

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Shulamit Kahn

2015

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Shulamit Kahn conducted by Frances Garrett Connell on August 17, 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: Shulamit Kahn

Location: Boston, MA

Interviewer: Frances Garrett Connell

Date: August 19, 2015

00:00:51 Q: Okay. This is an interview taking place with Shulamit Kahn at her office at Boston University, in Boston, on August 17, 2015. The interviewer is Frances Connell, and we are, um, doing this for the Barnard College Voices Oral History Project. Okay. So, Shu, uh, let's start by asking a little bit about your childhood, where you came from, anything you want to share about your family.

00:01:21 Kahn: Okay. Well, I come from, um, mostly—I lived mostly in the Midwest. We moved around a lot. My father was a rabbi. There were four of us children, but he, um, moved from congregation to congregation. And I ended up going to live with my aunt for the last two years of high school in Chicago to have a little, you know, uh, I don't know. Well, mostly, 'cause I wanted to go to Chicago and a school that has a particular—parochial day school in Chicago—Jewish day school.

So, um, then when I applied to schools, I just said, "I want to go to the best school I can." I didn't particularly only apply to women's colleges, but, um—but I got into Barnard and it looked great. So, I, um—I decided to go. And, um, at the time, I was relatively observant, uh, you know, when I left. By the time I got out, I was less observant, although still observant. But I definitely wanted to go to a big city, and New York was about the biggest you could get. Chicago is big, but, um, New York is biggest (laughs). So, um—so, really, that's my background.

Uh, I would say that my parents—they weren't quite intellectuals, in a sense. My father was a rabbi, so he was learned in Judaica. My mother did read a lot. Um, she's still alive today. She's, uh, turned ninety-eight last month.

00:03:09 Q: Oh, congratulations.

00:03:10 Kahn: Yeah. And she's as sharp as a tack. I only hope I'm that sharp when I'm that old. Um, but so—you know, she always—I always felt bad about my mother, because she would have been so happy working throughout her life. And in those days, you got married, and you didn't work. Especially, she did have four children. She was the rabbi's wife. So, she kind of worked as the rabbi's wife, but she didn't have much say. When he would move, you know, he would just say, "Well, I'm not staying at this job," or "I lost this job," or "I decided I needed this." And she would have to just go and start anew in a new place. Like, move everything and—including her children.

But, um, she was an intellectual of some kind. And so, in that sense, I felt comfortable at Barnard. But I also saw the difference between women who could be independent and women who were, kind of, stuck at home with their husbands and their family.

00:04:08 Q: So, where were some of the places you lived as a child?

00:04:10 Kahn: So, I was born in Indiana Harbor, Indiana. And we would have stayed there a

long time. It's near East Chicago. In fact, I was literally born in a hospital in East Chicago. But what happened was that horrible red lining in south Chicago. And so, when south Chicago got red lined, um, our area was part of the area that was going to go to blacks. And so, it did go to blacks, and everybody who wasn't black was scared and moved out. And my father, even if he had wanted to stay, he couldn't, because the synagogue closed down. And so, it was, like, such a radical time in the history of Chicago. It's just an incredibly harmful, um, you know, like, earth-shaking, earth-changing thing. But—

00:05:00 Q: So, this went from an Orthodox community to an all-black community.

00:05:01 Kahn: Yeah. Within two years.

00:05:02 Q: Within two years. Yeah.

00:05:03 Kahn: So, anyway, we moved to Edmonton. That's where he found the job that he liked. That's pretty far. You might not call it the Midwest, since it's in Chicago, but it's in the middle of the continent. And he didn't like it. It was too far. So, then we moved to St. Paul, and we were there for quite a long time. And then, we were there when I went to—I left. In St. Paul, I didn't have a Jewish school past eighth grade. I wanted to have one, so I stayed with my aunt. But my father was still in St. Paul when I left. And then, since then, he's lived many places. Now, my mother does still, once again, live in Chicago, and I have a sister alive who's living there too. So, they take care of each other.

00:05:45 Q: Now, were you in, uh, Jewish schools all through, or—?

00:05:47 Kahn: I was in Jewish schools except for junior high a few years, when there was no Jewish school. And so, I had two years in between where I was in the public school. And it was fine. I just—uh, and I also went to a Jewish camp, and I loved the people there, and they all lived in Chicago. And I said, “Wouldn’t it be fun if I could be with those people?” So—

I don’t know what it would have been like if I had gone to the public schools. My sisters, uh, went to the public schools. Um, but anyway, that’s what happened.

00:06:22 Q: So, where are you in the family? You’re the oldest?

00:06:24 Kahn: I’m number three. There are four of us.

00:06:25 Q: Oh. Okay. Yeah.

00:06:26 Kahn: Well, there were four of us. My oldest sister passed away a few years ago. Um, and yeah. All of us are getting old enough so that we know people close to us who passed away, our own ages who passed away. So, that’s—(laughs) it’s a good time to do an oral history ‘cause you’re going to lose some of us soon.

00:06:43 Q: Yeah. No. No. It is. It is. Definitely. Um, are there particular things you remember doing as a child, then? Were—I mean, you said your family was observant but not—

00:06:49 Kahn: No, we were observant—

00:06:50 Q: Very observant as a rabbi, but—yeah.

00:06:51 Kahn:—by the time—no, we were observant. By the time I left college, I was a little less observant, but—but then, we were. Um, so, what do I remember? Gee, that's an interesting question. I'm wondering why you ask. Um, but—

00:07:09 Q: We want to know what made you what you are (laughs).

00:07:11 Kahn: What made me what I was. Well, I don't know. We had a very—when I was in St. Paul, I went to this Jewish school, and there were—it was tiny. And so, there were only five of us, and we kind of—

00:07:23 Q: Oh my goodness.

00:07:24 Kahn: Yeah. Really tiny. In the class. There were—I mean, not in the school, in the class. And we—but it made us all, kind of, strong. Because there were only five of us. We each had a position in life, in a way. I was, you know, always the smart one at that school. Then, I went to the school in Chicago. I was not the smartest but on the smart side. So, that kind of that gave me a lot of confidence, I guess. In Chicago, I ran for Student Council President. So, I was the President. And, you know, a lot of things there, you know, helped me a little bit trying to be a

leader. Although, in many senses, I also, uh, was shy.

It was hard to be a rabbi's daughter. Like, you're always apologizing, in a sense, for, "Oh, you don't like the rabbi." Everybody doesn't like a clergy—there's always people who don't like clergymen and, clergy in general. There are—I don't know. There just always are. And then, I would cringe, and my mom would say—you know, on one side, I was sort of scared of people. I was scared of criticism. But I also learned how to be a little bit of a leader, um, just by being in a small school and, um, in general.

And my class in Chicago was fifty people, which was a lot bigger than five. But still, I think that going to a place like Barnard is a shock, because, um, there's so many interesting people and so many really smart people. You know, it's different than your home school. It was a little bit of a shock.

00:09:03 Q: Did you ever feel the need to rebel? I mean, uh, as a dutiful rabbi's daughter, were you (laughs), um, aware of your position?

00:09:09 Kahn: Um, that's a very good question. So, I had a boyfriend, uh, in high school. He was also from a Orthodox family—hence, the high school—but he had completely given it all up. Um, so, I had this example of giving it up. And I certainly didn't live by the rule of the law in all manners of life. Um, I'll just stop but say that.

00:09:39 Q: Yeah. Sure.



00:09:40 Kahn: You know. But, um—but I didn't—you know, uh, that's who I was, and I identified myself. So, to this day, I mean, I go to the synagogue every Saturday. I have Friday night dinner. I keep a kosher home. Do you know? So, to this day, I still do things. And so, it's a—kind of a strange thing. Do I believe that the god of the Jews is the only god? No. There's one god. It's the only god, but it's everybody's god. And, uh, is there god? Who knows whether there's god or not? Who cares? Um, it's a community and it's a way of life that, you know—so, um, you know—

So, I did rebel. I mean, I was a hippie a little bit in college. Weren't we all? I mean, that was the time when you suddenly got free, and I did get free. And I remember, I spent my junior year in Israel. Um, and I remember coming to see a cousin there. And she just laughed and laughed, because it was a fast day, a minor fast day, and I was fasting. And I walked in in a mini-skirt, and she just thought this was completely contradictory. How could you be fasting and be in a mini-skirt? She herself was not religious. She—you know, and—but that was, kind of, the contradictions in my life, in a sense.

00:10:56 Q: So, were you at all active with any of the Jewish groups at Barnard when you came?

00:11:00 Kahn: Well, Barnard at that time, and even to this day—it was together with Columbia. There was a great Hillel. And, yeah. And it was a—I was active in the—I wasn't a leader, but—in fact, I wasn't a leader in anything much in college, you know, when I think about it, at all. Um, but I—you know, we went all the time, and it was a lot of my social life, in a sense. I did

meet a lot of people there.

00:11:27 Q: Let's go back a little bit before Barnard. So, you already said that you—seeing your mother, who would have been good working outside the home but couldn't because of the '50s and the whole—

00:11:36 Kahn: Right. Right.

00:11:37 Q: —sort of, culture at that point. Um, who would you say is the most—? I mean, what do you think—? What could you tell me about her that, sort of, encapsulates what her life was like in the '50s when you were growing up. Um, I mean, she had four children. That says a lot already (laughs).

00:11:52 Kahn: Right, and she had to work hard. At the beginning, she didn't have children, and they told her she would never have children. But, yeah. She had—you know, there's, uh, a classic picture of her that was in the newspaper, of her cooking holiday cookies. You know, and she was a great baker. And you think of her—she was proud of her baking. But my father would criticize her cooking as opposed to baking. I mean—you know, the thing is, they—they weren't nice to each other particularly. And, uh, maybe they were when they were younger, but by the time they got older I think they were each unhappy with their lives, and they took it out on each other. And so, I think of my mom being criticized by my father, criticizing my father. But I think of her, um, cooking and baking all the time. She certainly taught me to bake. Not that I bake very much these days. Who does? Um, but, so I definitely remember that about her.

But also, she had this hobby that we didn't know too much about of, uh, writing poems. So, she used to write poems a lot. And I actually—we were just cleaning out her house, uh, this past year. And I said, “What do you want from the house?” She's in assisted living. And she said, “Oh, nothing.” She said, “Oh, except maybe this one suitcase that says ‘My Materials.’” So, I opened it, and it was all of her old poems. So, I have since, uh, put them together into a book and self-published it, and given it to the whole family. And they were kind of sad poems. Uh, there was a side of her I didn't know growing up, you know, a very vulnerable side. And you know, a lot about moving and how hard it was to move. Yeah, and, uh—but just some, you know, sad—

I actually think, uh, in retrospect that she was bipolar somewhat, 'cause sometimes she would be quite manic. But I think she was also depressed a lot, and especially after she had a hysterectomy, she was very depressed for a while. And so, those are some of the things I remembered about her. But she was so intelligent. She read the news. She was progressive politically. Um, my father had started out progressive politically. We had this great picture of them when they worked for [Adlai E.] Stevenson [II].

00:14:24 Q: Stevenson Democrats. Right. Yeah.

00:14:24 Kahn: Right. Yeah. And then, uh, what happened was that—right, they weren't lefties. Lefties in the sense of—actually my in-laws were lefties. But, um, my father did go to a communist party meeting, but it was mostly when he was younger, before he met my mom. I think it was mostly because of, um—of a girl there. (Laughs) Do you know? But, um, they

weren't lefties in that sense.

And I'm sad to say that my father turned more, a little, towards the right, uh, during the civil rights movement actually, because there—in Minneapolis at the time, there was a lot of unrest, and there were riots and everything. And it kind of turned him. Before that he was really pro, um, integration and pro-everything. And after that, it wasn't like he was pro-segregation, but I think his politics turned a bit.

00:15:19 Q: I can see how that would go. Good. Okay. So, um, who do you think was the most influential in your life, then, in the period prior to Barnard?

00:15:28 Kahn: I mean, of my parents, it would be my mother. Um, my sister, who passed away, I think was quite influential in my life. She was the oldest sister, and she went to New York for college. And, but she didn't finish there, because she—she did rebel. She went and moved in with this guy in the Village the first year. And my parents brought her back and said, “No, you can't go there anymore.” Uh, she wasn't at Barnard. She was at the Jewish school, Stern, at, um—

So they were—they were influential. But I also had some good teachers when I was in Chicago. So, I had one history teacher who really taught me what it was like to think. And I had one English teacher who taught me what it was like to write. Um, and I'm not saying that I'm the best writer, but boy, without those people, I would have been terrible. And you could get teachers like that. They were still getting their Ph.D.s. And so, they needed to work, but they

didn't have teaching, uh, credentials. So, they could work at a private school. And so, we had—those were great teachers. Yeah. Really good teachers.

