really well, some did not, but they all constantly would look her up and get together every month. But, you know, of course someone would have to help them, and they looked up to my mother to help them. And my mother goes, “Well, obviously you’ve got to do it because I can’t do it.” [Laughs]

00:39:51 Q: Sure. So what kind of things would you help them with?

00:39:52 Louie: Oh, you know they’d have confrontations—I mean obviously they issues with immigration, they had things with their leases. I learned to read a lease early in my [laughs]. Things with utilities, getting their children into school. I mean I was only a sixteen-year-old, or a fifteen-year-old. but you spoke English and enough Chinese so I could be the translator. If they had to go to the hospital, who else would go? I don’t know how I had that much time. I certainly didn’t put it in my resume that I did any of this stuff either, not to enter college. But, you know, you do it. And it’s not like my mother got paid for it. It was just because they were friends, they were part of an extended family, and we just—you’d get great meals. I’ll tell you, my mother’s students, they make great dumplings [laughs], they give me dumplings to this day, and I feel—they freeze them delicately and bring them back to me, and I go, “Oh, I don’t have a refrigerator, how am I going to bring it home?” I mean I have to port it over to my daughters or my nieces and freeze them, and they become one big goop [laughs]. Terrible. I know how much labor they



went through. But, you know, I'm going to eat them. I'll even eat them when they steam as one big cake and cut them up [laughs].

00:41:13 Q: Now did your mother—? She never taught again.

00:41:15 Louie: She taught Chinese school a little bit, in Queens, because nobody wanted to do it. And I was not really good as a student either. I managed to rebel, but, “Oh, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to be my mother's student.” [Laughs] What a conflict of interest! I don't know where I came up with these arguments. I must have done it—way before I would become a lawyer. I swear I came up with these arguments way before. [Laughs] I would always come up with a solution to get myself out of that. And, you know, we'd find another teacher, and—but she did that, at least for her friends and their students.

And my mother, you know, she was ambitious too. I mean she didn't want to stay in the laundry, and she ended up doing the laundry and then still working in a garment factory nearby part of the time. And then she learned Spanish from her colleagues in the garment factory. You learn. I mean she probably learned more Spanish than I learned at that stage when I took Spanish. But you know, who knew? I mean I never had thought to ask her. And, you know, they had a little nice group, because she had met many ethnic friends from working in a garment factory. She loved it because she could be away from the laundry by herself, solo. She would have, you know, friends, they could chit-chat even if they were working—you know they worked by the piece. It wasn't like they were working by the hour, but they still had a camaraderie between them.

And then she had a neighbor who—one of the other stores down the block, I guess they sold saris I guess. I didn't know that. I mean now that my daughter is actually—my daughter had worked at Google, and spent a year in India. And we went to India, and she—you know, all these fabrics, I said, “Oh, my mother had things like—” I mean her friends gave her these things. I just never thought of utilizing it. And what did we do with it, because they moved to California from New York, and a lot of things got thrown away. But there are lots of little precious things that—there were a lot interesting neighbors that they knew. That was very nice. I think that's probably the best situation.

But, you know, you do know that—I think what always happens is—I realize when you go into any system that there is an outcast system, because you'll always be the bottom of the line to get service, or people would—or people did—you know, like they rap now about Chinka Chink. But people did do that, and they did that in the streets. People, when you walked down the streets—and this is in New York, outside of your enclave of Chelsea. I mean people would, you know, berate you. I mean, I don't know if it's just because of what they hear from everyone else. And you'd always be the last to get service sometimes, and that was—but you knew that, and I guess you had to keep silent, or you just waited for your turn. You'd get ultimately your turn, you felt.

But it's difficult, and I think when my parents went back to California, because my mother had relatives in Sacramento and San Francisco, it's different because in San Francisco they would never leave my—I swear my mother had a nephew who came from China, did not want to leave Chinatown, even though his relatives moved further away from someplace in San Francisco. He said he couldn't take the bus ride now. How could you not take the bus ride? But he just did not

want to be away from a Chinese community in a Chinatown. And there's a big comfort zone there.

You know my mother went there and she became a social worker, you know, aide, and because she'd really have an education from here. And, you know, she at least could be a social worker aide there. She couldn't get that here. I mean you couldn't even be a teachers aide—you couldn't be anything here. Even if she had an education, or took courses, or did anything, there was not real possibility here. So I think it was better for her and for my father. They could do something that was more than just working around laundry or a restaurant. And, you know, all their relatives are there. They actually did better, but I don't think they resented that—I mean they ended up here because that's where his father was, and this is where his life was. You know he did alright, but obviously in terms of what you think of as a respectability situation, or, you know, professionalism, you could attain that on the West Coast that you can't attain here.

00:46:15 Q: And when did they move then?

00:46:18 Louie: Oh, they moved, I think in the late '70s.

00:46:20 Q: Okay, so you were finished with college.

00:46:22 Louie: I was finished with college, and my sisters were all in college.

00:46:26 Q: So they all got together after—

00:46:28 Louie: Right. So that's what they did. And my sisters all stayed in the East, and we all went to college in the East, and we all took different paths. Some of us ended up in the West. My youngest sister, who had gone to Music and Art [Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts], and was more artistic, I mean she ended up in nursing. She went to Berkley [University of California, Berkeley], and very political. And she's at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles], and—I mean her husband is at UCLA as a professor....[OMITTED LINE] She's a solid Democrat. Sometimes I tell her that she's overzealous about her politics, and that she should relax about the fact that she does too much. I mean you can't do so much for politics.

00:47:24 Q: I think it's in your family. [Laughter] I mean that's doing much, much more.

00:47:28 Louie: She does too much for that. And then my other sister ended up—she's back and forth. I mean she's back here again, but she was in California for a while. And then the other one stayed on the East Coast and she went back to Baltimore, and her husband works there. I think she worked at something like—oh, what was the thing? I can't even remember. The Domestic Peace Corps, whatever they call it. What was that called at that time? And I think she was working there at that time, that's how they met.

00:48:05 Q: [AmeriCorps] VISTA.

00:48:06 Louie: VISTA, right. So they ended up like—oh, they were in Rochester, New York, and then they moved down to Baltimore. And so, I think—it's awkward because I think for Asian—but I've lived in many places—my husband is in the bio-pharmaceutical field. And we were at Stamford, and then we went to Syracuse, New York. No Asians, hardly, in Syracuse, New York, and certainly the only Asian lawyer [laughs], in Syracuse, New York. I mean there's not a—that's like returning back to an area that was not diverse, I mean we'd gone from two extremes, from diverse to non-diverse. And that was kind of difficult. And there is an academic community in Syracuse, but we're—you know, it's also a company communities. And the people there were nice within the company.

And I just have to admit that even though, you know, I was doing immigration law there, and I ended up meeting a lot of diverse other people, other than the corporate clients that I had. They don't warm up to you right away, but after being there many years they're probably life-long friends. So I think it's more like being in Europe or someplace that they just don't know, and I guess—they're not racists per se, they just don't know. So you just meet them and then after a while you're friends because you're neighbors and you've been together. But they never really known someone that's Chinese. You know that's the difference than someone who probably has

—

I think the problem with New York, or in California, is there's xenophobia because of the haves and the have-nots. And as the new immigrants on the block the Asians who've done progressively better, and also some come with a lot of wealth in California, and so you have this xenophobia, and that people do—it's just subconscious, but I guess if they want to label it, it's

just like, oh, you'll label someone black as maybe potentially violent, or because you lived in Harlem all your life, or in the Bronx, or you think of some group as being—I'm in immigration law. People label—every ethnic group has a trait, and all the comedians make—they bring out that trait for whatever it is. You know, someone Indian as this way, and someone Jewish as that way. And it's different doing a comedic thing about it, but when you bring it out to the community, or every day life, it's totally different.

And I've had friends who've lived in areas in California like Castro Valley where there are hate crimes, and in Illinois where they had a hate crime, and people just were targeting people for different things, because of gender issues, being gay, or being anything. You'd be picked up because you're Hispanic. You'd be picked on in a violent manner, that's where there's a border line. And I think it's difficult. I think a lot of times I've just been lucky because you've had a chance one on one to educate, or communicate with everyone that's different. But I think when groups cluster and other people see that you're driving Mercedes and BMWs and they resent that. And they think, Oh, you're too loud at night, so you must be Latino, all that music at night. They just don't understand. And actually it's wonderful to hear someone's music at night if you live in a Torah-head area where the city is so dull—why do you want to—? But people get irritated. Everyone has a turf, and everyone wants to close their ears and eyes, and they don't want to become friendly. And I think I've been just fortunate that I've had moments where everyone was friendly. So I didn't feel that it was never going to be—I knew that there were going to be barriers, but I think if I hadn't had that cushion from being in as diverse a place as Chelsea or New York, I don't think so—

00:52:53 Q: Okay.

00:52:45 Louie: Because even at Barnard, I have to be honest—

00:52:57 Q: Let's go to Barnard now, yeah.

00:52:59 Louie: I met people from all kinds of classes, and all different people. And I don't think color or money came into issue. I have the best of friends who've taken me—I mean my friend, Gaye [??], is just such a wonderful person, that she took me—well her grandmother had an estate up in wherever, Croton–Harmon or something like that, something with stables—

00:53:25 Q: Was she a roommate, or—?

00:53:26 Louie: She was my roommate and she was a transfer, Gaye Tucker [??].

00:53:29 Q: Oh, Gaye [??], yeah, I remember her.

00:53:31 Louie: And we come in and out of each other's lives, because we've had different things happen to us. She's had a lot of changes. And she's the smartest woman. She's willing to change careers, and now she's a landscaper architect, and before she was one of the first computer minor people—I mean this is a woman who doesn't have to really work. I don't think. I mean not necessarily—I mean she wasn't like—she didn't get all the wealth. Let me just say

her grandmother had wealth, but that doesn't mean she had it. But I mean, she was comfortable. She didn't have to do all the things she's done.

But, you know, she included me in these things, well not—I mean she doesn't even think, “Oh, what do your parents do? Do they have—?” I mean it doesn't enter the conversation. It's like you're tight friends, and you're tight friends.

00:54:24 Q: Friends as friends.

00:54:25 Louie: Yeah. And so you go up there, and I was going, Gee, I don't know about this whole—she went to a cotillion. Oh, I was going, “Gee, what is that?” [Laughs] Not that I know what it is, or something like that, something grand. And she had met her husband through one of these things [OMITTED LINE].... And we've come into each other's lives, and done things together, celebrated our sixty-fifth birthdays together, and, you know, trips that she—every once in a while she plans a trip.

Like she's rent a house and we'll go there, or somewhere. The last thing as an Adirondacks thing. And then she planned something in Europe, which I just—[laughs] if you don't read your emails, which I'm not great at. I don't catch all the things that are happening, so somehow I answer like a month later, beyond the time. But it was not deliberate, it's just I'm terrible about looking at everything. And now we're getting together again, in Point Reyes, because all her children have all moved. Somehow they all migrated to California. One of her sons is a producer in the media, in the Bay Area, and then the other one is a BMW mechanic, and then her daughter was here but



now is in Maine, and so—she was a public relations person who had very interesting things that she represented, like artists and other things. But, you know, it's amazing to have these interactions.

And my other roommate, Jo Ellen Gordon, who passed away, she was a great.

00:56:11 Q: What was her name again?

00:56:12 Louie: Jo Ellen Gordon. I think she was originally the class of '70, and then she became '71, because she had infantile arthritis—

00:56:20 Q: Oh, yes, I remember her. Was she in a wheelchair?