I'm sorry that my math teachers weren't as exciting, but I did like math. And I thought—I started Barnard thinking I was going to major in math and physics. I'd never taken—I mean, I suppose I did. But, well, anyway, that's another story (laughs).

00:17:08 Q: Yeah. No. No. I'd like to hear it, because when you first arrived at Barnard, what were some of your impressions? Do you remember your first day, coming through the gates, and how did you get there, and—?

00:17:15 Kahn: No, of course not (laughs). Uh, I got there—so, what was, um—we did not have a lot of money growing up. Rabbis were not well paid then. Um, and so, they put me on a plane. They couldn't afford to come. And I came by myself. And I was—I remember feeling, in general, like, lonely, because I'd had this boyfriend in Chicago. No longer. Um, I—you know, and until I got friends—I mean, my roommates immediately, you know, they—they had really matched us well. Um, so, out of—we were in a suite, and, um, so there were four of us in this suite in Brooks.

00:18:00 Q: In Brooks, uh-huh.

00:18:01 Kahn: Yeah, and, um, my exact roommate was a little too—too neat for me, or I was too messy for her. So, that was a problem. But the other two, one of them is Ellen Bierbaum [??]

that I still see all the time, and the other one is Judy Robbins [??], who I talk to every once in a while. So, um, you know, I remain friends with them.

But yeah. I was scared. I was scared. I was lonely.

00:18:28 Q: Do you remember any of the activities that you gravitated to when you first arrived, uh, when we were all so confused? (Laughs)

00:18:36 Kahn: You remember being confused.

00:18:37 Q: Oh, yeah. Well, um—

00:18:38 Q: Terrified (laughs).

00:18:39 Kahn: Yeah. So, what—the activities. So, first of all, I definitely went to Hillel and I tried to—you know, I went there every Friday night, and stuff like that. Um, another thing that I did was I tried to be in a play.

00:18:59 Q: Oh.

00:19:00 Kahn: And I tried out, and I got a minor—no, what happens is I—

00:19:03 Q: This was with Minor Latham [Theater], or with, uh—

00:19:04 Kahn: Yeah.

00:19:05 Q: The Barnard—?

00:19:06 Kahn: Yeah, the Barnard. And I thought to—I tried out once, and I didn't get it. And I said, "It's 'cause of the way I look. I don't look glamorous in any way." So, I actually (laughs)—this is a funny story that I've never told. I went to Bonwit Teller, and I got my hair done. Um, and she said, "You would look good in a fall." So, I bought a fall. Like, you have to know how little money I had in those days. I couldn't afford anything. But I bought this hair thing that I have to this day. I never wear it. To this day, I never wear it. You know, sometimes it's a costume.

00:19:47 Q: What was she thinking? Oh my goodness.

00:19:50 Kahn: But—and then, I put it on, and I tried out for another play, and I got a part.

00:19:55 Q: Oh my goodness!

00:19:56 Kahn: And it was, like, it's true. I wasn't glamorous enough.

00:19:59 Q: You always had really short hair, didn't you?

00:20:03 Kahn: I did. I mean, my hair doesn't grow. So, by the time I left Barnard, it did grow, like, this far. And it was really curly, 'cause it could be really curly. But I would never have, like, straight hair that was long—except when I had the fall on (laughs).

00:20:17 Q: Goodness. So, do you remember what the play was?

00:20:19 Kahn: Oh, well, it wasn't a good play. It wasn't a real play. It was, um, like, part—snippets—parts of things by Bertolt Brecht. So, it—but it wasn't a play. It was, like, different things from it. That's all I remember. And then, after that, I thought, "Well, I'm finished with pretending to be somebody I'm not." (Laughs) If they wanted me like I was, that would be one thing. So, I do remember that. But other than that, I—

00:20:49 Q: Now, had you done any acting in high school?

00:20:50 Kahn: Oh, you know, maybe fun little things in camp, but—you know, it's funny to think what you would have been, and who knows, you know, if you didn't have that experience or this experience. Um, I did go in thinking that I was going to be a math and engineering major.

00:21:12 Q: Oh, okay.

00:21:13 Kahn: But I was really poorly prepared for that, because, um, everybody—first of all, there wasn't very strong math at Barnard. So I was taking courses at Columbia. And I took Calculus for Engineers. So, there were three levels of Calculus. I don't if—



00:21:31 Q: No, I skipped all my math.

00:21:32 Kahnn: We called it Calculus for Poets, Calculus for Engineers, and Calculus for Martyrs (laughter). So, the on—the martyrs, those were the—well, even the people who were engineers, you could tell they had been exposed to a lot more math than I had. And, you know, if I had had better high school math, uh, I would have perhaps done much better in general. I would have done much better on my SATs. I would have done much better, um, in math and in physics as well. You know, I wanted to take physics. I didn't love it. And I think, you know, when I look back at it, I had bad math teachers who just wrote on the board, which is the way many people did in those days. But not in English, but they sure did in math.

And, um, you know, if you didn't get it—so, um, my first semester, I thought, well—I got a C in my midterm, and I said, “Oh my god, I'm going to get a C in this course.” And, um, I had a friend—I met a guy at Hillel, and he was in Math for Martyrs, Calculus for Martyrs (laughs). And he sat down and—in four hours—he taught me Calculus. So, I mean, that's what a good teacher can do. “Here's the intuition behind it. Here's what you're trying to do.” And I ended up—I must have gotten an A in the final 'cause I got an A- in the course. And, um—and, you know, it was a shame, but in those days, the teachers weren't great. And if you didn't have somebody who really understood math in a way that could convey it as an intuition, that—you know—didn't work.

00:23:19 Q: Yeah. You just needed that foundation really.

00:23:20 Kahn: Yeah.

00:23:21 Q: Yeah. Yeah.

00:23:22 Kahn: Anyway.

00:23:23 Q: So, you ended up majoring in what? In economics?

00:23:25 Kahn: So, it took me a long time—no, I didn't major in economics. So, I—you know, after the '67 episode, um—

00:23:35 Q: Yeah, we'll go back to that in a second.

00:23:26 Kahn: —that we all lived through, which we'll get to, I'm sure—I gave up on my physics and math. And I thought I wanted to do something positive. And around then, cities were important, and cities were—kind of, meant you know, left—it was the period that [John] Lindsay was coming in. And it was the period that, you know, cities were what political people fought about a lot. So, I went into urban studies, and political science. And, um, you know I took some economics as part of the, uh, urban studies. And, um, I did a paper—my final senior project, thesis, whatever it's—what was it called, a thesis? I guess. Yeah.

00:24:22 Q: Yeah. I think so. Senior paper. Senior thesis. Yeah.

00:24:22 Kahn: Yeah. It was on budgeting in New York City. And I knew—

00:24:24Q: That's huge (laughs).

00:24:25 Kahn: I knew no statistics, you know. So, I remember—Professor Carelly [??], one of his comments on it was, “It would have been nice if you could do chi-squared tests or some statistics here.” But no one taught statistics then. If I had known I needed statistics, I would have. But it—it's amazing I did anything at all. You know, it's two by two—it was tables and, um—

But my, I remember the person who was in charge of urban studies said, “You know, you're really good at thinking about models. Maybe you should go into something that has to do with modeling or mathematical modeling.” And, um—uh, she didn't say economics, per say. Um, but anyway, I went on. I did not know what to do with my life. Once again, I was breaking up with a boyfriend.

00:25:18 Q: (Laughs) Those men. Well.

00:25:19 Kahn: And, um, you know. That's, like, it really—and so, after college, I—um, I moved to Boston because, actually, I was allergic to New York by the time I left. No one said, “You're allergic to New York.” They said that the reason that I was breathing (takes a gasping breath), like that, was stress. I was—literally allergic. And in retrospect, it was the, uh, soot that was in the air from the incinerators. It's much better now. But, uh, you know, and these people,

when they couldn't figure it out, they said, It's stress. And it was like (takes a gasping breath). And then, you know, like, um, twice since I left there—you know, it kind of took a few months and cleared out. And since I left there, two times I got it back. Once was when I, um, went to visit New York again and stayed there for a week. Uh, you know, like, uh, a few years later. And another time was, I went to Ground Zero. And, uh, both times—I got it back. And so, it really was (laughs)—you know, I couldn't stand the soot.

00:26:19 Q: It was the air. The air itself. Sure.

00:26:21 Kahn: It was the air. So, I had to leave New York anyway. No doubt about it. And so, um, Boston seemed like a cool place. And, um, I had a friend who was coming here. So, up to Boston I went.

00:26:32 Q: Now, had you applied to graduate school, or did you just come to work?

00:26:34 Kahn: Oh, then I did apply to graduate school.

00:26:35 Q: But not while you're right at Barnard. Not your senior year.

00:26:36 Kahn: No, I did actually. I didn't know what else to do. So I applied to graduate school. And I got into Harvard Graduate School of Design in urban planning. And I said, This is what I want to do. So I went there for a half a year, and then, I said, This is not what I want to do. 'Cause, you know, I'm—I didn't want to be a planner. I didn't think like that. I wasn't an

architect. I wasn't a drafter. And you know, I really was an economist in a way. I thought of those kinds of models.

So, um—but the way I became an economist was actually that I left Harvard after a half a year. You know, I didn't say for good I'm leaving. I just took a leave of absence. And I started—I said, I have to work to see what I want to do. And I said, What can I do? Well, you know, after temping as a secretary, I decided this is not what I want to do. And I looked for jobs in consulting firms. And in those days, pre-internet, we looked up in the yellow pages. And in the yellow pages, urban planning and economics were—those consulting firms were in the same category. So I ended up in an economics consulting firm, and the rest is history (laughs).

00:27:54 Q: Fantastic. Okay.

00:27:55 Kahn: Yeah.

00:27:56 Q: So, you worked in Boston for—?

00:27:57 Kahn: I worked in Boston for about two and a half, three years. And then, I went to graduate school in economics.

00:28:04 Q: And where did you do that? At MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] was it?

00:28:07 Kahn: So first—where I first applied. I didn't get into MIT. I wanted to go to MIT,

which was the best department and everything. I got into BC [Boston College]. I wanted to stay in Boston.

00:28:18 Q: Ironical there (laughs).

00:28:19 Kahn: Well, no, this is BU [Boston University], not BC. I got into BC. I wanted to stay in Boston. In fact, I think I only applied in Boston. So, I went to BC, uh, for a year, and I got straight As. And then, I applied to MIT from there, and I got into MIT after a year.

00:28:36 Q: So, you did your doctoral work all at MIT?

00:28:24 Kahn: Yeah.

00:28:39 Q: And what was your specialty there?

00:28:46 Kahn: Well, um, my area was in labor economics. About working, in a sense. Which was, once again, what the lefties tended to do. Although I was most definitely not a Marxist. I just thought that—well, I thought that that wasn't a, um—it wasn't a helpful way about thinking through economics. Um, so, you know, it didn't give you lots of—me, any insights into, um—so, anyway, but, um, I started, uh—my thesis was on occupational safety and health. And, um—and then, uh—you know—

00:29:25 Q: So, were you looking at government—government regulations with respect to that,

or could—?

00:29:30 Kahn: So, occupational safety and health? Um—

00:29:31 Q: Yeah. Is it—can you say more? I don't—

00:29:32 Kahn: No. Well, I was—okay, so, I was looking at, to what extent, uh, the people were matched—people in companies were matched to the safety and health of the companies. So, I was trying to match what kind of people gravitate to safe firms and safe industries, and what kind of people gravitate—? And also, whose preferences did they reflect? So, the most interesting thing that I found was that in non-union environments—remember those days there was a lot of unions? And this was a lot of manufacturing and those sectors. Uh, because white collars were pretty safe jobs. So, mostly manufacturing and mining and those kind of jobs. Um, the people who gravitated to the safe workplaces, um—so, you know, it was partially who gravitated there, and also, partially, how safe did they make their workplace. And, um, because it was a choice, really, that employers made, how much to invest. So, it turns out that for the, uh, non-union firms, they seemed to cater to young workers just coming in. To the workers just coming in. But the union firms tended to cater to the older workers, or what we would call them, the median workers. Like, people in the middle of the pack—not too old, not too young. But, um, since when you vote for a union, you have to get a majority. They basically were trying to have the—you know, kind of cater—the firms and the unions together tried to cater the occupational sell to the preferences of the people, kind of, in the middle in terms of their careers and stuff.