00:56:22 Louie: No, but, you know, her limbs are shortened, and she had to take Cortisone most of her life. And she came back and worked at Barnard for a short time as a disabilities counselor, and a tutor. You know she has a child psychology background. But she passed away, of her disease ultimately, because you take that many years of Cortisone—she had a heart attack. And she's the dearest person, and to me—she was super wealthy to me, because her father had a trucking company. And of course all this drama, just like in that—was it *Goodbye, Columbus*? It was the sibling rivalry in the family industry, and who takes over—like it was like, oh, so fascinating, every one of my classmates probably had a story that could be written as a book.

00:57:18 Q: Yeah, I'm finding that when I interview them.

00:57:20 Louie: And I think that's what's so interesting. And there's some other people. I mean my other roommate down the hall is Kay, I can't remember, we lost touch, but she was from the Midwest.

00:57:33 Q: Kay Davis from Cincinnati?

00:57:35 Louie: Yeah, right, from Cincinnati.

00:57:36 Q: Yeah, she was my good friend, and I've lost touch too.

00:57:39 Louie: Yeah, from the Proctor & Gamble land. That's all I could think of. Where's Cincinnati? I mean I could look it up [laughs]. I said, "Proctor & Gamble, right?" [Laughs] It's about all I could identify with. And I remember how she was going out with the guy who was with the Sha Nah Nah group.

00:57:58 Q: Yeah, Alan Cooper.

00:57:59 Louie: Alan—

00:58:00 Q: He became a rabbi.

00:58:01 Louie: Became a rabbi, right. And that was such a controversial issue, because she's a gentile waspy girl [laughs] with a Jewish guy. And then, you know, it's just everyone was different. I mean to some people like we're friends—I don't think you count on Barnard as having a tremendous number of friends. I don't think that happens. I think all of us were very busy with our lives, and there's probably a little bit of frenemies issue too. I mean just like in high school, the frenemies thing happens because you have a lot of pre-meds, and pre-this, and everyone's pre-something. I mean to be honest, except me and I kind of fell into—I mean everyone else would—kind of annoyed by it when—I applied to law school only because—

00:58:51 Q: Wait, what did you major in at Barnard?

00:58:54 Louie: Oh, I majored in psychology, I guess because I had a lot of fun with Jo Ellen in lab [laughs].

00:59:03 Q: I'm sorry, you had a lot of fun with what?

00:59:04 Louie: Jo Ellen Gordon, as a lab partner.

00:59:05 Q: Oh, oh, with a lab partner, okay.

00:59:06 Louie: And she was a political science major. And then I did—the problem with my major is, I couldn't figure out a major. And then they had the whole urban studies choice. So I said, I'll make my own major. So I did a blend of psychology and sociology, because that one

you could blend a lot of courses together [laughs]. So that was really what it was. I just did not want to fix my major, and that was—it was slightly scientific because we are—whatever they call—we're very, the psychology at Barnard is very structured and very scientific, right. So, it was not the touchy-feely psychology at all, although some of us have become Clinical Psychologists, but definitely not touch-feely [laughs]. So it was a half scientific, half social science. So that seemed to be acceptable to my parents, or to myself for my—you know I did very well on those little silly lab things. I mean Joellen said, "You're the math whiz, we can get our statistics right." [Laughs] And she was the touchy-feely person. So the two of us could get our—you make beautiful graphs and have beautiful statistics, and I could come with prose [laughs]. So that worked out. I mean that's what the great partnerships are.

01:00:33 Q: Now do you remember when you first arrived there how you felt? What were your impressions of Barnard?

01:00:37 Louie: Well actually I was a commuter the first year.

01:00:39 Q: Oh, you commuted. Oh, my, this is very complicated.

01:00:41 Louie: Because it was expensive to think of a dorm. And there was a shortage of dorms, and I was in Queens. Obviously I did not make that much money. I did not get that wonderful job as a switchboard operator yet [laughs]. And I came out of the subway, and my mother—[Pause] My mother really was very happy. She packed all these things, and she carried it all. And I think a lot of us had parents who felt it was their moment.

01:01:16 Q: Absolutely. Absolutely.

01:01:17 Louie: I just came out of subway, and it was so welcoming, we had all the Welcome Committees and everything else, you know. And I guess all these guys were looking [laughter] to pick our luggage up. I think from what I understand they're all coming—it's like going to whatever, an auction for horses [laughs].

01:01:40 Q: I was going to say, a livestock show, yes [laughs].

01:01:42 Louie: They were going to come pick whatever Philly they wanted to ride. I don't know, but it was kind of crazy, it was really crazy. Of course I don't think I got picked that well. I became, I think, the wing girl. I really realize that—

01:01:59 Q: What is a wing girl?

01:02:00 Louie: A wing girl is what Drew Barrymore is to Cameron Diaz. You know the side-girl, the friend, the guys who say, "Well, you could come along—I don't want to take your along, but I really want to meet your friend," [laughs] the pretty one, or whoever they thought was interesting. And I think I was a wing girl on a couple—and I was asked to the football game, because I guess they had to get someone to go—but they really wanted to meet my friend.

01:02:26 Q: And your friend was—

01:02:27 Louie: Well, one was Jane, and the other—and basically that's all I did. A few guys probably asked me out and they probably just wanted to meet the other girl. That's okay, I had a great—at least I got to go to the game or whatever it was [laughs]. But I came into my own ultimately. But it's still—the social life was kind of different.

01:02:54 Q: So your started as a dorm-ee the second year then?

01:02:56 Louie: Yeah, in the dorm, that was in the second year. I got a job as a switchboard operator, and I worked a lot, but I figured—my rationale—

01:03:03 The switchboard and in the cafeteria, both of them.

01:03:05 Louie: Oh, I hated the cafeteria. The food just smells [laughs]—they did this food—the acrid smell of the food at the kitchen was terrible [laughs]. It probably cured me of eating cafeteria food—

01:03:17 Q: So what were you doing in the cafeteria? I don't remember students working there.

01:03:20 Louie: Oh, yeah, you can do like background things. They didn't let you do serving, but

—

01:03:27 Q: So you're back there, preparing some things, like—

01:03:30 Louie: Well, just, I guess throwing the things around, the dishes [laughs]—

01:03:34 Q: No wonder you hate to cook.

01:03:36 Louie: I think I got smarter and I found out that I could get a job more hours at the switchboard, and that I could get a job with these two professors, through work study. So I got a psychology research assistant thing, and a sociology research thing. And the professor of sociology, Bernard Barber, was fantastic. And he kind of included me—I mean and also he comes from this affluent family. His wife worked at The Ford Foundation, and his daughter went to Radcliff. And kind of like, “Oh, well you should be friends with Leslie.” I mean she—

01:04:08 Q: Can you tell me his name again. I didn’t catch it.

01:04:10 Louie: Bernard Barber.

01:04:11 Q: Oh, yeah, yeah.

01:04:12 Louie: They just kind of like you know—I mean I don’t think he had to, I mean I was just a worker bee, and he just (laugh)—you’re just a research assistant but you’re a worker bee. In those days you had to have everything typed. No one had it on a computer. And you had to have somebody who typed perfectly with carbon paper [laughs], right. And you didn’t have to use white out and correct-a-tape. But he was very nice, I mean probably totally different than me,

but you know. And he included me in his graduate student discussions and things like that. I mean I think he was slightly rigid. I mean not as feminist as the other professors, but at least he was inclusive.

And I met up with him later in life too, coincidentally, only because he always was doing this research. I remember what I was doing for him was typing and collecting the data, and I won't aggrandize my job. I collected data. And everyone says wonderful things about their internships these days, but you can't—being a seasoned person now. I know that these kids who send me their resumes saying that they've done all this—look, you know we all have to be a coffee girl and a copy boy, or whatever. But that's fine, and collecting data is very useful too, if, you know, how to learn from it. You know I get back to the little fortran punch cards again, right. And so he was doing a socio-philosophical thing about clinical studies on human subjects. And humans were volunteering and what happens at a clinical trial. It turns out my husband really is involved—he's in medicine but he does clinical trials. And so we met up again later in life, and [laughs] talked about how—this is like something in full-circle. Nobody knew I'd marry someone who ended up doing clinical trials, right. I said, "Were we on the other side of the fence, or were we not on the other—?" And we're just discussing it with Professor Barber. He said, "No, no, I was never really on either side of the fence," it was a philosophical discussion.

And the other professor was at Barnard, in the Psychology Department, and he also had to do all—he was doing juvenile delinquency studies. So it was interesting. I mean they really treated—I'm sure that really as the graduate—I mean you can say it's data collecting, but actually the graduate students don't do much more at that point. But at least they thought of you as like the



graduate students. And, you know, you had to do the more typing. But I'm fast at typing so it was like a second nature thing, it was like the most focus point of it. But it took up a lot of time. I mean I think part of it—you know and then you have to do fifteen hours, or twenty hours there. And you did your other job, so you had like forty hours of extra work every week.

But I rationalized that I was I was not commuting, and it was a great experience being in the dorm. Although then you realize then, I think there was a little more class structure in some of the dorm mates. Although the one I met were wonderful, there are some that do have this class structure about, you know, the have and have-nots. And even among the Asians, a lot of them lived in a little bubble about—because the Asians who attended Barnard or Columbia at that time, before that were most foreign students. So they all came from a circle of aristocracy, or they were at Columbia because their parents were stuck. They had to choose because they couldn't go back to Communist China, and they were professionals, and they had chosen—I mean they'd chosen or not chosen to be here and take jobs here. So they were a different class than we were. We were peasants, I mean, so—

01:08:31 Q: Now, Julia was with you, but she was a commuter the whole time.

01:08:34 Louie: Yeah, Julia was with me, and she was a commuter, but he family is legacy Columbia [laughs].

01:08:39 Q: So they were the aristocracy as well.

01:08:41 Louie: No, she was not, but you know—

01:08:43 Q: But it was a long legacy.

01:08:44 Louie: Her long legacy, but her mother was. I mean even her, I mean her mother was even to her, I mean her mother was from Shanghai. There's a different aristocracy to Shanghai. And so Julia grew up in a family that was kind of half divided as to their politics, let's say. You know you have a mother one way and a father—and so you have this awkward situation of the males and the females being treated in a sexist manner. Now that was more difficult because she saw more visibly what was not given to her, and—

01:09:18 Q: With her brother, yeah.

01:09:19 Louie: For me it was just—well I knew there was class structure. My parents always told me there was a class structure in China when they left [laughs]. So it's not like it was a big surprise to me. But, you know, I knew that some people, some guys who went out with me, they were very—then it was a one-date situation, no big deal. They probably thought I was attractive to go out for the moment [laughs]. But, you know, when we got into the nitty-gritty their families were coming from a professional families, and mine was not, and that was fine. And, you know, I felt at first a little offended, but then, you know, there were plenty of guys out there [laughs].

01:10:04 Q: I don't know about that.

01:10:05 Louie: I mean at that point I felt there was. But the main problem I had with the dates is the ones who were the engineering types, unfortunately, they were really nice people—it's not that all engineers, because I ultimately ended up in a relationship for a long time with an engineer. But, you know, they kind of—like you went out with them once, or you just went home with them after a dance and they thought they owned you. Like they thought that you should be committed to only—they had already chosen you. And I just felt bad. I mean just like with my friendships from my childhood, I didn't want to be in that situation of saying that I was outright—I wasn't outright rejecting them, but why would I want to be tied—? I mean this is like what, first year of college [laughs]. It was the first time I'd ever gone out with anyone. I just did not feel—

01:10:57 Q: So you didn't date in high school?

01:10:59 Louie: No, who had time? And I don't know. I mean I knew there was an in-crowd, Linda. She had dates.

01:11:08 Q: Oh, the famous Linda.