00:31:30 Q: Ah. Ah. So, this is something, yes, you pursued. Now, did you—let me just go back. A couple questions I had wanted to get earlier, and then, we'll come back and look more at that.

00:31:39 Kahn: This is kind of boring, but go ahead.

00:31:40 Q: No, it's not at all boring.

00:31:41 Kahn: I mean, not for me, for you. But anyway—

00:31:44 Q: No. No. Not at all. No. I want to hear more about that, 'cause I read that you've got several areas (laughs) of expertise.

00:31:47 Kahn: Well, I haven't been doing that much lately, occupational safety and health. But go ahead. What was your question?

00:31:53 Q: So, where did you say your family came from originally, ethnically?

00:31:54 Kahn: Ethnically? Whoa. My mom was born in Chicago. But, uh, there were Eastern European Jews. My father was definitely Lithuanian.

00:32:03 Q: Lithuanian. A lot of Lithuanians. Yeah.

00:32:04 Kahn: Yeah, and then—well, they were intellectuals. They were the intellectuals, and



that's how they ended up with children who were the intellectuals. And so, if there are a lot of Lithuanians, that's why.

00:32:20 Q: And your mom as well?

00:32:21 Kahn: Well, she was half from Lithuanian, half from Galicia, which is now part of Poland, I think. But she was a mixed marriage. (Laughs) That's what they used to think of it as. You know, not purely Lithuanian, which is Litvak, and not purely Galicianer [??] but a mixed marriage, from two different kinds of areas.

00:32:41 Q: Okay. So, she was second generation—

00:32:42 Kahn: She was from that. She was a second generation. Her parents came from there. Yeah.

00:32:44 Q: American. Yeah. Both of them. Okay.

00:32:46 Kahn: My father actually was—went back to Lithuania in the '30s to—uh, he came when he was twelve, but he went back in the 1930's to go to Yeshiva there, to learn to be a rabbi. And his father wrote to him and said, "Get out of there now." And, um, the only reason they let him through Germany, 'cause he had a pass from Lithuania through Germany, was 'cause he was an American citizen.

00:33:11 Q: Oh, gosh. Oh, how scary.

00:33:12 Kahn: He was lucky. Yeah.

00:33:13 Q: Yeah. Well, glad he escaped or you wouldn't be around.

00:33:16 Kahn: I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't exist (laughs).

00:33:18 Q: But, okay. All right. So, we got you through Barnard. You're—working in Boston. You've gone into MIT. You're working on labor economics in particular. Uh, any involvement with any other people at this point, or were you just a strict student? Have you gotten—?

00:33:38 Kahn: Involvement with other people. Well, I always had friends. Of course. So, I, um, lived in a—what my parents called a hippie house.

00:33:49 Q: Oh, hippie house (laughs). What did they think of—?

00:33:50 Kahn: A hippie house. Right. So, they didn't love that. But if I rebelled, it was then. But I—

00:33:55 Q: It was also cheaper, I'm sure (laughs).

00:33:56 Kahn: Oh, it was cheaper, but it was fun. It was wonderful. Um, it really was

wonderful. You know, I always wanted to live with a lot of people. And, you know, I— afterwards, after we left, I wanted to live with a lot of people when we—in my first job in California. But people didn't do that once they, you know, paired off and became—I don't know. But it was wonderful. It was near Davis square, and, um, it was just really a wonderful experience.

And, um, I met somebody in graduate school, somebody younger than me. So, it took a few years for him to come. But anyway, so, he's my husband. And, um, that happens a lot to economists, which is to say if you're a woman in economics, you're not that common of a creature, and you tend to find other economists that you marry.

00:34:48 Q: Well, you'd be surprised. There's a woman who worked for the World Bank who's an economist from our class. She was a transfer student just very quickly. And she has quite a story in that she married someone who ran a dive shop in Jamaica.

00:35:00 Kahn: Wow.

00:35:01 Q: Which is completely different.

00:35:02 Kahn: Which is a little different. I'm not saying all did.

00:35:04 Q: But, yeah. So, she was the one exception (laughs).

00:35:05 Kahn: But that's very cool. What's her name?

00:35:06 Q: Kathy [??], uh, Kathy Krumm [??].

00:35:07 Kahn: Kathy Krumm [??].

00:35:08 Q: Yeah.

00:35:09 Kahn: I'll look her up.

00:35:10 Q: She was only there for two years, so—Anyway. But that's great. So, he was an economist? Did you have parallel careers then? Were you both—?

00:35:19 Kahn: We were both in economics. So, then, we were dual careers. Right. We didn't get married right away. But we moved together, and we interviewed, you know, kind of together, or in cities so that we've both had jobs. And we ended up with a job in Irvine.

00:35:32 Q: Okay. Irvine. Oh.

00:35:33 Kahn: Uh, California. So, I was there for five years, and, um, I hated five years of it (laughs). Every single second, I hated living in Southern California. We had also gotten offers from, U. Mass Amherst [University of Massachusetts Amherst], which was a very lefty kind of a place. And, you know, in retrospect, I probably should have stayed there. I didn't quite realize

how much I'd hate Southern California. I was such a city person. And I was such a—you know, and we were lefties among—you know, there was a—we had a bumper sticker that read, "It's okay to be a Democrat in Orange County." And the reason was that it wasn't okay to be a Democrat in Orange County. Um, so, you know, and we had more in common with the Democratic Socialists than with anybody else around, and there weren't that many of them. And, uh, um, you know, we—anyway, it just wasn't—I hated having to drive. I hated it wasn't green in the summer. I hated that everybody talked about their cars and their houses, and that's all they thought about and talked about. So, we had a little enclave in the university of intellectuals. And we had some good friends who were related to one or other universities, but I really hated it. And also, um, I hurt my back then. And so, I was in pain for the last three years, which didn't make me happier. So, um—

00:37:05 Q: Oh, no. You were in an accident or something, or just—?

00:37:07 Kahn: No. I went to a chiropractor. That's how I hurt my back. I mean, and it was—I was in real pain for years. And to this day, I mean—for decades, I couldn't wear anything with a waist or bend down or anything. Decades. And I'm getting better now, but I still can't wear heels. No way.

00:37:28 Q: Well, that's hard when you're—I mean, you're lecturing, right? Weren't you having to stand a lot?

00:37:30 Kahn: It was, actually. Uh, standing in one place is bad. Sitting is—turns out sitting

was the worst. So, I never stand still lecturing. I have to move, because otherwise, I'm screwed (laughs).

00:37:44 Q: Oh, yeah. No. That sounds dreadful. That's absolutely dreadful. Yeah. So, when you say you were, sort of, lefties and you would have been more Social Democrats than anything else, um, how—would you say that's continued as your political stance now or has that altered?

00:37:00 Kahn: So, I mean—the thing is, like, how can you live through Barnard and not be, you know, farther to the left? You know, on the other hand, economists are kind of—people think of economists as—well, there's some people who think of economists as very conservative. Um, so we're the kind of economists—we think very alike. We're the kind of economists who think, um, that there are markets. You can't pretend that there are no markets. Markets have a lot of good things to them. But, uh, unfettered markets can be problematic. And so, you need to intervene when there are certain—uh, there are some problems that markets don't solve. The global warming pollution problem. Markets cannot solve that. You need government for that.

But, you know, equity-wise, you know, you need government to economically make, uh, countries, uh, more equitable and society more equitable. You know, and, uh, you know, you need things like progressive tax systems. And even when we had a highly progressive tax system, it wasn't progressive, if you actually look, because of tax loopholes. You know, it wasn't progressive. So, you know, we're the kind of people who believe in progressive tax systems, but we're definitely Democrats. We're not farther to the left than Democrats, and we're very practical people. So, you know, even if we, you know, wanted to vote for Bernie [Bernard]

Sanders, we wouldn't—I mean, I love his politics—but, uh, there's no way he can win. And so, we're realists when it comes to politics. And so, when my husband and I—you know, like, I do wonder, what would happen if we had different politics? But we have the same politics, so we're lucky. And guess what? So do our children (laughs). And guess what they majored in? Economics.

00:40:00 Q: Oh my. It's a family tradition.

00:40:02 Kahn: It's a family tradition. We did not ask them to. We did not want them to. But they got to school and realized, "Guess what? I think like an economist."

00:40:10 Q: That's marvelous. Um, all right. Let's—we're going to go a little more in that direction, but let's go back. Back to Barnard again, now. Uh, spring of '68. And tell me how you first learned about the strike and what your involvement was, or your reaction, and all that.

00:40:25 Kahn: Well, that's—you know, I was thinking, How much memory do I have here about specifics? I do not remember how I first learned about what happened. I mean, how could you not know about it? Um—But I remember all these sessions that everybody's sitting and talking and thinking and, you know, about it. And, um—so where was I in the whole thing actually? So, I wished I could go into the building. I had friends in the building. I had a very good friend from Columbia who was sitting in. Um, but I really—I had this very—uh, you know, sitting through all those meetings with all the women doing this and that, I had a feeling that they were just having too much fun. And that they were in the building for social reasons. I just really

strongly had the—I said, There must be some people who are there not for social reasons. But it seemed like way too much fun, and it just didn't seem like a good reason to do that.

So, I supported them. Now, I would say that this good friend of mine from Columbia who was in there, he wasn't there for fun. You know? I mean, uh, he truly believed it. I believed—I mean, when you say believed—I believed that the Vietnam War was very terrible, and I believed that, um—you know, that the society was way too inequitable within Manhattan, and that the blacks were—you know, in Morningside Park and everything. Near there—uh, you know, I believe that it was a big problem. Later on, I worked for a rat control for the city, and things like this. But I believe that this was a real big problem, but I didn't, um—I just didn't want to go in, 'cause it was too much fun. And I didn't want to have the wrong reasons for going in. So, I felt really bad about that. And like everybody else, I hated the police. Vividly, I remember the police and their horses. And just, you know, like—you just had to hate them, because they were so mean.

And they really did beat people. I mean, they really did. On the other hand, I hated the jocks who had a ring around, um, the building as well. I mean, I just thought, you know, “Who are you? What are you doing at Columbia?” Many of them were men, but I don't remember seeing too many women on that line. But there must have been some. But I just thought, “Who in the world are you that you could be so—that you could think that the war was right? And think that, you know, our society is good?” So I certainly was very much like that.

I remember that it, um—when it all came to a head—so, I had this, uh, aunt and uncle who lived out in Brooklyn, and at one point, I felt, This is just too tense. And I ran away to Brooklyn for,



uh—for the weekend, which I would anyway, somewhat. And that's when things all broke, in a way. So, um—so, this is not lasting too long. But the other thing I have a vivid memory was after the—uh, so, during the strike, um—I'm trying to remember the whole timing, but there was, uh—because school was cancelled, there was alternative schools. And so, I said, This is something I can do something with. So, I became part of the strike education committee. And that's when I read all the books about Marx, and sat in the meetings with Mark [William] Rudd and everything about what should we be teaching in these classes.

And, um—and that's when—I really got infuriated. And I didn't—I don't know what I said to people, then. But I have this distinct memory of saying, “What the hell? Here's the most senior woman in this group. You're sending her out for coffee?” And I really—it was so obvious that these guys, who were so full of themselves—maybe they were left wingers. Maybe they really believed in it. But once again, I thought, “These guys are having too much fun.” But the way they treated the women—was appalling. And I sat there, and I just didn't want to be treated that way. I could not believe—I forget what I did, but I took a role so I didn't have to interact with, uh, these obnoxious guys all the time. And so, that was the beginning of my saying, you know, I don't care if their lefties. They're not—there wasn't the word feminist, but, you know—that's not what I want to aspire to be. Certainly not the woman going off to get the coffee (laughs).

00:45:45 Q: Yeah. No, that's a very common sentiment.

00:45:46 Kahn: Yeah. I bet.

00:45:47 Q: I think we—and they were silenced. Most women were silenced in those groups.

00:45:50 Kahn: Most women were silenced.