01:11:09 Louie: And Ethel, the dumpy crowd. I was kind of the in-between crowd. I was happy with my bowling team, and my whatever occasional dance thing that I did. That was fine. Probably my parents wouldn't let me date.

01:11:25 Q: I was going to say, yeah.

01:11:27 Louie: My father would probably—he had already decided I could marry—

01:11:30 Q: You were going to marry someone in the shop.

01:11:32 Louie: How could you offer me as a virgin if I had [laughs], whatever, if I went out with somebody? I mean going out with someone was already (makes a sound)—like how can you explain that on the open market?

01:11:40 Q: Now were you going out mostly with Asians?

01:11:42 Louie: Yes, I did mostly go out with Asians. I think I had one date who was a non-Asian. Actually it's a guy from Yale. I just didn't feel comfortable. I don't know. I didn't think we had anything in common. Also he was not from a—it was one of those things where they bus-load a bunch of Yale guys over to Barnard. I think at one point they did that type of thing. They would bus you back once. And I think I just—he was very nice, but he came from somewhere where they'd never met an Asian. [OMITTED LINE].... But I just didn't think—like what did we really have in common? And maybe I was open-minded about learning—I had to learn about dating [laughs], I wasn't going to learn about a whole new culture. It was more than I could—too many steps. I had too many things to do at school. And anyway, who wants a long distance—? Oh, I'd go to Yale, and you go—you know this is more than I can handle. I can't handle like a commute already [laughs].

And then I think I went out with some people occasionally—I mean I probably went out with three or people in my life at Barnard. And most of them were one date to meet the other girl, and meet the other girl. I'm friends with some of these guys now because I know they wanted to meet the other girl. You know one would want to meet that one, one would want to meet that one, and I was a wing girl. And then finally I met someone else, but then I felt—there, um, we had a good relationship but I felt he was too popular. [OMITTED LINES]....

01:14:22 Q: Kind of play the field.

01:14:23 Louie: But he didn't. It's just that I felt that I was not number one, and that I would not ultimately be the one. That's how I felt. And probably the class thing also bothered me. I felt that he was not from a laundry family [laughs], his parents were engineers, and he was an engineer, and that he would ultimately want to be with his own class. I mean no matter what I just felt that we didn't come from the same roots. And I was probably wrong, but I just don't know; [OMITTED LINES] most of the guys did marry very well, to be honest. They've all come and introduced me to their wives [laughs] at some point in my life.

01:15:23 Q: They didn't forget you.

01:15:24 Louie: [OMITTED LINES].... I think most men, most of the engineer types do look for women who are going to be their wife, not their partner. I mean some of them have. I think one of two have gotten people who ended with their partner, because they were in the same profession or something like that, but most of them really are looking for wife, a true wife,

someone who puts them first. And I'd never do that [laughs]. Oh, don't tell my husband that. Well, he knows that [laughs]. I mean I put him first in some things, but I don't put him first in other things.

01:16:20 Q: You're very independent.

01:16:21 Louie: I mean you have to put your priorities in place. And I think, though I do have problems—I do have problems with priorities. I mean I do not put myself first, and I don't put my family first, so I did do that several times in my life.

01:16:43 Q: Do you want to elaborate on that a little bit?

01:16:45 Louie: Oh, I think partly when I went to law school—I applied to law school and I think the reason I did—

01:16:54 Q: So this is right after—you're a senior at Barnard.

01:16:56 Louie: So I'm a senior year at Barnard, I think when—I knew I spent my life doing all these advocacy things, and that was a best fit. I mean I had looked—actually I had done a summer in an audiology camp.

01:17:13 Q: My goodness, you tried all sorts of things.

01:17:14 Louie: I did all kinds of things, and—well the reason I did that was unfortunately—I applied at the same time as a roommate who comes from a very rich Asian family, and played it, dabbling at social thing. She played she played at being a political advocate on Columbia campus, and she played—she basically just played at this. And I don't like it when—and that was another situation where I felt—there were several situations at Barnard where I felt that friends cheated, and I had problems with that. I mean I had problems with that in high school.

01:17:58 Q: Cheated meaning being dishonest about what they did.

01:18:00 Louie: Dishonest, academically, as well as other things.

01:18:02 Q: I'm sorry to hear that.

01:18:03 Louie: And as well as in terms of their political leanings, dabbling that they were worrying about the people, or did not worry. You know the people who shoplifted who said they were doing it because the people do that. This is like what happened in Watts or anything else. You know you raid the place because—you just don't do that. I know we have to clean this up, but there are people—everyone has issues.

There are people who have issues at Barnard too, with what's the fine line of ethnic morality. And none of us are totally moral. I mean you can't be, in this society, and you have to do—

I mean I've done things for clients where I know the clients aren't totally right, but I'm an advocate so I've had to—there's some things that they're permitted to let go and that are not, so, you know, you have to—but I was young, and I had a very strong, strong values [laughs] at that time. Not as seasoned and weathered as now. And none of us, I mean we're all immigrants. Immigrants don't come—we all had to emigrate in some sort of parallel way of altering the truth because of the laws. And I don't say that that made it right.

When you do immigration law you realize you have this bureaucracy that treats everyone differently by race, and that you can interpret the law either way. And Asians were always constantly discriminated against, I mean until the War Brides Act. I mean my mother probably would not have been able to come, my mother-in-law would not have been able to come. Many, not just Asians, I mean Italian—I mean nobody would allow you to bring a European wife, you know people who went abroad. That was not possible. And it was meant to keep the race—we were just as bad as [Adolf] Hitler in terms of trying to keep the race white.

And I mean you see today, Eastern Europeans can come in and not be treated any differently than—because they are white and pass as white as the other groups that have come in. And sometimes I get tired of doing immigration cases because I think the clients are manipulating me, and I can't stand that when the client manipulates me or doesn't want to pay, or plays games. But then I know the system, too, is not right. So you have that system—but then, you know, I can also—



But I don't think there's any justification for someone to shoplift when they have money, just to say that they're liberated, or whatever. Or other things, and there are a couple of people at Barnard who are alcoholics. What can you say? I guess it was tough.

01:21:08 Q: I was very sheltered. I missed all this.

01:21:10 Louie: So it was difficult. But I think—when I decided to apply to law school, oh, Christine Schroeder was the Dean. I never really spoke to her, but I decided to talk to her. And I said, “Well, gee, I come from all this terrible background. I don't have class on my side. I don't have academics on my side in terms of my parents, nothing. Why am I doing this?” And then she said, “Well, if you really feel—you should just go for it.” And I said, Well, you know, I've applied for ones that are dull, that do everything by the craft, you know. There's some that are practical schools. And she said, “No, just go for it.” And I said, “Well, but my best friend is applying to schools too,” and she says—this is the same predicament I had in high school, right. And she said, “No, well you go for it, they only pick one from Barnard probably.” She said, “No, you'll just go for it.”

01:22:15 Q: Yeah Christine!

01:22:16 Louie: So I said, “Okay, alright. Oh, what do I put on my resume? I don't even know how to address all these pretty things that people do.” And she said, “Just go from the heart. Write what your experiences are, and do that.”

I mean when I see other people—I've had predicaments later on when I finished law school and I was practicing, where people dressed up their resume, and put references to working at agencies that I've worked at, or working with me—and I've been in a predicament of not saying anything. And some of them have made it to good jobs in the Justice Department. I'm just saying that there are a lot of people who dress up their resumes, and it's tough. It's a tough call. I just—I don't talk to them, and I won't—I say yea or nay. That's it, I just—and if it were a major issue I would speak up. I mean I don't think I would be like Anita [F.] Hill, but I mean she certainly was bold. I mean I didn't have that issue. I mean it's not [like] an issue with her about, you know, with Clarence Thomas. But I'm saying if there were really a true moral issue—

But I think a lot of kids may—I don't why they did this, some of them were probably friends of my parents' children, and they did that. And I kind of got put in an awkward—I said, “Your one day of volunteering does not make a semester a year.” I said that to them, and of course closed fences on that situation. I said, “Don't put me ever in that situation.” Because it's just—and in fact I stopped writing references for people because I don't want to. If you're going to do something like that you don't put me in that situation. And I rather just be no reference, and you know, just don't even mention me. You know I'm not that useful. I might not be that useful to you anyhow, regardless. I'm not that important. So don't ride on a shirttail that isn't important to you. It won't get you anywhere. Not that I would do anything badly, but I just—I'm not that important enough to help you, seriously. So it's just that problem that happens occasionally. But you know, I think Barnard—

01:24:41 Q: So you were able to get your application done, obviously.

01:24:44 Louie: Yeah, I got my applications done, and professor—

01:24:46 Q: And you didn't have to inflate anything. You just put the truth.

01:24:49 Louie: No, he didn't inflate. They were wonderful. I mean I didn't want to bother them because I was just a lowly RA, secretary, whatever, admin—

01:24:57 Oh, you were an RA too?

01:24:58 Louie: No, I wasn't an RA. I can't remember—I did like whatever, you know orientation or something I think. I think I was an RA. I don't remember, but that was not something I would include, right. [Laughs] I don't think it was important. Although I understand that it is important these days.

01:25:16 Q: Oh, now it would be. So where did you end up applying?

01:25:18 Louie: So I applied to Upstate New York, to State University [of New York], because I felt I could afford it, and they would offer me a full scholarship. That's what they said they would do if they took you, if you were high enough. And then to Brooklyn College, Brooklyn Law School, where Geraldo [M.] Rivera actually went. Anyhow, he was Gerry Rivers then, I think. And they were very nice to me. And they gave me a full scholarship. And to NYU. And at

NYU I was on the waiting list, partly because I did need financial aid. And my best friend had gotten in at the same time.

01:26:07 Q: The one you were worried about. Also at NYU.

01:26:09 Louie: Right, no, she got into NYU and she got into Harvard. She chose Harvard.

01:26:14 Q: So you didn't need to worry about her at all.

01:26:16 Louie: Yeah, but she didn't want to withdraw her application. Some people wait a long time withdraw. And I guess I kind of felt, Well, maybe, that they would only chose person from each school. I mean, you know, we are a city school, and they tend to not ever want to accept everyone from the same college of the some city, and everything else. But it turned out I got in anyhow, very soon after, even before she withdrew. So I guess I felt better about myself, [laughs] in that case. And they gave me some money. It was not as much money as Brooklyn. And I think I got into Syracuse, yeah. I could have been a fellow classmate with Joe [Joseph R.] Biden then. [Laughs] You know, right? What did I know?

No, but I'm a city girl, I guess. And Joellen was going to NYU to the Psychology Department, and we could be roommates, and I loved Joellen, and it was just—even though I'd still be in the city and maybe forced to commute if my parents weren't moving, it was still going to be better because it was another part of New York I never lived in. I mean I don't understand why I never

explored The Village when I was up at Columbia. What is wrong with me? I mean I don't understand, there's a—

01:27:38 Q: You were too busy.

01:27:39 Louie: I was too busy. There was a lot going on. I mean we did have our lockouts, but I was too busy, because—actually I went to NYU for the summer program when I was in high school. I went straight to the program—maybe I was working. So I went straight to the program, got my French éclair, from someplace, because I would walk to where I worked so that way I saved the subway fare—éclairs were cheaper then, and I was thinner then so I could take a calorie or two. [Laughs] So I just didn't explore all that stuff that happens, the night life and everything else. I mean the only thing I did when I was in college was occasionally I'd hit a few Broadway shows. And I'll confess I did go towards intermission sometimes and catch part of the show, and people would either be leaving—

01:28:45 Q: You were smart, yeah

01:28:46 Louie: Actually, a friend of mine, her husband used to do that with the opera. You'd just go during intermission, and people were leaving because they did not like the show or because they had babysitting issues. They gave you their ticket. It's just—all you do is have to sit there and look nice and polite. [Laughs] Or sometimes people would just have an extra ticket and they felt—because I guess now I've learned from people, you know, there is a whole theatre crowd that gets tickets, you know, they work with the agencies, and they get comps, and they want to

fill the audience. So that started my life-long passion of being [laughs]—the person who did this with me was not someone from Barnard, because I didn't think I could ask someone from Barnard to do this with me, was my friend from Chelsea whose parents had the laundry at the other corner of the block, competitors with my mother, but who I played with because we were the only Chinese kids, or girls on the block. So who else could we be playing with? So we would play with each other. And she was going to City College, as a commuter, and we'd meet up and we'd just do this intermission thing of looking like nice Chinese girls [laughs]—

01:30:07 Q: Brilliant!

01:30:08 Louie: But I don't think they do that anymore, or they stopped—I think they challenged it. But I time-share my tickets sometimes because the tickets were pretty expensive. I did this with my friend, Susan, one time because I said, well—we didn't do it exactly that way, I mean she got us—one of us got a standing room, and one of us got a seat, in the balcony, and we time-shared our ticket. We said we'll swap because we couldn't tolerate the whole three hours of standing, but that's all that was left, in our price range, but that was all that was left. So, you know, we've done that over the years, if there's nothing else—not as bad as when we were young students, but pretty good. So that's how we absorbed our theatre at that time.

And then of course Lincoln Center [for the Performing Arts] was only two dollars for students in those days. And you can get nose-bleed opera seats for two dollars, or probably less, I can't remember. It was nose-bleed, but still it didn't bother me. That's part of how I wasted my time. [Laughs] Alright, so I mean I just didn't do everything else, but I kind of did that.

01:31:16 Q: You where choosy for the good things.

01:31:17 Louie: Right

01:31:18 Q: Let me ask you a little bit about—and we'll go back to law school, and then that whole trajectory, which has been most of your life. Were you at all involved, or how were you involved politically or socially like in '68, with the strike? Do you remember that all, or—?

01:31:34 Louie: Yeah, no I did.

01:31:35 Q: And you were commuting at this point.

01:31:36 Louie: In '68, I probably was living in the dorm, or—? It was first year or second year?

01:31:42 Q: Yeah, first year, first year, spring of our first year.

01:31:45 Louie: I think it was just difficult because I felt—obviously I had struggled to get into college, and I was spending all my hard-earned dollars going. It wasn't someone else's dollar, and, you know, my scholarship money, and like it was my one shot.

And now I know what one shot means, because I saw Hamilton last night, luckily. [Laughs]

Another lucky find with my theatre buddy, Susan. I mean we lucked up. She got the lottery after

many tries we've done. I had tried a few and she had tried a few. It's a standing room. It's not like we got this prime seat, and we stood for three hours. But of the shows that I've stood at, and I've stood at three shows in my life, and I think this is—maybe four. Merchant of Venice, and then Helen [L.] Mirren in the audience. They were good, and so it was Al [Alfredo J.] Pacino, but this was worth standing—well partly because of the music. I think you can stand through a musical cause your feet can ratta-ratta—or nobody bothers you if you rustle your body [laughs]. But it was attention grabbing, and it was very—it's a beautifully done. It's something I think if I were a teacher, it's wonderful that you could communicate on a different level with music, or with history to a younger audience. And maybe to transcend it to an older audience who probably doesn't understand Hip Hop. I mean I'm not a believer or an understander of Hip Hop either. But it was all about how this is an immigrant pop—because, you know, Hamilton had gone to Columbia, and how Hamilton and Lafayette really—this is a nation of immigrants, and that's basically—yeah, here I am, and how he felt that he had to continue to struggle and do all this stuff—but why—

But this is like—but I understood the message, and I didn't believe in the war, and I did cooperate with—I mean if it was shut down it was shut down. And I don't think I wanted to sit-in on it, but I think that message resounded clearly about how—you know the inequalities that you do face in a class situation. And how I felt even with the Vietnam War, aren't they likely more to recruit somebody whose ethnic minority and black, and Hispanic or Asian, than they were going to go for anyone who get past their way to professional school? I mean how can you get to all the other things—all the exemptions were not meant for anyone who was poor. It's just what it is. I mean how would you even get into these professional schools without all your connections, or



whatever, just to get the exemption? I mean I've known people who've gone to law school, not because they wanted to, but because they had an exemption. And they did not like law school. They wanted to be a musician or something else, but their parents had enough wherewithal—I mean they were conscientious objectors. But the thing is, how do you get to that point?

And also there were issues about the housing, or other issues that Columbia—you know you see that with—I mean I've lived through urban renewal. It wasn't awful here. But, you know, you can be usurped from your—because you're poor. I mean, where do you go? Seriously. I mean my niece and daughter tried to rent a place, and the rents are so outrageous. So I mean it must be phenomenal even then. So where do families go? I've worked in Legal Services since, in other contexts, and I get clients who barely can pay. But I see that you can't—it's a real struggle, and I don't see how even half the people in New York can live New York. And not legitimately, I just can't see it, because I see how much my daughter and niece have had to pay. And, you know, I can't qualify. And thinking you go through this whole crazy ratios, and if you're stuck with something else, other obligations, no one would qualify. I mean I've gone to a few places, and I said, Gee, I don't know. I mean if I went about this legitimately and told you about every debt I had you probably would say—or if I didn't have the right legal papers, or all the years of tenureship living someplace else, having owned a house—

01:36:38 Q: Where do you start?

01:36:39 Louie: Where do you start? So there were things that resounded, and I think that it was a good message, but I think an awkward dilemma considering I was paying for my way. And my

parents would just tell me, “Just leave and go to City College.” And I don’t want to do that. Not that City College is awful. I mean I’ve gone to—I’ve attended classes at some of the city colleges, and they’re great, they’re just huge. And sometimes I do feel you can make a brilliant thing and you’d be the only brilliant person in the room. Not saying I’m brilliant, but I’m just saying you can write a good paper, which is good, but I don’t think it would be as much as I would demand of myself, but it would be the best paper in the house. And I don’t know—it doesn’t encourage me the opportunity, and maybe because they’re weighing out who is in school at the same time, and everyone’s English is not that great—and I’ll tell you I almost flunked English at Barnard. Barnard was like, Oh, god, they had a terrible English department, not—you’re the bright brain in the English Department. But I had Kate [Katherine M.] Millet as my English teacher.

01:37:48 Q: Oh, my goodness!

01:37:49 Louie: Can you believe that? An Asian shy girl, not too shy, but still, sitting there with Kate Millet, who’s confronting you every week about the events that she did, these artsy events, like the Yoko Ono type of events, you know, lock ourselves in a room, or a box and see who’s the first to break out, and blah, blah. And—

01:38:15 Q: Didn’t she make you all wear blinders and walk around campus to see how—?

01:38:17 Louie: Yeah, she would do these things, and tell, “Oh, you’re so naïve and so stupid.” I don’t think it’s fair to say, actually she made you feel low if you were not of her—and that’s

another type of classism. I mean there is—yeah, I guess that type of discrimination, I mean an intellectual discrimination. There are a lot of times where you felt they thought that they were superior to you. And I think that's part of the problem at Columbia, that there's this inferiority thing. And I think part of the problem with the lock-out is that there were kids who knew that they comfortably could go home. I'd have seen that because I've been a lawyer. There are people who can shoplift, there are people who can have these issues, and their parents will get them out.

01:39:03 Q: Yes.

01:39:04 Louie: And there are the others who do not get out and have a permanent record. And there were girls who wanted to just be part of the party, because their boyfriends were there, and they were just going to be partying with them. I don't think that's feminist, because if you did it only because your boyfriend is there, or girlfriend is there, or whatever, either way—I could say that too for a male—you would go with the crowd and you were not making a conscious political decision. And I think some people did that because their significant partner were part of the movement. And, you know, I've seen people—actually, [laughs] the neighborhood that we lived in later when we were in California was in Redwood Shores, and Patty [Patricia C.] Hearst actually ended up living in the same neighborhood, as a middle class person because she had married her bodyguard, but you know—

01:39:57 Q: She still had all the money, right?

01:39:58 Louie: Oh, she—probably still would inherit the Hearst money. I don't know, but, you know, that's partly how I felt about some of the people who participated, that some of them were blind-sighted, or indoctrinated. Did they know their own minds? Until you do it of your own mind, I think that's difficult. If you did it, then that's just fine, but if you did it because you were following the leader. It was just as bad as my rejecting my friend, Ethel, at that point. I wouldn't want to join something because it was just following the crowd. And I did that once and that was trying to get in with the good—you know, whatever, the social crowd. And you don't want to do that. So, and I saw people do that.

01:40:43 Q: No, I don't think a lot of people who came from backgrounds where their families were poor, they were the first generation in college, they very much resented that a lot of people were very well-off, and as you said could go home, whatever they did they'd be defended. And I think there was a lot of that feeling. But it wasn't articulated that much. I don't think that many people were speaking out. I don't know.

01:41:06 Louie: About it, or about how they felt?

01:41:07 Q: Yeah, there was a real hypocrisy, I think, and people saw that hypocrisy.

01:41:11 Louie: I mean there is. I mean we all know—I mean that's the thing about—if you go to City College, you know, everyone's on that same plane, right. Well, maybe, but maybe it's not. But at Columbia you felt there were the haves and the have-nots, and the ones that had the resources—and maybe now, today, when we have more—you know we have legal services and

defense groups that could represent minorities and other groups, you knew how to—you know the ACLU, some people would come to your defense. But would, you know, that if you're a young student? No. So if you're struggling—I mean even if you're struggling with the idealistic concept or the philosophical concept, going to jail is like something your parents taught you, you don't do [laughs]. I mean no matter for what reason, even if you grew up in India and you did, you know, passive resistance, and you believed in [Mohandas Karamchand] Gandhi—I mean, I don't know of anyone—well, you know, of course I don't think anyone rich participated in his movements either.

01:42:22 Q: Good point, yeah.

01:42:23 Louie: [LINES OMITTED].... But, you know, you just have all these other things where the legal system will look one way at someone who came from nothing, and someone who's going to be a future lawyer and politician, or you know. Parents are leaning on them. I mean it doesn't matter. They're part of the same social crowd. You don't do that because you have to live with each other. And that's always the system. I mean we're not as bad as other countries. I mean, I've worked in systems within international law where it's, you know, like intellectual property, and everyone's about, Oh, you get a lawyer from another country because they're connected. They're related to the president. They're related to—their wife is the sister-in-law of so and so. I mean this will get us somewhere, because the lawyer there is well-connected. And it's true of all these countries. You're in Europe—you hire people because they have connections.

And I mean Columbia is better than other Ivy League—they try not to be elitist, but there are groups of people that are there and comfortable. But at least it's—but you can't get into the comfort zone just because you have—I mean if you go to some colleges, you know, they're all elitists, and they're all [laughs] going to get out. I mean there are some that I figure that—they could do no wrong. And I think that you get someone that, like, went to Stamford, probably very—they would never do wrong, you know kind of thing that they would look at it. But even with the disparity of where the backgrounds could come from. Maybe it's California too, you know there's a different mindset to looking—but I don't think they would have protested anything. They never did [laughs]. It's only Berkley. And the Berkley situation, even there, there were the haves and the have-nots. There were those who worked hard to get in and those who were comfortable, because it's the best institution if you want to hang out in California. So you would have very affluent connected people at Berkley, and they made a stand and they could be defended—and also they're very knowledgeable. They're very smart people. They're knowledgeable of the fact that there were legal resources on their side. They had it all together before they did anything. So that's smart, [laughs] if you're going to do something like that you've got to get your legal resources in tow before you do it [laughs].