00:45:51 Q: Even though they had a lot to say (laughs).

00:45:53 Kahn: Oh yeah. No, you couldn't say anything.

00:45:54 Q: So, you're right there in the middle of the—

00:45:57 Kahn: And so—and that's—uh, but I had this very strong feeling. It just really upset me. It's like, Why are we having our own independent way of education here, and trying to learn different things, and the women don't count here?

00:46:11 Q: Do you remember any particular professors that were supportive of—?

00:46:15 Kahn: Of the strike?

00:46:16 Q: Of the strike, or that you were involved with. I don't (laughs).

00:46:19 Kahn: I don't remember any professors from then. I mean, I guess I don't remember any professors from that year. You know, my bad math professors. Um—

00:46:25 Q: Uh, yeah. Well, you already spoke on that (laughs).

00:46:28 Kahn: Right. Do you know? So, I really don't remember anything.

00:46:32 Q: Yeah. I know there was an alternative college that a few people went into over in— somewhere down in the old hotel—one of the old hotels near Riverside. Um, I didn't even know about it.

00:46:40 Kahn: What do you mean it became—? That was their main college from then on?

00:46:46 Q: It became, like, a little commune. And they'd have classes there. I believe—not Gaster. Um, the French guy. Um—

00:46:50 Kahn: Um, right. The French guy.

00:46:54 Q: Uh, not—oh gosh, his name is slipping me, but you know we're speaking of.

00:47:00 Kahn: Right. I do know. Yeah. 'Cause I took French.

00:47:03 Q: Yeah. He would bring in all sorts of speakers, and it was apparently—

00:47:05 Kahn: Oh, that's wonderful. Uh, how did I not know about that?

00:47:07 Q: But I didn't know anything about it either. I—Barbara Sherr was in our class, and she actually lived there for a while. She had some stories, but yeah.

00:47:15 Kahn: So you know—it was—you know, we were really young.

00:47:17 Q: (Laughs) Yes we were.

00:47:20 Kahn: I mean, and other people lived through this. And we're only doing our class, I think. The other people who lived for this, they were more of the leaders. You know, the seniors, the juniors. We were really young. And what were we getting ourselves into? I mean, I really believed that the—you know, that—I really did not like the administration, and I did not like the police. And, you know, I really believed in what they were trying to achieve. I just did not believe that you should have your motives mixed up like that (laughs).

00:47:56 Q: Yeah. Well, I think Columbia and Barnard treated the strikers very differently. I mean, Barnard was very protective, as I recall, of us.

00:47:58 Kahn: Yeah. So, this friend of mine who was in the building—he ended up transferring to Brandeis [University]. And I'm trying to remember—I'm going to be seeing him in a couple weeks—I'm trying to remember whether, um—I think he got kicked out. But then, he got invited back in. But he said, "I don't want to come back." And so, he ended up graduating from—you know, going to Brandeis.

00:48:28 Q: Yeah. No, I was surprised, but I think there was a whole contingency.

00:48:30 Kahn: That was kicked out.

00:48:31 Q: A lot of people went to the west coast to Reed College, apparently.

00:48:32 Kahn: Oh, that's a nice place to go. Right.

00:48:33 Q: Which was a very different atmosphere entirely

00:48:36 Kahn: So, there was a whole—Columbia people did get kicked out, huh.

00:48:40 Q: A lot of them, apparently.

00:48:41 Kahn: But not Barnard.

00:48:42 Q: And then, they were invited back, but they had already accepted something else, like, "Screw you." (Laughs)

00:48:46 Kahn: That's right. That's my friend. Yeah. That was my friend, Josh. And he was very angry with the way they were treated.

00:48:50 Q: Yes. Yes. Barnard didn't throw anyone out.

00:48:52 Kahn: As well as with the way they treated, you know, every aspect of it.

00:48:54 Q: Do you remember the whole Linda LeClair issue?

00:48:56 Kahn: (Gasps) Oh, yes. So, one second. With the bra?

00:48:57 Q: And what was your—what do you—

00:48:58 Kahn: One second. So—

00:49:00 Q: She was the girl from New Hampshire who was co-habiting with her boyfriend.  
The *New York Times* did an article on her.

00:49:07 Kahn: Right. And she didn't wear bras.

00:49:08 Q: That's right. That's right.

00:49:10 Kahn: (Laughs) And so, uh, that was later. Much later.

00:49:13 Q: I—yeah. I always think it was—

00:49:14 Kahn: I think it was part of the women's movement. And so, that was the beginning of

us waking up. Oh, yeah. And I didn't wear a bra for a while. I mean, this—I thought, "Like, yes. Like, hell." And so, we all rallied. And it was so wonderful. You know, the women's movement—I do remember, I thought she was a little weird as a person. Do you know? That she seemed to be a little weird. But, um, you know, everybody was, if not having sex, having sex kinds of things. Do you know what I'm saying? So, like, what are we pretending? And, you know, remember that my sister went and lived with a guy, you know, and got in big trouble with her parents, but—

00:49:57 Q: And you were—she was three years older than you or—?

00:49:58 Kahn: Yeah. Four years older than me. Yeah.

00:50:00 Q: Oh, okay. So, that's—that's a whole—almost different generation.

00:50:03 Kahn: It was a different generation.

00:50:05 Q: She was a pace setter (laughs).

00:50:06 Kahn: Right. She was the pace setter, but she got in big trouble for it. And let's not go into the whole story there, but—

00:50:10 Q: No. No. This is your story, not hers (laughs).

00:50:11 Kahn: This—right (laughs). But, I was very happy that that was happening. And I was so into it. And I—right. As I said, I didn't wear a bra, and then, I realized, "Oh my god. My breasts. I'm not comfortable without a bra. They're too big." And so, I went back to wearing a bra. Not wearing a bra was for people who did not have big breasts. That's what I think.

00:50:35 Q: Yeah, I couldn't have gotten away with it either (laughs).

00:50:36 Kahn: And, uh—but I let my hair grow—uh, you know, my curly hair grow wild. And I wore clothes from consignment shops that—you know, I just loved it. I, uh—I remember going to Central Park, and this guy was dancing. And, um, in the park, and people were watching it. And I went and danced with him. And people started throwing money at us. And I threw it back, and he was upset that I threw it back. And I—threw it back again. But it was—uh, it was so liberating. So, that more than anything was liberating—was this feeling like, both as a woman and as a person—like, this hippie thing was wonderful.

00:51:22 Q: It was egalitarian.

00:51:24 Kahn: I mean, it was egalitarian. It was freeing. I mean, you know, before all of this happened, you—you know, you couldn't. You had to sign in guys into the building for two hours on a Sunday, and that was it. And then, it was, like, "Okay. Go ahead." And it was, like, "Oh my gosh." The parietal hours—overnight, everything changed. And I loved it. I really loved it. And I was so happy. Uh, I just—it was me.



So, like, if—did I rebel? You know, like, against my religion. I don't know. Is that rebelling? Did I smoke dope? Who didn't smoke dope, right? That was a huge part of our life after it all. And you know, I just—I remembered when I first smelled dope. So, did I get into anything? Like, I remember—I mean, smoked dope, uh—

00:52:23 Q: You were with others I'm taking it. You weren't alone.

00:52:24 Kahn: Huh? Yeah, of course. Yeah, well, it was one of my roommates and friends, a couple of us, we thought, Okay, let's try this. And it was like the whole thing was—and it was so freeing and so—it just was a breath of fresh air. As a woman, I could be myself. As a person, I could be myself. I could have fun. I could dance. I could do whatever I wanted. I mean, not that—I could study too. I mean, it wasn't that I didn't want to work.

00:52:57 Q: Yeah. Well, clearly you studied. I mean, you did well. Yeah.

00:53:00 Kahn: Right. It was that, you know, I didn't want to be caged in with girdles. You know? Um, which I wore when I first got there. You know, and I didn't want to be caged in with getting people's coffee. I didn't want to be caged in in the major I had, and what I could do. And the whole thing was—it was such a wonderful period of life. And so, the—like, I think, Have we gone back to being really, like, straight-laced and liberal and stuff? Um.

00:53:30 Q: Straight-laced and liberal?

00:53:32 Kahn: I mean, not liberal.

00:53:35 Q: Conservative. Yeah.

00:53:37 Kahn: Conservative. Yeah. Sometimes the wrong word comes from my mouth (laughs).

00:53:40 Q: It's okay (laughs). Happens to professors.

00:53:42 Kahn: Um, do you know. Huh? Happens to professors.

00:53:44 Q: I think it happens to professors though (laughs). Happens to anybody. Um—

00:53:50 Kahn: Oh, sometimes, I stand up there, and I say something. And they, “Did you mean this?” And uh, my husband said, “I would really be worried about you—about you getting senile here, if it weren't that you've done this for thirty years.” (Laughs) So, it's not. Uh, but I mean, didn't you feel the same way?

00:54:05 Q: Oh, yeah. It was fascinating.

00:54:08 Kahn: It was great.

00:54:10 Q: It was a lot of fun. It really was. I mean, probably too much fun (laughs). Um, and I

also liked going down and being, like, the queen down at Princeton ‘cause it was an all-male environment. I mean, I had grown up with brothers. So, like, being around all girls was, like, very strange to me.

00:54:24 Kahn: Oh, yeah. That’s different. So, I have—we were three girls. And the youngest was the boy. So—we mostly were surrounded by females. And my mother was, you know, a very dominant person in the family even though she didn’t work. Too bad. She would have really loved working (laughs).

00:54:40 Q: Yeah. So, what do you remember—? I mean, I remember, also, there was a tremendous amount of racial tension even within Barnard. Do you have any perspective on that, or—I know at one point, all of the African American girls even went on their own hall, or a lot of them did, not all of them, but—

00:54:58 Kahn: Yeah. So, part of that happened while I was, in my junior year abroad. So, I came back, and it was a much more divided campus than it had been. And, um, so, you know, being in urban studies, uh, we actually—you know, like, there were some people—you know, there were some girls who were black and who were my friends. And, um, I kind of really believed in the integration thing. And so, um, I remember, also, the same roommate, kind of, saying, “Oh, you can’t say Negro anymore. You have to use the word black.” So, that was when the word black came in. And, you know, I loved that they were doing what the women were doing, which is—so, we passed the—we weren’t there for the civil rights era. I’m sure I would have gotten very active in the civil rights era. But, um, I—

00:55:54 Q: What do you mean by that, you would have—what would you have done, do you think?

00:55:59 Kahn: I might have gone to the south.

00:56:00 Q: Yeah. To collect voters?

00:56:01 Kahn: To try to sign people up to vote. Yeah.

00:56:02 Q: Great. Yeah. Yeah.

00:56:03 Kahn: Yeah. I might have done that. Um—

00:56:05 Q: Yeah, we were just—

00:56:07 Kahn: It's a scary thing to do, in a way, but, um, I might have done that. And, um—and I was—it was an important thing. Uh, so, in Minneapolis, when my father became more—kind of, moved to the right, I was moving to the left then a little bit, even though I was young. And I actually worked for [Hubert Horatio] Humphrey [Jr.], who, believe it or not, was—

00:56:29 Q: Oh did you?

00:56:30 Kahn: Yeah, when I was little. Yeah. I worked, you know—just worked on his campaigns and everything ‘cause I lived in Minnesota. And he was very liberal then. Do you know, it—the Vietnam War did him in. Really did him in. But, um—

00:56:42 Q: Yeah. I always thought he was a good man.

00:56:44 Kahn: He was.

00:56:45 Q: He’s a good man. Yeah.

00:56:46 Kahn: So, um—but, you know, I was upset when I came back and—so, I always did—uh, you know, when I came back, I always did feel it was a little hard to, um, have black friends. But really that last year was the worst. Because there was this divide. And it was really sad, um, because I guess I’d believed in integration. I mean, I understood wanting to be strong and stand up for yourself and to be in a group. And I could certainly understand it. But, I think, we white people lost something, lost a lot by not having that.