But, you know, I think for what was done, it was done from the heart. So if it was really done from the heart I think it's much better than—a little pre-meditated calculation—I mean war—I mean you don't do all that without—So I think it still was a message that had to be sent, but whether it have to be sent by totally shutting down the campus, and maybe the president got reactive—I mean everything. The reactions were too strong. We were very concerned, we were at an intersection of what was—what do we really want? You had two extremes. I mean we had a

president like [John F.] Kennedy, where everything seemed euphoric and wonderful, and then you move into something else. [Lyndon B.] Johnson—I mean you can’t—you go from this false sense of security and hope, and then you move into that.

Oh, I’d like to all be idealistic. I mean it would be—and I think partly practicing law has been terrible. I’ve become sarcastic, and much more jaded. And I think my children think I’m more cynical, and I don’t want to be cynical. I’m not paranoid, but I’m cynical. And being a cynic is not—I don’t think it was really part of my original nature, but I’ve become a cynic.

01:47:03 Q: Talk a little bit about that then, that whole trajectory. So you’ve entered NYU, you’re sharing with your roommate from Barnard, Joy. The experience of being in law school as a woman at that point, and then were you—

01:47:16 Louie: Well, that was also a miserable situation. How many Asians were there? So we were probably like what, maybe fifteen percent, twenty percent women.

01:47:22 Q: Twenty percent women, okay. Which was probably large for NYU.

01:47:26 Louie: NYU being more liberal than the other law schools were, in terms of that. There’s still the haves and have-nots. That’s always the case in law school. And there were people who had the grand design of what they wanted out of law school. I had no idea what I wanted. Can you believe it? It wasn’t like I was going to become an accountant or a tax lawyer.

Although my parents probably thought, Oh, you do something stable, you work for the government. It was nothing like that.

01:47:53 Q: But they were pleased you were going to law school though?

01:47:56 Louie: No. I'd gotten to a program in audiology. I have problems—I have problems with decisions [laughs]. I'd gotten into a program at Columbia in audiology. And they said, "Gee, that's practical, and it's kind of medical. And I can explain to my friends what you do." [Laughs] "And you'd have better hours, and it sounds better. It just is more understanding that you'd be helping people." And I guess I just—I got into those things, and then I got into some other teaching program at Teachers College [Columbia University], and I would have been a good teacher. I've taught courses in the past. It's terrible I used all my tickets. I'd asked different professors for different things in order not to confuse—you know ask them all because they'd be—wow, are you got confused? [Laughs] You know, you ask tow to write for this and two to—

01:48:54 Q: We all were. We all were.

01:48:55 Louie: Right? "You're applying to three different types of programs. Do you now know what you want to do?" I said, Well I do, later, but I don't know if I'll even get into law school. And so let's think of something else that's more compatible to what my skill sets are.

And, yeah, I think I might have been happier, maybe not audiology, but something in the bio-medical thing. I probably would have been, in retrospect, happier starting my own business, or



going to business school if it's necessary to start your own business. My mind was all over the place. And I really don't like the same tasks, redundantly. And sometimes anytime it gets too—I like immigration law because I can make up arguments about this, and that, and that, and the people are different. The situations are never the same. But if I were doing straight corporate documents I think my mind would go crazy just doing the same thing. I mean some of the other fields would have been better because I would have interaction with more people. I think I like having different situations. So you know, I chose law school because, “Oh, you're so lucky to get in.” [Laughs] It's just like, “Oh, everyone would die to get in as a woman—” You know, and then you couldn't make changes.

And I think I was good advocate, and I saw the unevenness of the system no matter how—I mean no matter what it is, in taxes, anything. And I think—I went in, but, you know, the structure of the classes were, even though it's a liberal law school, the fundamentals were just dull. I was more interested in my volunteer work. I was working on the Chinatown Health Clinic, and at Legal Services at that time. I overdid it in terms of my volunteer effort, and barely struggled with the courses. Although I could do it, it was just like it was always like a last moment thing. And I mean I know I could do it because when I subsequently took graduate law courses I aced them. So it's just a matter of where you set your priorities. So I did not set my priority on law school. I thought that the other life was better. And it was because it gave me feedback. Either you had people who loved you, or things that you felt happened. And you didn't have to wait so long for it to happen. I mean now I can't even stand—some of the legal cases I have has lasted as long as my children, [laughs] or, yeah—You know, there are cases—I can't stand things that last this long.

It was not welcoming. Law school is not welcoming. And if you're talking about frenemies, this is worse than frenemies. You're constant frenemies. It's not one or two frenemies and having a few supportive helpers. It's competitive. And a few Asians. Most of the other Asians dropped out for other careers, like one went to work for UN, and—or two of them, and one went to other things. Basically it was like, I think it was probably less, the last Asians, the last two or three Asians who lasted out of a whole group of maybe four or five that came off different schools. You don't last. And I kind of survived because I had to get something that kick-assed me back into thinking of going back.

So actually I went and took off a year, and I went back to California where my parents were, my sister, the political person was [laughs]. And then I did realize I had to work somewhere and get some money, so I worked at things like with one of the credit card services. And realized, "Oh, gee, this is not what I want to do either." I mean you're dealing with rich people and dealing with credit issues of their wealth. And I was offered a fairly good job doing something else that I—you know working for some law firm, that probably would be much better in the long run, being a legal assistant than being a lawyer.

But then I decided—I'd asked if I could intern or clerk with one of the senators, Senator [Alan M.] Cranston at that time. So I went to Washington. And that was during Watergate.

01:53:32 Q: Good timing!

01:53:33 Louie: It was just because I wanted to do that. I wanted the excitement of doing—be there, you know so I was there. And, you know, of course you end up being the lowly admin, whatever they want to call us, legislative assistant, or whatever. You know you do everything, you write the letters—you're the ghost writer, you ghost-write statements, you help the speech writer write speeches. I'm a very good writer, in spite of the fact that Kate Millet did not like my [laughs]—in fact everyone I've worked with who were White-Anglo, or White-Jewish, delegate all the writing to me subsequently. They say, I'm a poet when it comes to writing a brief or argument. So regardless of my bad time with Kate Millet, who gave me a C, and who constantly confronted us with the fact that—Norman [K.] Mailer's daughter was in our class, Susan Mailer. She was in the English class. She was the daughter of one of the wives.

01:54:33 Q: She didn't go all the way through though, did she?

01:54:34 Louie: I don't think so. But it doesn't matter, she was in the English class.

01:54:37 Q: Beverly Sill's daughter was in our class too, I heard, but she didn't last long either.

01:54:40 Louie: Well they had bitter talents to follow. It's not like every—Columbia is not the [laughs] be-all-and-all, and you don't have to finish college. I know for a fact, that you do not need to finish college to do things. I think a lot of it comes from a drive within. But certainly for someone from our class background, where our parents didn't have everything, it gives you a sense of validation and security.

01:55:07 Q: Absolutely, yeah.

01:55:08 Louie: So and I think that confidence makes a big difference. I mean I think for me Barnard probably just provided me with a confidence level that I wouldn't have had if I had gone to a coed school, because I wouldn't have felt as confident, because I did better than in the stupid—better than the less, I don't know, skilled guys who took some of the courses. Maybe that is because of the teaching or the way they were thought at Brooklyn Tech, or whatever. You know I don't think we were smarter. I think it just forced us to interact more and to challenge ourselves more. It has nothing to do with anything except—

I mean taking Columbia smaller seminars. When you're challenged, you're challenged. I mean I took some of the graduate courses, and, oh, Religion, [laughs] The Study of African Religions. When you're there in a room where you can be challenged you are working on it. You raise the bar for yourself. And first you have to find yourself, right. I don't think there's any guarantee that any college can do anything. But first you find yourself and then you find what you want to get out of it. And I think sometimes having a sense of failure by getting your Cs, just makes you feel that you can—you push yourself, but I don't think that necessarily they should have given me the C, but I'm just saying—because that could scar you for life [laughs].

01:56:40 Q: You're beyond that though.

01:56:41 Louie: I'm beyond that. But I could see that if you're not a strong enough person it would make you say, Let's quit and somewhere else. And in that sense I think Barnard was not

supportive. They did not help people with—now they have good supportive writing program. I think that's—wasn't it funded by one of the writers? Um—the one who—is it a psychologist? One of the writers supports a writing and editing program. The kids go through constant redrafts of things that they do. I mean there's a kind of—

My daughter actually attended Barnard, and she said they have an excellent writing program. And she was petrified of dealing with the writing at Barnard, having heard from Joellen and myself [laughs]. And she's not really much of a writer, not daughter number two, she was more of an artist, and an engineer type. I mean she subsequently ended up in the School of Engineering, did rather well. But that's not what she loves to do. She loves to do art. So she's pursuing her artwork, and other things. And she's worked at this art gallery, and she's very knowledgeable about African Art, and other things.

But I'm just saying that it's sometimes difficult at Barnard cause you almost have to choose you path early. And maybe your path wasn't what you really wanted to choose. And it's just everyone—many people came either because their parents had chosen, or they're pre-law, pre-med, whatever, or they're from families that were medicine, so they do that. So they come in like this with a preset mind. And I think that didn't create a lot of friendships because of that, and maybe also because of the commuters situation. It did not create—there was this—most of it blended, but there was a segmented community.

And I think the clubs—I think the problem with what happened in '68 was a lot of the clubs fractionated. So places where you would have had a forum or a venue to meet other people like

you do, like what other people do now, you know, joining in the Radio Club or some of the other things, it didn't happen, because we were all concerned about taking a side politically. And so you didn't have a time where you could make friendships and enjoy the naivety of joining—of starting college. So we were abruptly thrown into adulthood, just like when I was a child. I became a twelve-year-old adult raising my younger sisters because my parents did not have the time or the total ability. And the same thing with doing the advocacy. And the thing is when we went to Columbia that type of thing forced us to become an adult without enjoying our college year.

So that I think is probably the deepest sorrow, because a lot of people enjoy and have this great college bond that you hear about constantly from other colleges. And I think the acceleration of—and maybe even now with the tuition costing this much, and the demands on the students, that first year of college can't be enjoyed. I think even my daughter felt that everyone was too focused on getting on the right path at Barnard, and Columbia. She said she had no fun to enjoy all these wonderful things of going to a museum or theatre because she had to work so hard. And of course she was in engineering [laughs]. You know and you have to work hard, and she was in architecture. She worked hard. I mean she spent all her time—she said she had a few tight friendships, but because a lot—and I think that may be the same, now it becomes an economic situation where people are not enjoying that first year of college. But I think the whole joy of going to college is to have at least—like going to summer camp and developing your first friendship, your first friendship away from home, without your parents, without—

I really didn't go to summer camp except a short little thing that actually one of my parents'—my mother's laundry customer said, Well, this child is going, and they could apply for me and that I'd get a scholarship. And that was—it's still a beautiful situation. And I've made friends—I've had Gaye, and Joellen, and, you know, people I've lost contact with, and Julia, even. I lost contact with her. I mean, you know, you have your children, you have—

I moved everywhere. I mean I did not stay a life-long New Yorker. We've moved to the West, and then we moved back to Syracuse, and then we moved to the West, East Bay, and we moved to New Jersey, and to Maryland. [Laughs] We've been all over the place, five years here. I mean you would think I'm a politician's wife, [laughs] you know, or an army child, right. So we've been everywhere and we've been in situations, not that—I think when I moved back to Maryland did we enjoy anything—that's another place, oh, that everyone's so politicized, or so busy with their lives that—I mean you've lived there. I don't think that I got to enjoy all the museums or all the other things. You're just too busy, everyone's busy, maybe suburban life is like this, everyone's busy being PTA-ing, and channeling, or networking. Networking, a dirty word. I mean none of those things that I do, because I was there just a short term. I just kind of like enjoyed whatever—my children's lives. And I was trying to find myself, Oh, I moved here, now I should really try to change careers. But I guess that didn't—I was not strong enough to change careers.

02:03:05 Q: Now did you start out in immigration law, or no?

02:03:11 Louie: Oh, I started out—oh, gosh, no, I didn't. I started out in immigration law when I did Legal Services, but I did the legislative stuff a little.

02:03:19 Q: That was in Washington.

02:03:20 Louie: Yeah, but that's not like profitable or going to make you money. You know it's not a career, career. This is maybe something you can do if you have other money. And it takes—oh, being a legislator for anybody, doesn't matter who it is, you work. I mean everyone who works on The Hill, you have to admit—and you should take young people. You work. You work sixty to eighty hours a week. It's your whole life. It's nothing. It's nothing. It's either your life or not your life. But, no, I did the Legal Services, but, you know, there's a hierarchy there too. You know the liberals have their little class system too about—you know you don't get into ACLU or other things unless you're connected. We have an intellectual elite. Maybe you just want to do everyday cases, and you're not intellectual enough, you want to do earth shattering cases. Well, we're not all going to be able to do earth shattering cases. And then some of the other things have to be handled as well. No, I did that for a while, and then I got—I was smart enough after leaving and coming back. I'd taken—

02:04:27 Q: You mean going to California and coming back to The East?

02:04:32 Louie: No, going back to law school, after the legislative—I actually did very well in intellectual properties [laughs]. So I ended up with a position with an intellectual property firm that did mostly patents, and trademarks. And then I kind of justified that I'm just really helping



brilliant artists—really, you’re only doing corporate things. [Laughs] No brilliant artist can pay you. [Laughs] So you—I was going to find the next inventor, but, you know, that doesn’t happen. You’re doing things like Hewlett-Packard [Company]. And it’s interesting but it’s repetitive. We must have stayed on the same lawsuit for Levi Strauss, and I had to justify in my own mind—and that probably got me out of a job, because I kind of told the partner that, Well, you’ve made your whole career doing a job defending Levi Strauss. And it’s fairly lucrative, but we’ve been on the same case for Levi Strauss against whoever, other jean company—it is big business, the trademarks, and that little curvature on the jean. Although I don’t know what happened to Levi Strauss. They couldn’t keep up with the rest of the fashion industry. But I said something that was probably politically incorrect if you were trying to move ahead. I mean I had a job, but it wasn’t going to get me anywhere. And also once you’re married they kind of think that you don’t have to be moved on promotion-wise. They think that you’re kind of like there to do the work. I said that, Well the only thing I can to justify the position, I’m keeping these garment workers employed in legal union positions at Levi Strauss by advocating constantly to protect their trademarks and keep them—I was keeping people employed, basically [laughs] this is how I got to rationalize what I was doing.

And that was difficult, and so then I kind of said, Well I’ll go back to doing immigration, but then I had to do where you had to make money, not Legal Services. So you can only do pro-bono and take on cases. And, oh god, you had these sleazy bosses who were just talking about money, money, money, or law. Everyone’s talking about billables, no matter who it is. It’s not a corporate—anything. And so then I fell into a group of women who were practicing solo, and we worked out a collaboration where we were all like helping each other. And that was probably good for

the last bunch of years. And then when we moved to Syracuse I got to do immigration things for Bristol-Myers [Squibb], and, you know, a major corporation. And there were interesting cases, the scientists actually come from different places in the world. It was very—and they really—can you believe it? Clients send you flowers and bring you baked goods, [laughs] and you get food, and people appreciate what you do. So there was feedback, and there was some money from the clients who—the corporations—even corporate clients sent me flowers. They loved me [laughs]. They thought that I really had them in mind and their family in mind. I did not think of just them as the client.

So I was good at it, but then we left Syracuse because my mother was losing her eyesight, and my husband had cancer, and had—we had to go—he had vocal chord cancer, and we had to do a therapy. And the only place to go was Boston. So we went there for a couple of months. And then after that one the company moved for him down to New Jersey or Connecticut, I think, we decided to—he found something that was that was rating—he recovered—he went into submission after months of radiation therapy, which was double-dose. And my daughter was born at that time. So it was a difficult time, I was saying, I'm going to have to support our whole family. I mean I don't know where this is going to leave me. At some point, you might have a not-terminal, but you can have a shortened career, you have a shortened life span.

And so I had a job in Syracuse, so I worked in Syracuse. My parents and my husband and my babies, my two daughters went up to Boston. Joellen knew somebody who had a place there. We sublet. We went to Mass General [Massachusetts General Hospital], and I commuted. You know there was no telecommuting then. I did my cases, and I developed this wonderful relationship

with a great partner, a woman, to do my cases partly. And then I just continued and we built, the two of us—you know there were very few woman built your own practice out there. But we managed, but then, you know, we left because when the company left for my husband to Connecticut, and then he felt he was in remission, he felt because my mother had sacrificed enough to come that we should go—and she was getting blind, that we should go out to California. So we did that.

02:09:56 Q: So at this point you have a husband, you have two children, you've been supporting everybody—

02:10:00 Louie: No, I wasn't supporting everyone. At least he got into remission and—

02:10:02 Q: Well, yeah, but that's a lot at once, my gosh.

02:10:04 Louie: I thought, Gee, I'll have to work forever. And my partner was very generous about—

02:10:10 Q: Wait, was your father still around at that point?

02:10:12 Louie: Oh, my father was around.

02:10:14 Q: I mean your father was with your mother still.

02:10:16 Louie: So he came to—you know he didn't love being at Syracuse or Boston. I mean he didn't mind Boston because his father had been there. But, you know, they're retired—he was retired, and she had a job that meant a lot to her. Not that it was a high position, she was a social worker aid, but it meant the world to her. You don't do that to—it's something she waited till we finished college to get.

02:10:40 Q: And what was causing the blindness?

02:10:41 Louie: She had diabetic retinopathy. So diabetes actually caused that, so she lost her eyesight in one eye. And then after we moved there she lost her eyesight pretty much in both eyes. I mean she helped me through with my third child, and my son. And then, you know, I continued back there because I knew some other woman that we met in the halls of immigration, you know. You can develop friendships—you don't have to be frenemies all the time. You can be collaborative. You know, so we met here in the halls, our big adversary being immigration [laughs]. You can develop a common bond when you have one adversary. It's like joining the army. You can develop very strong friendships with the people on the other side. So, you know, we did our cases together, and—

02:11:35 Q: So you're back in San Francisco.

02:11:36 Louie: I'm back in San Francisco—

02:11:39 Q: And you found a place for everybody.

02:11:40 Louie: Right, and then my parents—

02:11:42 Q: And who are you—? You don't have the practice with the other women at this point?

02:11:46 Louie: No, we're all working independently. So it was great, and we would just work separately, and together. I mean whenever we'd be on vacation, we could collaborate, if we had collaborating case that we thought that we had different skill sets on. And it was good. I mean we weren't rich but we were happy. And then my partner in Syracuse was very generous. She continued to give me things that I would work on, new briefs, because she felt that she wasn't that confident, and—

02:12:12 Q: And you're a good writer [laughs].

02:12:14 Louie: Yeah, I'm a good writer. She's Jewish and white [laughs]. She's an English Major from [University of North Carolina at] Pembroke. [Laughs] You would think that—  
[laughs] no but, you know—

02:12:25 Q: It was a different kind of writing.

02:12:26 Louie: She just felt that—we all knew each other's talents, and she was generous about continuing to share the cases, and, you know, the corporate client cases, which paid us good money. And she felt that they were mine, because they were my corporate clients. But, you know,

she was connected to that town, and to the other lawyers in town, but she was very fair., You know, Pam was generous about it. The women I've worked with have been very fair. And then I connected with somebody else who was a—actually it was a roommate that Joey and I had. Her husband was roommates with someone else and it turned out his wife was an immigration lawyer in town, who's Jewish, in New York. And she also had some things sometimes when she needed help on. So I kind of got into this network of people that we traded on each other's skills. And we weren't like—

The thing is, until it became more profitable, immigration was not a great field for other—just like family law. A lot of women had made it in family law until the men decided there was money in it. Once there was money in it, because you could do O.J. [Orenthal James] Simpson's case, or some celebrity case in handling their divorce, then it became a man's—you know the men wanted it. Immigration law used to be something that—but then once the corporations needed you to take it in so that they can get their scientists and engineers in, then it became profitable, the men are back in. And men practice totally differently than women. They're not collaborative. They're talking about money. They're thinking about money every single step. Not that some of the women do not think about money. They do. Especially the women who are daughters of these men who take over the practices. But at least you had some degree of collaboration, and at your heart you could understand that there are some cases we do pro-bono, and there are some people where we're willing to help on or be more relaxed about helping each other out. And we don't charge through the nose.

But you have to be careful as a woman because everyone will indicate that you should be free labor. Many of my friends have lawyers as husbands, and I should give them free advise on other issues because their husbands actually only work for the government, or they do big corporate cases, this is not their cup of tea, they do not do estate planning. They don't do anything that doesn't—you know like when they have a problem with their lease, with their kids. Who do they call? The local free [laughs] lawyer. You know you become—for women, a lot of people ask you to do things for free. I don't think they ask men. And I think that's objectionable. And even woman ask you that way. And it is a difficult situation. Some of them, I say, Your husband's a lawyer, or your son's a lawyer, you have sons-in-laws who are lawyers. But are you too embarrassed to ask them? And of course they expect it free, you know, well, you know, for a cup of tea or dessert or something like that. And I guess you just—that's been the difficult thing of where do you start asking them to be a client verses a friend? And sometimes if it's minor it's fine, but, you know—

My daughter has friends too that ask me for—lately she has friends of hers were from England and they have issues. And they're men, and they get paid well. They did consult with other people, and they probably paid them. But for me it was a sandwich, and then they wanted more free advise. And my daughter, being a smart daughter, said, "I do not refer this to my mother. If you want to talk to her you talk to her, but she gave you your hour of free advice, and she gave you a phone call." And she says, At this point—and you're only a friend of a friend. [Laughs] I mean she's much better as a business-person than I am, to say no.

02:16:25 Q: It's the real gift [laughs].

02:16:26 Louie: Yeah, I think that our boundaries or priorities are difficult as women. I don't know if it's just that we're—partly we're insecure. I don't know if Barnard really helped us with the insecurity. We're confident in some things, because—I mean my partner just said, it's amazing how brave you are of walking in for a Chinese woman. Not that she—they're Jewish, and, you know, they went to Brown, she and her husband. They say, “Yeah, I just know that whenever something's wrong you'd speak up, just as much as we do, or even more than we do.” And it's just—

And I will speak up, but whether or not my priorities are correct as to what I place first. My family or—I mean I don't think I place my kids first. I mean I had to sort of step back when I practice law, because I feel tremendously guilty about this. What happened was my daughter was old enough to sit with my son in the car. But I had to see the client, and I placed the priority to go meet the client, in someplace in California. You know this corporate client. And they were tired and sleepy, and they—the older one, she just fell asleep in the car, and my son was there. And I said, “You're going to watch your brother just for the twenty minutes I have to go in.” And somehow he work up, or he decided to open the car door, and leave and come looking for me. And I felt, “Oh, that's embarrassing.” What he did was come in while I'm helping—I said, I abandoned my—I could be accused of child abandonment. My daughter was old enough to be there as a babysitter. She's older, substantially, so you have someone who's like twelve-thirteen watching someone who's younger. But she snoozed off, and he was just like five or four, I mean he just didn't—he didn't notice that she's in the front seat. They weren't sitting next to each other



right. So—and I said, well, you know, there's a time where you have to place a priority. It was not that important, seriously. So I realized I had to cut back.