Um, and, you know, to this day, society’s way too segregated. Especially Boston. Boston’s bad. No, shoot—Washington is less segregated, in the sense of the workplace. It’s quite amazing. So, because the workplaces are not segregated, it really changes the way the society is. But Boston is very segregated, and—you know, BU just doesn’t attract that many blacks, and black faculty. You know? Uh, while I was here, I tried to get, um, the administration—I worked on the, uh, committee with the faculty council trying to get the administration to hire more black faculty and

to do more to get these black faculty. And their opinion—this was the older administration, with [John Robert] Silber and his henchmen. Do you know, the ones who came after him? And, you know, they—their feeling was, “We hire the best people.” And, um, (laughs) it’s like, “No, not really.” He was so angry at us for trying to—“No. I’m not going to try to hire blacks.” He always did fine with women in terms of hiring. Just blacks was terrible. And, uh—the new presidents is—I mean, the new president’s been here ten years. He’s much better, but before that was bad. And I did try to do something then. Um, but it’s really a shame that Boston is—you don’t see—it’s not a very integrated society, the way that Washington, D.C.—even though might live separately, at least, um, you work together. I mean, I live in Brookline, and we have a good number of blacks, but not, like—

00:59:17 Q: Yeah. Yeah. No, Washington does a good job, actually. Although, it still has a lot of problems. No doubt about it.

00:59:23 Kahn: Still has a lot of problems. And New York has—you know, has areas that are clearly integrated. And so, that’s really nice.

00:59:33 Q: Yeah. It’s hopeful.

00:59:35 Kahn: It’s hopeful.

00:59:36 Q: Yeah. I have a son who lives in the area. I know—at 110th, right across from Central Park now.

00:59:38 Kahn: Oh.

00:59:40 Q: It's, uh, called SoHa [South of Harlem], and it's getting "hot," as they would say in the real estate business. I mean, that's—

00:59:46 Kahn: That's SoHa. I never knew what SoHa was.

00:59:48 Q: Yeah. South Harlem. Yeah. Anyway, it's—every little place in New York has a—

00:59:54 Kahn: Has a name. I know that.

00:59:56 Q: Has a name to sell it, now. And everything's for sale.

00:59:57 Kahn: That's right.

00:59:58 Q: So, it's a different world, but, yeah. It's—

01:00:01 Kahn: So, I mean, now I actually, I'm on the—I'm very active in a school in—speaking, uh, in—in Africa in Kenya. So, like, this is my thing.

01:00:06 Q: Oh, talk—Say more about that now. This is part of your research?

01:00:12 Kahn: Well, I kind of felt for a long time that I wasn't doing anything useful in my life.

01:00:15 Q: (Laughs) You're a professor. Come on.

01:00:16 Kahn: I wasn't doing anything useful in my life. I was the president of my synagogue, which was useful, but—

01:00:20 Q: Uh, I'm sorry, uh, what?

01:00:25 Kahn: The president of my synagogue. And I was, uh—you know, I really helped the synagogue change into a better place. But, um—

01:00:30 Q: In terms of better things for women, or—?

01:00:33 Kahn: Oh, it—uh, well, better place for women. For sure. And also, too, a better place—um, more open to—you know, like, more friendly, more, um, having multi-generations. Um, more—just a better governance structure so that things got done. Less yelling at each other, and more working together. So, I'm—I changed a lot of things, and since then, they've changed even more. But I'm happy.

01:01:02 Q: Now, is it a socially progressive synagogue as well?

01:01:06 Kahn: No, it was—it's a conservative synagogue. Conservative does not mean



conservative politically.

01:01:12 Q: No. No. I know. I know.

01:01:13 Kahn: So, while I was there, we turned egalitarian. And I was always part of the egalitarian movement and the egalitarian services. And also, um, so, you know—and it's traditional, but it—you know, most of the people are not observant.

01:01:34 Q: So, they're, kind of, going back to their roots, but they're re-interpreting them. Yeah.

01:01:36 Kahn: Right. Right. But anyway—

01:01:35 Q: Anyways, so then you—

01:01:39 Kahn: —but that wasn't—you know, that wasn't enough, but what could I do? So, um, I went—I always wanted to do something, and someone I knew was going to Kenya. And she'd written a book about Kenya. And I have a cousin in Kenya, and she was supposed to go with someone who pooped out on her. So, I called her up, and I said, "I'll go." And, um—and so, I went and became part—and I, kind of, visited the school that she was part of. It's more of a vocational program. And, um, I've been on the board since. So, it's been about ten years. And, uh, we just were together yesterday trying to plan changes. But it's wonderful because, um, a little money goes a long way, in terms of changing people's lives. So, we take street kids off—

it's not huge. So, uh, we figured out yesterday that we've graduated 350 vocational students, who are now working, and they have been, uh—you know, like, like, you die really young if you're a street kid in Africa, 'cause you use this glue stuff which is really bad for you, and you just die young. And so, here these people are working and they're proud of themselves. So, it's a great project and I'm really glad to be part of it. Yeah.

01:02:53 Q: Yeah. Well, good for you. So, you—you two, sort of, started this together? Or she had begun and then you joined on?

01:03:00 Kahn: No, it had been begun by somebody else. Uh, she, in fact, is no longer part of it. Um, and, uh, it had begun by somebody else. Actually, the person who started it is, uh, um—is on *The Globe*. She's a reporter on *The Globe*. And she had gone there for a year or two after college, which I never did, you know. Uh, I thought, Oh, should I go? You know, remember how everybody would go to, um—to the Peace Corps and everything? (Laughs) You went to the Peace Corps? Lucky you. So, I played with that.

01:03:35 Q: I didn't know what to do with my life.

01:03:36 Kahn: See, I played with that. I toyed with that. But I—you know, like, I was still quite observant, and it just didn't make sense.

01:03:40 Q: Yeah. No, no. It would have been awkward. Yeah.

01:03:42 Kahn: No. And even now, I still eat, kind of, kosher. It's hard to go to Africa and to eat anything besides, uh, corn mush and kale, which is not good (laughs). Not delicious—without the gravy on it, not delicious. Anyway.

01:04:02 Q: So, you've also, um, uh—you've also worked with international students. I saw one of your research projects that you worked—

01:04:11 Kahn: Oh, I work on international stuff.

01:04:13 Q: Not with, but on. Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about that?

01:04:16 Kahn: Oh, okay. So—

01:04:17 Q: Or is it not yet published—? (Laughs)

01:04:18 Kahn: Right. No. It is. No. I'm interested in, uh, how—so, um—so, I somehow fell into studying academia. And women in academia is a lot of, uh—I've done a lot of research on women in science and women in academia. And, um—and careers. And I've also done something—and I'd like to do more in the future so I probably will—on international students and the role of international students. So, it's not, like, touchy feely. It's more, like, Okay, if international students get educated here, is it better for their home country if they go back or if they stay here? You know, there's the brain drain if they stay here. And is that true? Is there really a brain drain if they stay here? And so, you know, our papers now say, uh, Yeah. Um,

there is really a brain drain. Even though a lot of people, they are, kind of, working across, um—you know, they do, kind of, give back to some extent. But you share the science much better if you go back. That's what we found.

So, there's this whole kind of science in science, and—international science, kind of, area, and that's what that's part of. And, um, so, I also choose my topics partially by what I'm interested in and partially, uh, about who I'm interested in working with. And, um—because it's not fun to work alone actually. It's fun to work with other people. So, I have, these days, two women co-authors. One is the office next to me, and one is in Kansas. And we work on different things.

01:06:04 Q: So, were you focusing on a particular region of the world when the—?

01:06:07 Kahn: No, no. This is—we're talking about data around the world.

01:06:11 Q: Data around the world. That's huge. My goodness.

01:06:15 Kahn: What we found was—Well, it's huge, but—well, long story. I mean, but it—we looked at the Fulbright program as an instrument. What's an instrument? It's, like, uh, a randomized trial that's not really a controlled trial, but it's, like, a natural experiment. So, Fulbright's have to go back home. And so, we used that. So, we gathered a lot of data about them, and stuff like that. But, um, what was I going to say? But what we did find is that, um, it didn't really—if you came from a developed country, it really didn't matter one way or the other. Not to your career, and not much to their career, either. So, it was mostly the less developed

countries, the developing countries, where it was important to have some of these people go back.

01:06:58 Q: Uh-huh. Did you find that they were radicalized when they went back, having been in the States, or were they—?

01:07:04 Kahn: Oh, so, you know, I don't study that. But I would say—radicalized.

01:07:10 Q: So, it was really their economic input?

01:07:11 Kahn: It was their scientific impact.

01:07:12 Q: Their scientific input. Okay. Yeah.

01:07:13 Kahn: Yeah. Like, their scientific impact that you measure by things like publications. I'm also studying their entrepreneurship here. Uh, international, um, immigrants' entrepreneurship here. You know, so they're not—it's not what humanists would study (laughs) about these people. It's kind of, more—so, I always took to empirical work. Like, looking at the facts and when I finally learned statistics—right. When I finally learned statistics, I realized how valuable it was, and so, I teach statistics. And so, that's what it was, was statistics.

(Someone enters)

01:07:50 Kahn: And here's another woman who teaches what I do, who's a woman economist.

01:07:52 Q: Hi. Okay.

01:07:53 Kahn: Here's the new generation. So, she's from Barnard, where I went—

01:07:57 FEMALE VOICE #2: Hi. How're you doing?

01:07:58 Kahn: We're having an oral history project.

01:07:59 FEMALE VOICE #2: I'm sorry to interrupt.

01:08:01 Q: That's okay. Go right ahead.

01:08:02 Kahn: No prob.

01:08:03 Q: We've had bigger interruptions than this in these oral histories, so—(laughs) this is fine. No phone ringing or nothing.

01:08:08 Kahn: Where'd you go to college? Harvard?

01:08:10 FEMALE VOICE #2: MIT.

01:08:11 Kahn: MIT.

01:08:12 Q: Oh. But you didn't know each other at MIT. You're different generations.

01:08:13 Kahn: We're really different generations.

01:08:15 FEMALE VOICE #2: I didn't know you went to Barnard.

01:08:17 Kahn: Huh? Yeah. I did.

01:08:19 FEMALE VOICE #2: Yeah.

01:08:20 Kahn: We're really different generations, I would say. When I went to MIT, I didn't get in, and they said, "Well, we only have eighty dorm rooms for girls. So, we don't (laughs) admit more than eighty girls." I was like, "Okay."

01:08:33 FEMALE VOICE #2: Oh my goodness.

01:08:34 Q: Really? Oh my gosh.

01:08:35 Kahn: Yeah. Yeah.

01:08:36 Q: That's terrible. It's hard to believe that it's still that sexist.

01:08:41 Kahn: It's a different world.

01:08:42 Q: Yeah.

01:08:43 FEMALE VOICE #2: That's crazy.

01:08:44 Q: Than it was in those days. And that's not that long ago, and—

01:08:47 Kahn: Right. I mean, right. That was what was limiting them from admitting more girls. They didn't have the dorm space.

01:08:53 Q: Crazy.

01:08:54 FEMALE VOICE #2: They solved the problem by just, like, mixing all the boys and girls.

01:08:56 Kahn: That's right.

01:08:57 Q: Yeah, that's—yeah.

01:08:58 FEMALE VOICE #2: When I went, like, all the bathrooms were co-ed (laughs).



01:09:00 Kahn: Oh, well, that's one way to do it.

01:09:01 Q: Yeah.

01:09:04 FEMALE VOICE #2: Like, so they didn't have to restrict or anything (laughs).

01:09:06 Q: Yeah. I think that's everywhere now. Actually, it's—(laughs) I think it's all coming—

(Crosstalk)

01:09:08 FEMALE VOICE #2: (Unclear)

01:09:09 Kahn: Well, I think the problem about co-ed bathrooms is (unclear)—

01:09:12 Q: I would, too, actually—

01:09:13 Kahn: Yeah.

01:09:14 FEMALE VOICE #2: Yeah. It was kind of weird.

01:09:15 Kahn: The problem about co-ed bathrooms is that men can't really use urinals.

01:09:18 Q: (Laughs) Yeah. I know.

01:09:20 FEMALE VOICE #2: No. They didn't have those. But they would just, like—one of the dorms had, like, at least full doors, but the other one just had, like, stalls and curtains and things.

01:09:26 Q: Oh, okay.

01:09:27 FEMALE VOICE #2: It was, like, a little weird (laughs).

01:09:28 Q: It takes all kinds. Whatever.

01:09:30 FEMALE VOICE #2: Yeah.

01:09:34 Q: Yeah, I mean, we're getting in to—okay, so what are—let's—I'm skipping around a bit. And you're talking about your career in particular. Foci for research. And I'm going to go back and ask you a few other things I forgot. Um—

01:09:45 Kahn: About Barnard.