And well then we made another change—my mother, unfortunately, became more blind, and then she needed an amputation because of diabetes.

02:19:06 Q: Now she was living with you, I take it.

02:19:08 Louie: She was part of the time. She was living in an apartment with my father, in San Francisco, because they loved San Francisco. My father is very sexist. He was never not sexist. And then he was very embarrassed by my mother's blindness, and amputation. I understand it's—culturally—most cultures do not do much for people with disabilities, period. And my father was also, you know, going through Alzheimer's a bit. So, you know, a lot of this is just not rational. So my mother just decided—at some other point my father and mother just could not really coexist because he was just constantly embarrassed. And he was forgetful. He would go to the bank and take out money and not know what he did with it. And so he had to go to a—we felt that he had to go to a nursing home. And then she also felt—then I was leaving, and then my sister was not really able to take care of it. So she ended up in another hospitalization, and then really had to go to a nursing home because it was just too complicated. Because you can't really hire—even though I'm in immigration law, you can't hire people reliably who's going to be there twenty-four/seven, not when you're not around.

My sister was not also—she was going through a difficult phase with her marriage, and she was going to leave. And we were leaving because my husband was going to go to Maryland. So we had to make that decision. And I felt that was not very reciprocal considering that she had helped us all those years. But actually she had chosen. She was a very independent person who felt that this was better. She knew it would be better. So she erased that guilt factor that we would have. And I think—I hope I am brave enough to do that for my children. I don't want them to feel encumbered. I mean I know women have the role of being the nurturer, and taking care of everyone. And anything my husband experiences with his father, who never wanted to go into an institution, and made it to his hundredth birthday—he did not want to go to a nursing home. But worse than worse he did not even want someone to come into the house to help him. So even hiring people, he'd lock them out. And he expected his daughter, duh, who he was sexist too, his daughter, who lived nearby to come and help. But she was working, and her husband had a job that he was constantly being let go, because he worked for an airline. You know you'd be on and off, and it's not an industry that's reliable. And he expected that. And so then we came to New Jersey so we could be closer to the East Coast to help him. And his other son, and his wife didn't want to come—I'm just telling you that, not every child comes—maybe you should have six children, like a farmer and have somebody at the end.

But, you know Asians do not put their elderly in a nursing home. That's another cultural thing. And many Barnard people have also expressed that they too have given up a big proportion—I think I just read it in the magazine, many people have given up their—stepped back in their dreams and their careers to take care—I think there was somebody who's a physician. I don't know whether it was Barnard or NYU, maybe it was NYU Medical, who did that. She couldn't

let her father go into a nursing home and she had to just decide that she'd take care of him. I mean we never—I don't think it's perfect. We were never given the bag of tricks to learn how to manage career and family and elder care all at once. I don't think we were. We kind of—I don't know—I mean partly—we probably should address it more.

I mean I think the younger Barnard situation is that they do have better supportive concepts about the writing, for the developing of small entrepreneurial businesses, and then we've had, like, alumni sessions once or twice about elder care—

02:24:09 Q: Like the sandwich generation that we're—

02:24:11 Louie: Yeah, the sandwich, that we're—I don't know, it's very difficult because I don't know what—see I know in our heart of hearts we're too independent. We might not go into a nursing home ourselves. And do we do that double-standard on them if we ourselves—if we don't acknowledge this? I've written an oral will myself to tell my children, it's all right. Because I know at the time when I'm demented I might hang on and make them feel guilty, because I'll be good at making them feel guilty. But I want the relationship—I don't want it to be burdensome. And I think my mother was graceful about not doing that. She was wonderful about it, I think. And my father, even in his old age, he said—he never wanted me to go to college, and never wanted [laughs] me to go to law school, but at least he said, “Regardless of what happens in the world, you have a skill, you have the brains, and I'm proud of you. And you're capable of surviving, even though your husband's incompetent.” [Laughs] I think it was one of those things

where, “I don’t think her husband’s good enough,” and that type of thing. He was willing to say, “Well, you’re smart enough, you can stand on your own.”

02:25:39 Q: That’s just quite a combination—

02:25:40 Louie: “And you can survive in any world.” Of course I’ve been ranting about a number of other things about how other men, and the young men these days are not that great [laughs].

02:25:54 Q: How did you meet your husband?

02:25:55 Louie: Actually, I met him through a classmate of mine from Columbia, through Peter, indirectly, because we were all volunteering at the health clinic in Chinatown. And I was very busy. I’m always busy at whatever I’m doing. I could care less what everything else—but because we had to, like, go, and I collaborated with gatherings. And Joey was always very social, she always wanted to have a monthly or—every two months she wanted to have a party, and we had an apartment in The Village on East 8th Street. And we had a wonderful location, and everyone would want to stop by and use our bathroom [laughs]. A bathroom is hard to find in this town, right. There were no Starbucks. And I guess we just met like—not that we were really dating or anything, we just became friends. And I was just busy doing my thing.

And then I ran off to do whatever I did in California, and worked in Washington. And then he wanted help in finding a place to stay in Washington, after I left Washington. So we kind of like

developed this long connected long tele-commuting—we were never in the same place for a long time. And he had finished medical school, and I was going one way and he was going another. But kind of—you know I was ambitious. I was going to make a go of this job, this wonderful job. I thought the dream—it was a dream job. It was a beautiful firm, beautiful interiors, [laughs] you know the typical corporate firm that was creative and innovative, and beautiful sailboats faced the water and the ferry building.

02:27:38 Q: What was the company?

02:27:39 Louie: Oh, the firm is no longer there. It was Limbach Limbach & Sutton.

02:27:41 Q: Limbach Limbach & Sutton, very—

02:27:42 Louie: Yeah, one of those, you know long names. It was a nice place, but, you know, it's a male place. Anything in that type of field is mostly male dominated. And I was not socially connected. If you're not socially connected you don't bring in the big-time clients. Rainmaking is a big part of a law firm's work. And, you know, you could be smart but you're going to be doing the smart work. You know, you're right. No, you don't interface with the big clients because no one wants—that's how he got his partner. That's how they get their client, they don't to ever lose the client again. The client came to them from somebody else's firm [laughs].

So it is a partnership. But you know, not that you're going to ever steal a client, like a corporate client, very easily from anybody. I mean everyone always talks about it, but it doesn't—and it

happens occasionally, but it's usually because a senior partner has left another firm. But we're not taught to do that part of the field. We're taught to be—and Asians are certainly tecno-crats. We live by the fact that we've got brain power and smarts. I mean many of us do, not just Asians, but most of us were taught that you—and I guess we are naïve that way, that our smarts would hold us in great stead, just like my father said it would do. But many of us thought that we could rely on our smarts and not on networking, the 'dirty word [laughs]. And maybe networking amongst women is—I mean like the other women, you know, some of the other sister schools have much better networking than Barnard.

I mean I've been in situations in Washington, D.C., where I'd met—like my son was in a Boy Scout group, and the mother was—she's not from our class, she's younger, and then we were talking, and she's a lawyer. And then I realized that she was from Barnard, because I looked in the directory. And I said, "All these years, two years, I did not know. And would you like to go to a Barnard function?" Well, they didn't have a good time? I mean I don't understand. And then at the same time, it's always with my son's—another classmate, and the boy's mother, also she did not say she went to Barnard, ever. And were doing, you know, those usual sports things together, and she worked for some producer of a major TV show, one of those associate producers. And she also did not say she went to Barnard, or she didn't want to go to the Barnard function. And it's not that she went to graduate school, I think she made it from, you know, the usual—coming from the bottom rung and moving on up. I mean it's surprising that no one wants to identify.

02:30:52 Q: It's strange, yeah.

02:30:53 Louie: And of course they're not from our class. They're younger. And then I went to a recent function—in Philadelphia they actually have an all—The Seven Sisters Collaboration, for alumni events. So they invite everybody from all Seven Sisters to come, including Barnard, and there are a couple of Barnard people in that thing, but they don't come to Barnard functions. In fact one of them works for something, I don't want to say where, but I asked her. And she's from a class—I said, "What class?" And she's older, she's a couple of years older than our class, and you would think she would come. I mean she's retired. Or maybe not, she's still working at something. But I was talking to her and it just didn't seem like she wanted to have the conversation about Barnard. And we were talking with other people who went to Byrne Mawr [College], or you know, this is a law firm. I mean she was not a lawyer, but I don't know, it's really hard. I mean I think that this club, the Barnard Club in D.C. has been one of the strongest that I've been to. The ones in California try to have things that are non-academic, and you know, just fun.

02:32:15 Q: Yeah, the social, yeah, yeah.

02:32:16 Louie: So those are the only two—and one in L.A. is actually very interesting. They have lots of interesting people who work in the industry, you know, Hollywood things, stuff like that. And there were all these types of other people. And I'd only gone to one. It's just because I visited my sister, and I thought, Oh, maybe I should not be sitting here with you because you're so busy being a Democratic politician. So I guess I better find something else for myself to do today. [Laughs] And, you know, she said, In my neighborhood—and I looked up something. I said, "Well, gee, I could go to this." [Laughs] And that was interesting, because they were talking

about people who were working in the Hollywood industries. A lot of them were doing costume or stage—and, you know, young and older as well, and people were trying. So they're willing to share and talk.

I think part of the problem with the functions—and those are more informal functions than the ones in Washington. I think the problems of function that I've seen in Northern California is they got to be too pricey. They had to find events that cost the venue where, you know, people would have to pay fifty dollars. You know you're asking people to spread themselves thin to go to a function that, you know—it's nice to get together with people but they didn't really want to do a sit-down meal or—I mean that venues charges, you can't help it. So I think it would be nice if there was more of a sisterhood but—

02:33:50 Q: Yeah, I agree.

02:33:51 Louie: And then my daughter ended up at Barnard and Columbia, both of them, and she says the Barnard women are tight, but the Columbia women are kind of frenemies.

02:34:01 Q: Oh, really.

02:34:02 Louie: There's a friction. I've never heard anyone backlash about a Columbia women, but the Columbia women do say things about Barnard women, that you know—

02:34:18 Q: They felt superior or something?



02:34:20 Louie: No, they just say that you did there to find a husband or whatever. You know the typical, old-style women thing, that you think does not exist in this day of feminism. And this is from Columbia—these are from Columbia women who you think would think that they were smart enough, and blah, blah. And why do we have to get into this type of discussion? And that didn't happen to my daughter, but she said there are people—I heard it a little bit indirectly. It's a silly discussion, this is not—at this day and age, obviously, we did not go to college to go find a man.

02:35:00 Q: I would think not, no [laughs].

02:35:01 Louie: And in those days it was probably part of the picture, but it's partly not just—I think when we went to college we, of course, looked forward to a social life, because I had no social life when we were in high school. So it wasn't that we were going to find a man to marry, but we were—well it would be nice to have a life [laughs]. Right? And I think it's true now too. I don't think—very few people do marry people they met in college, a couple of us have. But I'm shocked when I meet people who actually married the person they went out with in college, but that occasionally happens.

02:35:41 Q: Okay, you've covered a lot and we've sort of skipped around, but unfortunately have this family engagement. So I can't let you go as long as you should go. But let me just ask a couple more things, because I'd like them down to the record. Okay, we got you married, we got

through your career. What is something in your career that you're particularly proud of? Because you've done a lot of things.