01:09:46 Q: In terms of world events and things, what do you remember from those days, and what subsequently really influenced you, do you think? Um, that's such an open question that you can, kind of, handle it any way you want.

01:09:58 Kahn: I mean, of course, you remember, mostly, the Vietnam War, because that was, like, happening the whole time that we were there. And people were dying. It would be, like, someone from my high school, um, died in Vietnam, which is pretty unusual if you have a Jewish parochial high school with fifty people in a class. Um, but it was horrible. I remember everybody trying to avoid the draft. And, uh, it turns out that my birthday, if I had been a boy, was a very high draft number. Um, so, you know, everybody—you couldn't help but really think about that war. And it really was a horrible war. There was just no purpose for this war. And it—and we—it was a horrible war. So, we went to lots of—I went to lots of anti-war demonstrations and things like that. Who didn't? What else was happening?

01:10:56 Q: No, a lot of people didn't. You'd be surprised.

01:10:57 Kahn: Oh (laughs).

01:10:59 Q: Those guys who closed off the college.

01:11:14 Kahn: The guys who were outside the—the jocks who were outside didn't. That's true. But I—you know, I tried to do as much. But I didn't have leadership roles or anything. I tried to have my body be my—you know, go to demonstrations and things like that.

01:11:15 Q: You made a presence. Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

01:11:16 Kahn: Yeah. My presence. What else do I remember politically? Well, there was the '67 war actually.

01:11:23 Q: Oh, yes. Yes. That was your senior year of high school, right?

01:11:26 Kahn: Right. And so, um—so, when I went to Israel for my junior year abroad, you know, I had friends—so, my friends in high school were very Zionist. You know, and the—uh, like, the orthodox Zionists were basically, um—this camp I went to. And, uh, some of them were living on the West Bank, and I went to visit them. And so, that was a very hard thing. Once again, I thought, “They’re having too much fun.” So, you know, they liked having something to, um—you know, it was very exciting to be doing that. But it—you know, it was a problem. Do you know? And it’s a horrible situation there. I don’t think—you know, it’s a horrible situation there. I’m certainly not pro-Palestinian, but I’m pro-peace and I’m, uh, pro a two state solution, because that’s the only thing that will, in the end, make any sense. But even then, I said, “This is crazy. You know, there’s too much hatred here. It’s too dangerous.”

01:12:43 Q: Do you remember how you felt when that war broke out? I mean, back in high school?

01:12:46 Kahn: Well, I was happy. In the sense of, you know, we always felt—I mean, we always felt that Israel was very vulnerable. And it was. And it is. But it was really, really vulnerable. And so, you—we were all really scared. I mean, we have relatives, we have friends who live there, and, um, we were all really scared. And then, um—then, when we won, it was

just so wonderful. And that didn't—

01:13:15 Q: And quickly.

01:13:16 Kahn: I mean, because we really—it seemed like we were—they were going to get all killed. I mean—it's hard not to. So, it's—uh, it's a different—once again, you have to have lived through it to feel as insecure—people now think, “Oh, Israel's powerful.” It's not that powerful when you—you know, in the sense of, it's pretty easy to, um, attack. And it's pretty easy to, um, kill everybody 'cause it's so small.

01:13:42 Q: Yeah. Yeah. Now, tell me about the process by which you ended up going your junior year to Israel. How did that all come about?

01:13:48 Kahn: Oh. You know, it just happened in my world.

01:13:51 Q: And where were you there? You were—okay.

01:13:53 Kahn: So, I—well, so many people went from my class, who were, like, part of the Jewish Orthodox community.

01:13:59 Q: Yeah. Now, did you know Janet Price? 'Cause she was from Chicago. Well, no. You were only there two—

01:14:05 Kahn: I don't think I know Janet Price.

01:14:06 Q: And she went her—I think, her junior year as well.

01:14:07 Kahn: I'm trying to remember the name Janet Price. I'm—keep on coming up with this economist named Janet, whose last name is not Price. So, I have to look her up in the book.

01:14:14 Q: No. No. She was an educator. She's—yeah.

01:14:16 Kahn: I have to look her up in the book.

01:14:17 Q: Yeah. Or she says she's a reformed, uh, lawyer who went into education (laughs).

01:14:22 Kahn: That's interesting. Um, because I'm studying engineers now. And lots of engineers leave engineering, but they don't really leave engineering. It's, like, they use engineering in their jobs. It's just they're not, quote, unquote engineers. So, she was not an—she's an educator. She's a lawyer. But I'm sure she uses law in the way she thinks about education.

01:14:48 Q: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. It's a certain way of speaking. I mean, of thinking.

01:14:50 Kahn: Yeah. Yeah. Of thinking. But, right. So—

01:14:51 Q: So, you were where? In Jerusalem University [Hebrew University of Jerusalem]?

01:14:52 Kahn: So, I was in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. One exciting thing was that—after the ‘67 war—we had Mount Scopus, was part of Israel. And so, we were one of the last years that most of the campus was down in the old campus, and some of my friends went to classes and lived on Mount Scopus, and it was, like, brand new. So, it was a feeling of much brand newness there, which was quite exciting. Um, so that was really cool. Uh, but it was just—I’d never been to Israel. Um, it’s just something you do in this world. Um, these days they do it between high school and college, a gap year. Um, and these days, when my students go abroad, they don’t go abroad for a year, they go abroad for a semester. Which, you know, in retrospect, might have been a good thing. Because, you know, if you’re going to go to a good college, why not go there? (Laughs) If you know what I mean. We didn’t—

01:15:55 Q: And how did it, uh, compare academically to Barnard?

01:15:57 Kahn: Well, most of the courses were pretend courses. So, they had courses—

01:16:02 Q: (Laughs) Pretend courses. Oh, because you were a foreign student, or—?

01:16:07 Kahn: Yeah. They had courses for the American there, that were much lower level than anything we’re used to. And, the same thing happened to my daughter who went to Israel for a half a year. And my husband wouldn’t let my other daughter go. Said, “I want you to go someplace where you take courses with the regular students.” So my daughter went to South

Africa 'cause she could—that other one—'cause she could take courses in English with the regular students. But, um, I did take some courses in Hebrew. And they were, uh, interesting and high level. I took macro-economics, and I took, um, urban geography. And those were good courses and high level courses and, uh, quite interesting. And you know, it's kind of the—it's something—it's a skill. You have to learn this body of knowledge. It's not something you discuss. It's about—you know, it's not like discussing a book. It's, like, learn these models. And so, that was something I could do in Hebrew. I couldn't discuss the meaning behind books.

01:17:06 Q: Now, you keep up your Hebrew, I take it, or—?

01:17:08 Kahn: I keep up my Hebrew somewhat. I go back every ten years or every five years—or depending on—on what. So, I'm not fluent but, you know, we didn't learn a lot of Hebrew then. In fact, I learned more later when I had Israeli boyfriend in a summer in Israel. Boyfriends are important in my life, right? So, but, you know, the Americans didn't speak much Hebrew, because they all spoke to each other, which was just really a shame. But *c'est la vie*.

01:17:34 Q: Pretty common. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Good. So, when you entered Barnard and when you left it, what would you say were the biggest changes? And what did you expect your life was going to be like when you left Barnard?

01:17:44 Kahn: Everything was different between when I—when I entered—where people went to Barnard to get their MRSs. I mean, and they even said that. And, it was just so constrained, and life was constrained. And then, when I got out, it was little too unconstrained, which is to



say, I didn't have a clear path in front of me. So, once again, I became scared about what did life mean for me. I just wasn't sure. And also, you know, I'd broken up with a boyfriend. So, I wasn't sure where I was going. But I was so different. I was free. I was free to be myself, and to think about myself, and to think. You know, just to do what I wanted to do. And when I went in there, you know, I didn't realize I wasn't free, but I wasn't free. Yeah.

01:18:46 Q: And living in Boston in the, kind of, hippie house, that helped shape you too?

01:18:52 Kahn: (Laughs)Yes.

01:18:54 Q: Or was that more just fun (laughs)?

01:18:55 Kahn: In—well, uh, to begin with, I just lived with roommates. And then, I realized that this was something I really wanted to do. Um, it did help shape me. It's, like—you learn that other people are the most important thing in the world, and being around other people is the most important thing in the world, and you live in—

01:19:12 Q: This from an economist? No. I'm kidding.

01:19:15 Kahn: Right. Right. You learn that in a house more than, you know—that's, uh, a lesson of a house—of this house, is that everybody's fascinating. Even these people who are quite different—and everybody—you know, we were so different. And you were exposed to all sorts of very different people than the ones you would choose as a roommate. And, um, I became

a vegetarian while I was there. Well, actually, I moved in as a vegetarian, because I said, “Well, if I’m going to keep kosher, and I want to live with other people, I better go to a vegetarian house.” So, this was a vegetarian house. And I also had a dog. And, um, part of my freedom was my dog. And, um, you know, and I couldn’t imagine eating a dog. So, I wanted to be a vegetarian. (laughs).

01:20:02 Q: What kind of dog was this?

01:20:03 Kahn: She was a mutt.

01:20:04 Q: Oh, but still. Much loved. Yeah.

01:20:05 Kahn: You know. Much loved mutt. Yeah. Seventeen years.

01:20:08 Q: Oh dear.

01:20:10 Kahn: We don’t have—that’s how long she lived with me. Um, we don’t have a dog since then, because, A, my daughter has asthma and is allergic, and B, my husband says, “Well, we know who’s going to walk this dog at eleven o’clock at night.” And I can’t pretend he’s wrong. Yeah. And we travel too much, really, to, um, have a dog. But I’m thinking of sharing a dog. If my—my daughter lives in my basement. And if she actually stays in Boston and lives on my first floor, I think her—her, uh, fiancé likes dogs. I think we’ll have a dog (laughs). Do you have a dog?

01:20:50 Q: (Laughs) Um, that's a long story. I ended up taking my son's dog when he started traveling the world. And I recently had to retire him.

01:20:57 Kahn: Oh. See, it's so sad.

01:20:59 Q: Which was sad. It is sad.

01:21:00 Kahn: How old was he?

01:21:01 Q: He was, actually, fifteen.

01:21:02 Kahn: Yeah, so that's really old.

01:21:04 Q: Yeah, so I don't have the courage to call up the place. It was, like, a retirement center for golden retrievers in Pennsylvania. And I drove him down there.

01:21:12 Kahn: Oh, wait a minute. You literally retired him?

01:21:14 Q: I literally retired him.

01:21:17 Kahn: I thought you meant you put him away.

01:21:18 Q: No. No. I didn't put away. It was—I researched to find a place that would take an old golden retriever. And this is a place that does. But I haven't had the courage for a year to call. It's been a year now.

01:21:28 Kahn: To see if he's still alive.

01:21:29 Q: To see if he's still alive. Yeah. It would be too painful. But I will (laughs).

01:21:32 Kahn: Did you have to pay them?

01:21:34 Q: No. No.

01:21:35 Kahn: That's an amazing place.

01:21:36 Q: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

01:21:37 Kahn: So, sometimes I think I should retire and do something fun again. You know?

01:21:42 Q: Like rescue dogs? (Laughs)

01:21:43 Kahn: Yeah. Like, live in—right. Like rescue dogs and—uh, yeah. Exactly. But, um, of course, I'm not going to, because, A, I really wouldn't know how to do it, and B, the problem with retiring is I love my husband, and my husband loves work, and he'll never retire. And so, if

I want to be with him, I can't travel the world or anything and be with him. So, I'm kind of stuck in Boston. That doesn't mean I couldn't retire. But I like research. You know, and I like teaching now that I only teach one semester a year. I was teaching, you know, all the time I felt. And one semester's perfect.

01:22:25 Q: Yeah. Let's go back and talk a little bit about your family life. You've obviously balanced raising a family with being a professional academic. What can you say about that? And do you want to talk a little about your kids?

01:22:35 Kahn: So, um, I guess, you know, we were the first generation that really did that, in a way. And, um—

01:22:45 Q: It wasn't easy.

01:22:46 Kahn: It wasn't—not easy. But it's not easy today. So, you saw that woman. She's pregnant now with her second daughter. It's never going to be easy. But I—you know, as, um, somebody who I went to MIT with, um—who's now the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin system—um, she told a group of, uh, women economists—so, I've been active in women economists at different points of time, and she told a group of women economists, uh, “The best thing that you can do is marry well.” And she was absolutely right. Which is, marrying well means marrying somebody who doesn't think it's your job to raise the kids.