02:36:02 Louie: Oh, I've done—I think I really liked it when I helped people with their landlord issues, because their the enemy [laughs], and not. Um, I think that my biggest case, which I bought myself a big grand piano for, even though I didn't play [laughs]—I guess I talk about it as my baby grand piano, because I spent so many hours on it. And finally I made enough money, and it took a long years. It was this Polish person who came in, it was a difficult case because he had to get waivers and things like that for immigration to come here. And it was difficult in Poland. And he was very appreciative. His wife, though, had a lot of conflicts. I felt bad later on. It was a sad case because the wife was not happy here, and the son was not happy, unfortunately. But it was a good case. I mean it was a challenging case. Because we went through all the obstacles. You know the typical bureaucracy does not favor anybody if they don't want to.

And so it was something that someone said could not be done for an exchange visitor, and waivers. You know we have political stands, we collaborate with certain countries. We do not to vex our relationships, even for \_\_\_\_\_[??] sciences. I mean you have to go through all the loops. And I think other people thought that t hey couldn't do it. I mean there are several cases like that I've done. And even my partner says, you know she hears about someone else who goes to some lawyer and they pay them mega money and nothing got done, and, "Remember the case we did?"

And there—and there was a case of this woman who was abused, and then she had come here and married someone else. And she was from Thailand and she was abused by her step-father

and things like that. And we managed to straighten it out so she could be here, because they didn't believe that—I mean she was an older woman, married a younger guy, not that much younger, but you know, immigration, “Five, seven years is too much. I mean why? She only had ulterior motive.” I mean they were a couple. But the fact that you had to go through these loopholes.

And then these kids are born—you live on the border of Syracuse and Upstate New York. These kids were born in Canada, and didn't know they were born in Canada. They end up—they try and think, Oh, I can join the military, or get a G.I. job in security, or the police force. They can't get them. And so that we did. And then we had these fancy cases, you know, we got one famous basketball player in, you know. He didn't have to play basketball. His parents had enough money that he didn't have to play, but you know, that's what he wanted, you know. And, you know, he did it.

So, you know, there's cases that are challenging, that you feel that, Oh, it's worth doing this. And you do get a little bit of flowers, and you get a little bit of food. And I don't think I made money, and I don't think I made a famous name for myself in the field. And was quick to give credit to other people for things I did, but I personally was satisfied, I do feel stepped upon, financially sometimes. And I feel terrible that I made more money doing other things than I do practicing law. What can you do? That's the way life is. And I probably regret that I probably just never started a business. I probably should never really—

02:39:47 Q: Yeah, probably would make an entrepreneur.

02:39:49 Louie: Yeah, I should've just gone off on my own and started something. That probably would have happened.

02:39:54 Q: What about the future? You said you sort of alluded to maybe retiring or beginning to slow down?

02:40:00 Louie: Oh, I've weaned off the cases. These cases take so long that you certainly can't—I don't want to be seventy years, seventy-seven years old, and still there's something bothering me in the background. I've had some cases that grabbed on mainly because the clients have lied and done all kinds of things, you know even lied to me. Okay, you can't tell the honesty of your clients. I mean criminal lawyers have that problem and so do immigration lawyers. I mean most lawyers, but some are paid well to ignore it and some are not. Yeah, I think it's time, when you don't love your clients, and when the other people think that they can do things that—and maybe they can, but if people are doing anything for money to help these clients, and the clients don't want to listen to you about it, that this is not going to happen no matter what money, and things, it's time.

But, you know, there are issues that probably maybe I'd volunteer to do some things if they would liberate the immigration law, if the clients would help themselves. I've learned from the past, that these liberated immigration laws, that sometimes clients are not cooperative, or they don't want to pay their back taxes, and they don't want—they don't want to help. I mean they have to bring in the documents. If they expect that I'm supposed to find everything for them

that's not possible. So then I will go back and help, but at this point the clients don't want—I mean I can deal with the egotistical ones. I have egotistical ones that I've told them they don't win the Nobel Prize until they've written them up to win the Nobel Prize, which is true. I make them sound like a lawyer, [laughs] almost, by the criteria of immigration. And they are, but someone else has to write it up, not them. They don't know how to. But, you know, you have a lot of egotistical, you have people who are sexist. And it's a field where there are a lot of men who aren't accustomed to women lawyers. And where they think all this is money that you pay for, you buy the connection and you get it.

So I think it's time, and I don't know what—maybe I should write a book. I did wonderful ideas of all these stories. I think my daughter and I should get together, and we think we should have to decide the names will remain anonymous, and everyone will be long and gone and we could write our book [laughs].

02:42:33 Q: I totally support that. I think it would be wonderful.

02:42:35 Louie: So I think something like that, or if we're really smart, and we had smart documentary talented children, like your son, [laughs] we probably could create a movie. But there's times to be, Kate Millet aside, I think I could [laughs]—I might not be able—I might be able to write something.

02:42:54 Q: I never understood her.

02:42:56 Louie: I didn't get stomped on from the beginning years at Barnard. I mean I think from the first—if they had gone by the first year, it might have been a disaster. And so I guess that's being able to survive [laughs].

02:43:12 Q: You're a strong woman.

02:43:13 Louie: The surviving is hard. I don't think I'm smart, I think it's just tenacity. You know I think it's just for all of us it's that. And I think having supportive teachers has been great. I mean Barnard had a few. And Joellen had [Peter H.] Juviler. Oh, she kissed the ground that he walked on. And so did many people.

02:43:36 Q: Yeah, he's amazing, yeah.

02:43:38 Louie: And, you know, just having one or two teachers that make a print in your life, from the day one. Like my second grade. And I wish I probably had been a teacher at one point, of younger students, because I think you can make a mark. And I'm kind of impressed by Hamilton, the musical, because I think he's a teacher at heart. So he's been able to do this. I mean it's not like I really want to—I don't want any musical to be so popular that you can't get a ticket, because gosh I don't want people to overpay. I want people to enjoy things. But I think when you get to be able to teach a lesson without being preachy, I think it's—

02:44:23 Q: It's brilliant, yeah.

02:44:24 Louie: Yeah, brilliant, yeah, that's important. And I don't think I'd been able to probably do that. I think I'd like to eliminate some of my cynicism. I want to move forward with things. And I'm not going to be able to play Bridge, unfortunately. You know I'm not going to—I can't play Mahjong, I can't play Bridge, my mind is all over the place, everyone said. They said, Boy, you really know how to learn. I said, Yeah, but I don't think I'm ready yet [laughs]. I can't sit that long. I know I'm probably the worse partner, but that's it.

02:44:56 Q: I think you're brilliant. I think you're great. Is there anything else that we haven't touched on in your life? I know we didn't get a chance to talk much about your kids, who have all done great well.

02:45:03 Louie: Oh, my kids are done—they've each done things on their own. I can say they certainly did not do it because of our connections. It was a tough job market for them all, but they found their own way. We were not in the fields that they wanted to—or even if we were the market changed. Maybe I should not have been cynical about being a lawyer because then they all decided not to be a lawyer. But I think my daughter is very good at her niche in internet security, and she's moved from the big Google to another company. And she probably has many ideas and dreams, probably too many dreams [laughs] and ideas. And she probably would have done well in any situation.

The other one has done art work, she's fantastic. She went to Barnard and Columbia, but that's nothing to say that it did or it didn't—it didn't make or not make her. I think she's able to do her art, and find a way to do it with her gallery work. And I think her confidence level is as strong—I

don't know if Barnard gave her that yet, or she'll have to find it in her own voice in that time.

But I think she will find her voice, and she's already found some of it. And, you know, being an artist is tough, to try to be an artist and survive.

And then my son, he's managed to do wonderful work. He's, like, involved in all this rescue mission work, and I think some day he wants to work in a Third World Country. But he does public health, and they asked him to be on the board in San Jose, but he's also trying to put himself in many places. I mean he has only so many days. And he works in Central Valley now, in the Modesto, the home of George Lucas, at one point, but Lucas moved up. But he's there, and he does all his emergency rescue work. He really wanted to do that, he worked with World Health, and he decided politics and administration is not—a desk job is not what he does.

[Laughs] And I think they will find their way. I'm glad that they're independent, and they don't totally depend on me, except for dull stuff, because I do dull stuff very well [laughter]. Right, so I guess that's not bad. I mean they'd hire a lawyer either for dull stuff, or for accounting. But I've never been a tiger mom, or a dragon mom, and I guess maybe I should have, maybe that would have helped. But I think they found their way anyhow.

02:47:55 Q: I think so, yeah.

02:47:56 Louie: And my husband's been very supportive, so—I don't know where he disappeared—



02:48:05 Q: We'll let him [UNCLEAR].

02:48:06 Louie: Yeah, so we'll do that. And I appreciate I think the—although there was not much going on in our early years at Barnard, I think maybe because things got disrupted, I think the alumni groups have tried to have more collaborations where we've met. Like I've met you anew, and we met people we knew kind of indirectly and knew, or—which is nice because there's no ulterior motive to it.

02:48:34 Q: Yeah, yeah. I enjoy that a lot.

02:48:36 Louie: And so, you know, just that, and I think that maybe we'll—and I hope maybe some more people would acknowledge they went to Barnard [laughs].

02:48:45 Q: I think so too.

02:48:46 Louie: And want to meet each other again.

02:48:48 Q: Just one last question, and I know I could ask you many, many more. You're a good storyteller, and you'd better write that book. But what advice, if you had like just a few words, what advice would you give to that young Lily entering college when you did? In terms of how your life might have gone.

02:49:08 Louie: I think my tenacity has helped me and hurt me. I was able to go on, move on to whatever my best shot is, but because I reached these things that were like what, the golden hoop. I should have be able to give it up and change directions. I think if—I promised myself I'd change careers, I didn't change. You don't give up because you got a good—I think I should not have—or, you know, everyone wants it—why are you thinking that this does not make sense if everybody else wants to do what you're doing? So, I think that, that would have been—it can help and hurt, right.

But I think for our young incoming people I think everyone—you follow your dreams, but you should be willing to change. And I think try to find some more people you can connect with, not professionally. It's great to have professional kinds but sometimes it's an awkward situation. And but if I'd been able to I would have found like my childhood, you know—you have a bohemian friend, you have a dah-dah friend. It would be nice to have a wider circle, and not to be crappy about this line from Hamilton, this interesting line at the end—or to give it way. I don't think it gives away the story.

02:50:43 Q: I'm going to go see it, yeah.

02:50:45 Louie: One of the last lines was, “The world is wide enough for all of us. It's a beautiful life.” I mean something you probably don't think about when you're young, competitive. But there's room for all of us, and we can achieve much more if we work collaboratively, all of us. And it's hard, it's hard because we grew up—the feminist movement is good, but it wasn't—also, it was still competitive, and it was still like, Well, you're not smart

enough to be a feminist, and you're not with us. You know, you can't—you don't create these groups that are dissected. You have to feel that we all can do it, that even if she wants to be Mrs. Mom, or she wants to be, Mrs. Wife, or whatever, I think we still have a common core to achieve. And I guess I couldn't look at—you know I'm blinded too. I probably follow all the stereotypes. I don't see that it wasn't there myself. And so I'd hope to avoid that in my next life [laughs]. Or in my future decades coming up, right, do whatever.

02:51:59 Q: Well, listen this has been really, really rich.

02:52:00 Louie: Okay, great.

02:52:01 Q: I thank you so much for taking your time because you are a busy woman.

02:52:03 Louie: You're welcome. No, thank you for doing it. I know it's a lot of labor of love, and I know it's difficult, and I think most of us—it's very hard to tell a story about your life. I mean most of us don't want to do it until we're dead.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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