01:23:28 Q: Yeah. Yeah. Of course.

01:23:29 Kahn: You know, who doesn't think it's your job to do the laundry. Who thinks it's a cooperative thing. And so, I married well in that sense. And, um—

01:23:37 Q: And how old were you when you married? You must have been—

01:23:40 Kahn: So, I was thirty-two when we got married.

01:23:42 Q: See, now, you were smart. Yeah.

01:23:43 Kahn: Yeah. I was twenty-nine when I met him. But, you know, we didn't get married 'til I was thirty-two. He doesn't believe in marriage. My daughter's getting married now, and her fiancé—it's such a different world—came up to, kind of, tell us before he asked her. He didn't tell us that he hadn't asked her, which was a little bit of a problem, because we kind of let the cat out of the bag, but it was no big surprised. Uh, but, um, right. And Kevin says—uh, my husband said, "Well, uh, I'm happy you're together, but I don't really care if you're married or not."

(Laughs)

So, but we got married when we were thirty-two. And, I felt that my career—I couldn't have a baby right away. So, I was thirty-f—and then, when I started trying to get pregnant, it didn't happen like (snaps) this. And I had a miscarriage. So, I was thirty-six when I had my first daughter. And I was very happy to have her. And she was healthy if small. And I'd also had a—uh, uterine problems. I had fibroids and stuff. So, I was very lucky to be able to birth a child.

Although, she was C-sectioned [caesarean section]. And I did have another one, uh, another fibroid in between. So, I was a lucky woman to have two of my own wonderful, wonderful daughters. And I just—they're just wonderful daughters. And, um, you know, there was a point that I did want to take my older daughter and throw her against the wall when she was twelve or thirteen or—you know, I wanted to murder her. But what you learn to do is get up and walk away when you really hate them. Because she was hateful, really hateful. She hated me. And she just said hurtful things, because she hated me. Um—

01:25:28 Q: You don't know where that came from?

01:25:31 Kahn: Sure. It came from puberty (laughs).

01:25:32 Q: Oh. Yeah. Of course. (Laughs) See, I never had girls. So, I didn't have to go through that. Right.

01:25:36 Kahn: It came from puberty. And then, what happened was, two years later as she was, kind of, getting more stable, we were up in the country on vacation, and she got appendicitis. And, um, so we were in the hospital with her, uh, twenty-four/seven. And then, I heard her say on the phone, "I have the best parents in the world." And I almost died. I said, "Oh my god. We've come full circle here." Because we loved her so much, and she loved us. And then, she hated us, especially me because I was her mother. And so, now we're—I mean, after that, it's not that she told me everything. You know, she was very secretive and everything because that's what teenagers do. But she did—she was nice to me and I was nice to her, and we get along. And

now, we get along really well. Uh, and she lives in my basement right now. She's going to graduate school, and—

01:26:28 Q: In economics?

01:26:29 Kahn: Well. Right. In public policy and economics. So, basically that. And she has her orals next week. And she's getting married in three weeks. So—

01:26:38 Q: (Laughs) Nothing like compressing it all.

01:26:39 Kahn: So.

01:26:41 Q: Now, will they be married here or—?

01:26:43 Kahn: They're going to be married here out, uh, in the country in, um—I mean in the horticultural society place. We hope for the good weather. It's been a wonderful summer, so we hope it continues. And we love him, and he's a nice guy. And they're both really nice people, and they're both—so, the website for their registry, the first thing that comes is each of their favorite charity. Hers is my school, which she came to visit with me in Kenya. And his is a school in Israel that's for special ed kids. And, you know, they're just nice people (laughs).

01:27:17 Q: That's great. Lovely. Well, you've done a great job. And your other daughter is also—?



01:27:21 Kahn: So, my other daughter is younger. I had her when I was forty. She is in San Francisco, which as you know, is too far away. And she majored in economics. She—very, very different personalities. And she's, um, in a consulting firm. Like these people tend to do, they have this work stint between when—uh, many of them, they don't go straight to graduate school these days. Um, and she loves her work a lot. She's—uh, she's working on energy and the environment. She majored in economics and environmental—mathematical and environmental studies. And, um—and she loves her job. We're having a big problem with her right now, which is pretty sad. She loves sports, and she had two concussions two days in a row. And so, that was almost—that was a year and three quarters ago, and she still—

01:28:12 Q: What sport gave her concussions?

01:28:14 Kahn: Well, one sport was volleyball. She had a spike straight into the head. She didn't realize that's why she was dizzy. So, then, she was playing Ultimate Frisbee and she hit the ground head-first, same place. Like, this—here. And, um, so, uh, she's actually at a doctor today, uh, who has a new idea about her, 'cause she's, you know, we're just really sad that she's been affected. So—I mean, she's still working. But she can't do much else, and she has symptoms all the time. Dizziness, headaches, nausea. It's affected her executive function. She can't multitask. It's just everything. It's just very sad. But we hope that this new doctor—I said, “You have to go somewhere else besides the traumatic brain, um, place.” And so, she got a new doctor who said, “I think you have chronic migraines brought on by these blows.” And so, hopefully it's going to work out.

01:29:13 Q: Well, just the healing of the concussion. It takes a while.

01:29:14 Kahn: It doesn't take this long.

01:29:17 Q: But it's been a long time, huh?

01:29:19 Kahn: It's been way too long.

01:29:20 Q: Oh. What a shame. Yeah. Yeah.

01:29:22 Kahn: Yeah. That's the thing. I mean, by now—she's off the charts in terms of not getting better from concussions.

01:29:28 Q: Oh, that's terrifying. Ugh. I'm sorry to hear that. Well, hopefully this doc will find a solution. Yeah. You got to—

01:29:32 Kahn: Right. Hopefully, she has migraines, and they can take medicine and it'll go away.

01:29:36 Q: Yeah. No, I mean, they've got great—well, Boston, San Francisco have fantastic medical things.

01:29:39 Kahn: They have great doctors. Right. Right. But, um—but once a doctor can't do anything for her, you—you gotta say, "You have to go somewhere else." And they weren't saying that to her. And so, I said it to her. (Laughs) And I got—you know, I used my connections here, and I found a good doctor there, and—

01:29:57 Q: Yeah. That's really crucial. Well, good.

01:29:59 Kahn: Yeah.

01:30:00 Q: Yeah. There's nothing like worrying about a child (laughs).

01:30:01 Kahn: (Laughs) There's nothing like worrying about a child. But—well, but, you know, it's—

01:30:04 Q: It's just—can't get away from it.

01:30:05 Kahn: Right. When you're younger, you think, "Who knows what they're going to grow up to be?" And, you know, but you really want them to be—what I really wanted them to be is two things: happy and nice. You know, like, a nice person, a good person, and a happy person. And except for this little glitch, for my youngest daughter—and she has some other little problems in her life. Um, but they're both lovely people. And they're both happy people. Um, and so, I'm just really happy—I mean, I don't know if they would call themselves happy. But I'm really happy.

And, um, I recently—uh, last year, wrote a—uh, I was a co-author of an article, uh, about women and science that got play, and it was in the *New York Times*. And so, I was interviewed, um—

01:30:54 Q: I think I saw your bi-line and I didn't know who you were. I'm sure I did. It's coming to me now. Okay.

01:30:59 Kahn: And—so, but, anyway—um, but anyway, so, I wasn't in the bi-line, 'cause they wouldn't take four authors. So, we—anyway—but I was in the article.

01:31:05 Q: Oh. Okay. Okay.

01:31:07 Kahn: But, um—

01:31:08 Q: Okay. Then I didn't see it. I just saw the article.

01:31:10 Kahn: No, you might have—and—anyway—

01:31:11 Q: Well, tell me again what it was about.

01:31:12 Kahn: Well, uh, we basically—the whole article was just looking at all the literature about women and science—and saying, you know, what is it? And what we decided—uh, what—I mean, our main conclusion is that, um, women get turned off to science. It's not that

they can't do it. It's that they get turned off to science socially, in a way—at junior high. That's the worst time, junior high and high school. So, by the time college—college is important, but not nearly as important in those other ones. But it turns out that the ones who go into the hard sciences, the physical sciences like, they are doing well in academia, in academic science. They're just progressing along with the men, even though I'm sure it's hard. Uh, but these days—it didn't use to be true thirty years ago, but it's true now. But the fields like psychology and biomedicine are still not good.

01:32:07 Q: Oh, really.

01:32:08 Kahn: So—right. So, our two co-authors, they wrote the op ed about the hard physical sciences, which says that they're not sexist. And so, that's how we—

01:32:19 Q: And that is a huge change. Yes.

01:32:20 Kahn: That is—it really is a big change.

01:32:22 Q: Yeah.

01:32:23 Kahn: I mean, it's not that they're not not sexist. It's that you're just as likely to get tenure if you're a woman as a man. And in economics, by the way, it is not true. Um, so economics is also a bad field. But, um—

01:32:40 Q: But you managed.

01:32:41 Kahn: Uh, yeah, I managed. I managed to get tenure. Um, in retrospect, I would have to say that, as a woman—like, I think I went into it with a little bit of the wrong attitude. Partially it's that my husband is brilliant, and he's more brilliant than I am. And so, I was never as good as him. And I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't married an economist. Um, but, um, you know, I think I wasn't self-confident enough. Um, and that all through my life, I always haven't been self-confident enough. And that that has really hurt me. Um, but I managed, and, um, you know, I'm here. Do I love my job? I like doing research. Sometimes the students like me, sometimes they don't like me. I feel bad when they don't like me. And I don't understand it, and it, you know, so—but, um, you know, I can't imagine another life, but I bet you other lives might have been good too. But who knows.

01:33:48 Q: What can you say about the students that you teach now, or that you've noticed over, you know, the last twenty years or whatever?

01:33:54 Kahn: Right. Well, first of all, I teach business school students. So—they're always different. 'Cause they're more, "Okay, well, you know, how is this useful for me?" Um—

01:34:01 Q: Pragmatic.

01:34:02 Kahn: Pragmatic. Very pragmatic. And so, if they can't see how it's useful—they're not just interested in thinking about things. Um, I learned a lot once when somebody told me

this. So, there's this personality test. And it turns out that, um—the Briggs-Meyers personality test. And faculty in business schools and students in business schools are complete opposites. Which is really interesting. So, you know, faculty are interested in ideas and in—and, um, the students are more interested in the social—uh, the person to person—the—anyway—

01:34:43 Q: The networking. Yeah.

01:34:44 Kahn: It's really very interesting that—how different we are. But, um—

01:34:45 Q: And it's not a generational thing?

01:34:46 Kahn: No.

01:34:47 Q: It's totally—okay.

01:34:48 Kahn: It's really—no, that's not generational. Not at all,

01:34:53 Q: Yeah. Okay.

01:34:54 Kahn: But there has been a very big different, in that, um—I saw it with my children too. I'm sure you did—that schools are more interactive than they used to be, um, just, you know, growing up, K through 12 schools. And, um—they're more, uh, positive reinforcement, less negative reinforcement. And students come to college, and they expect everything to be the

same. And it has to be the same to some extent. So, you have to learn that, um, you know, you can't say, "No, that's wrong." And it's something that, you know, you know, people would—would say that all the time to us. And maybe it hurt, and then, we learned and stuff. So, I don't know which is better. And hopefully, we try to do a happy medium of telling them what's right, and then, they learn from that.

Um, but—uh, students, uh—well, first of all, they're not Barnard students. Barnard students were just intellectually curious. That the truth. And, uh, business students tend not to be as intellectually curious. So, um, but I have noticed that you have to be nicer to them, and you have to be more personable to them than you used to have to be when I started teaching college. And even when I started teaching here. That you have to have more of a relationship with them, um, which is different. But sometimes it can be more fun. And so I'm—

01:36:25 Q: Yeah. This whole rating system by students, where their input is—

01:36:32 Kahn: Important. Yeah.

01:36:34 Q: —valued, I guess, for—yeah. I don't remember—I think we might have had some little survey that was done when we were in college.

01:36:38 Kahn: I don't remember ever filling something like that out.

01:36:39 Q: But I never filled one out. Someone else from our class told me she'd been involved



in it, and I said, “I didn’t even know it existed.”

01:36:45 Kahn: I don’t remember.

01:36:46 Q: But certainly not online. Not everybody could check it from all over the world. It’s like—

01:36:49 Kahn: Oh, the—the Rate my Teachers thing.

01:36:52 Q: Yeah. That kind of thing.

01:36:53 Kahn: No, but way before Rate my Teachers, my professor—they had ratings here. And other faculty would know your ratings, but other students didn’t. And then, other students and everybody—so now, it’s like a—you know, so even the within university ratings are well known. And so, it’s like, what can you say?

01:37:14 Q: Yeah, no. I wouldn’t like that at all (laughs). Yeah. But you’ve adapted.

01:37:18 Kahn: That’s the hard part. It’s a hard part. You have to adapt. Yeah. My favorite class is one where I work, um—I have separate papers with, uh, students. ‘Cause I do like working with students one on one—particularly, that’s a lot of fun.

01:37:34 Q: So, are you working with graduate students now too, or—?

01:37:35 Kahn: No, I started working with graduate students, but I like the undergraduates more. They were more fun. Um, you know, less—they were just more fun, more open, and you know, just more loose people to be around.

01:37:51 Q: Do you get a—is there a lot of, sort of, cultural diversity—?

01:37:53 Kahn: Here?

01:37:54 Q: —economically, culturally here? In terms of the students coming into the business school?

01:37:58 Kahn: Oh, so, let me just say that racially, whenever I see a black man in my course, I want to go and hug him, because it is so rare. But we do have black women, and, uh, that's really nice. And, um, we have more women than, um, uh—than some other schools might. But, you know, business school has lots more men. And so, the rest of BU has sixty percent women. And that's true with most universities this way. But business school is much more even. If anything, there are more guys. So, that's interesting. Um, but diversity, in terms of racial diversity, not very much. In terms of economic diversity, there's more of that than I think. So, I have the people who come into my office and start talking to me about how you can't really go out to dinner for less than \$500 with a date. And it's, like, "Excuse me?" (Laughs) You know, you have to get this and that. Versus the ones who—this last year, I had this very sad story. It was, this woman wasn't handing in her assignments. And then, finally, I sat her down and I—she didn't

want to tell me, and then, finally she said, “Well, I haven’t bought the program. I can’t afford it.”  
You know, the software.

01:39:35 Q: Oh. Oh. Gosh.

01:39:36 Kahn: And it was, like, What? You haven’t bought the software? No wonder you haven’t done anything. And so, um, what can you do? So—

01:39:39 Q: Yeah. Oh my goodness. Yeah, that makes it different. Now, do you remember, um, being at Barnard and being aware of any disparity in terms of class? It’s kind of an open question, right?

01:39:52 Kahn: In terms of class?

01:39:54 Q: In terms of—yeah. I mean, I know they were very wealthy girls, and then, there were other people too.

01:39:58 Kahn: Right. I was very poor. I didn’t have—I think my spending money was \$50 a month, which was really nothing. And that was for my clothes and everything. So, I really had no money.

01:40:11 Q: And your fall (laughs).

01:40:12 Kahn: Huh?

01:40:13 Q: And your fall.

01:40:15 Kahn: And my fall (laughs).

01:40:18 Q: But, I mean, were you acutely aware of that? That you didn't have as much as some of the others, or—?

01:40:22 Kahn: So, it's interesting. So, uh, 'cause I see the same thing, uh, with my children. I did not feel—Maybe if you tell me, you know, who's rich here, I could tell you, but it did not seem to me there was a problem. I felt that there was no problem. And that there was no differentiation. And, um, yeah. So, that was really quite amazing, when you think about it, that I—there must have been some people who, you know, went off to the Hamptons or something, instead of me going off to Brooklyn to my relatives. But I did not feel that there were people that were not friends with me because I didn't have a lot of money. Of course, we didn't go out to eat much anyway. Especially if you're kosher you don't go out to eat.

01:41:09 Q: Unlike now.

01:41:10 Kahn: It's not like now. It's a different world. Right. So, it's really different. But I—did you—? I don't know. How did you feel? 'Cause I did not feel—even though I didn't have money, I didn't feel that is was a problem.

01:41:21 Q: Yeah. No, I came from a very poor family too. So, I also flew out by myself from Saint Louis, and yeah. Um.

01:41:24 Kahn: From Saint Louis. Are you from Saint Louis?

01:41:27 Q: Just outside of Saint Louis. University City. Yeah.

01:41:29 Kahn: So, my daughter went to, uh, Washington University. Yeah.

01:41:32 Q: Washington University. Oh. Okay, then you know the terrain.

01:41:33 Kahn: I know the terrain. Yes.

01:41:35 Q: It's a good school.

01:41:36 Kahn: It is a good school, but that was a school where money really mattered, I think.

01:41:40 Q: Yeah. I think it probably did. There's some very wealthy areas there.

01:41:44 Kahn: Right. But my other daughter went to Pomona [College]. I couldn't get them to go to Barnard. They didn't want to go to girl's schools. But my other daughter went to Pomona, and that was a school where money did not matter. So, you—go figure. I don't know why.

‘Cause they’re both equally expensive, but Pomona gives lots of scholarships.

01:42:03 Q: Interesting. Well, that makes a big difference. Yeah.

01:42:04 Kahn: Yeah. And they’re very rich. Pomona has a huge endowment, so it can afford it.

01:42:09 Q: Yeah. Well, you know, I mean, our tuition in those days was almost nothing.

01:42:13 Kahn: It was a lot for my dad.

01:42:14 Q: But it was still a lot for our—for a lot of families. But I’ve discovered so many people. I mean, I didn’t know there were other people who were struggling economically. It was like—I mean, I don’t remember thinking, “Oh my god, I’m poor. I can’t do this.” I just remember not doing a lot of the things ‘cause (laughs) there wasn’t a lot of money. I babysat, I remember, a lot, and that was my—

01:42:30 Kahn: You babysat. I did some babysitting too. But I also, you know—I bought my clothes at consignment stores, you know, used clothing stores. Then, they weren’t consignment. And I would go to plays and dance and everything, and I would do it on those student tickets. So I did not feel—I didn’t feel deprived in any way, and I didn’t feel that there were things that I couldn’t do because I didn’t have the money for it.

01:42:57 Q: Yeah. Yeah. No, I think Barnard was really good that way. I mean, I don’t know

that it's the same now.

01:43:01 Kahn: I don't know.

01:43:02 Q: I mean, maybe it's more like Washington University.

01:43:05 Kahn: And maybe it's more like Pomona.

01:43:06 Q: Yeah. Or maybe more like—

01:43:07 Kahn: I think giving scholarships makes a huge difference.

01:43:10 Q: Well, yeah. I mean, what is it, \$60,000 to go there or something?

01:43:15 Kahn: Right. But I mean—yeah, so, when we were at Pomona, we didn't say anything, but we realized we were the only ones in her group of friends that paid full freight. I mean, you know, we could afford it.

01:43:27 Q: That's good, though, I mean. I mean, not good for you but—

01:43:30 Kahn: But we were the only ones who paid full freight. Yeah, well, it's different. But my oldest daughter has lovely friends. So, just 'cause they weren't rich doesn't mean they weren't lovely.

01:43:41 Q: Yeah. No, I used to haunt that campus. I loved it. I mean, I was really lucky. My high school, you know, we did all sorts of things with Washington University, so—I was a beneficiary. I don't know how it is now.

01:43:52 Kahn: Yeah, but I think—I wonder what it's like to be in a girl's school now. But then, it was really the right time to be in a girl's school—because, you know, what was happening there, we—suddenly, we all became ourselves.

01:44:05 Q: So, you said that being a female in economics, and particularly academia, had been a challenge. Um—

01:44:11 Kahn: It was a—why was it a challenge?

01:44:13 Q: Were there times when you felt that you were specifically, you know, discriminated against because of that? Or missed this or that because you were seen as a woman and not as an equal academic, or—?

01:44:25 Kahn: So, I tell you when you really feel it. So, you sit in a seminar and people are talking, and you say something. And then, somebody else says the point or picks it up, and it's not your point, it's their point. And that's the kind of thing. They don't hear the women say things. They hear the men say things. And that's the kind of—that's why it's difficult. It's not, like, “Oh, you have the same publication record.” But there—it is true—in tenure. Many tenure



cases are marginal. And, you know, I've studied this, and the marginal cases go against the women in economics. And, um, I wrote one macro-economic paper, or relevant to macro-economics, and so, uh—so, I got invited to some macro-economics. And I said to myself, Those are all men. And they're wearing suits, too.

01:45:24 Q: I'm sorry, it what now? In—

01:45:26 Kahn: Macro-economics.

01:45:27 Q: Oh. Macro-economics.

01:45:28 Kahn: You know, like, how the economy is growing and stuff. And they're all men, and they're all wearing suits. And, um, it's very difficult to be a woman in that environment and to be heard and to be respected. Now, there are, you know—Alice [Mitchell] Rivlin. I mean, there are plenty of women who are, now, in that environment and respected, which is great. But it wasn't always true. And even now, you have to really fight hard to be heard, in a way. And, you know, if you combine that with my own natural tendency to underestimate myself, I think—you know, or to be meek or something, it's a problem.

01:46:07 Q: Which was our upbringing, right.

01:46:09 Kahn: Yeah, which was our upbringing.

01:46:10 Q: Hard to fight it. Um, you—actually, one of the saddest stories—I’ll just briefly share—was another economist. Um, Bettina Birch [??]? Did you ever know her?

01:46:19 Kahn: Yeah. How do I know her?

01:46:20 Q: She was at Barnard.

01:46:22 Kahn: No, I know that. But I—how do I know her? Yeah.

01:46:23 Q: She was an economics major. She ended up teaching at Barnard.

01:46:27 Kahn: Oh.

01:46:28 Q: Didn’t get tenure, and ended up suing Barnard.

01:46:31 Kahn: In economics, she did? And she sued Barnard. I’m—of all places, Barnard should not be anti-female.

01:46:39 Q: I know. I know. But I don’t know the whole story.

01:46:40 Kahn: But I mean, maybe she didn’t—who knows?

01:46:42 Q: But it really turned her off from academics. She left academia. She teaches in a

community college now. In New York, and loves it. But for about fifteen years she completely left it. She became an independent scholar. She done fine. But, you know.

01:46:57 Kahn: I have to look her up.

01:46:58 Q: It was a sad story.

01:46:59 Kahn: It was a sad story. So, the thing is—right. There's always, you know, is—it just—so, I was on a search committee for a dean here, one of the schools at BU. And it was the same thing. It was the same thing. It was, like, um, you know the president, it was the present president, [Robert A.] Brown. And he really wanted us to look at women and to look at minorities. And, um—and the search team came back with the short list of twenty-five men out of, you know—uh, out of hundreds and hundreds of people. And I said, “Oh gee, you know, are any of these minorities?” “No.” I said, “Well gee, weren't there any qualified people?” And so, “We chose the best.” And I—but I made them sit down, and the chair was very happy to do it with me. I made the search team—“What about this person? What about this person? What about this person?” And lo and behold, there were some qualified women and minorities on that list.

And, you know, it's not—you know, they like to think—you like to think you're not biased, but there's so much implicit bias. You have to work against it. And if you don't realize that, you're just fooling yourself. I mean, they really thought they weren't biased. But, you know, when you said, “Well, what's wrong with this person?” “Well, nothing in particular, you know. We just were making this list.” I said, “Well, why don't you put that person on if they have the same

qualifications?” “Okay.” Oh—you know. And we ended up interviewing mostly women, because they’re the—

01:48:44 Q: Good for you. Yeah.

01:48:45 Kahn: —they were the best ones. So—and a minority guy and, you know, two white guys too. And we hired a woman. But just this implicit bias is there. And some people know they have—not—now, I have to say, a lot of my colleagues here, my young—you know, the—in my generation, they were not biased. I have to say, they were good guys. Um, a lot of them were not biased. And, um, some of them, you know, said, “Here’s an opportunity. There’s not that many jobs that women are getting so let’s hire the best people, and they’re women.” So, we have, you know, a lot of junior women now. So, that’s lovely.

01:49:20 Q: Good. Good. Good.

01:49:22 Kahn: Oh, yeah. But I think—economics might be getting better, but the figures don’t show it yet.

01:49:26 Q: Right. Well, you were a pioneer (laughs). Let me just ask you a few more questions, then, and then I’ll let you go. I know you’re busy (laughs), I have to get back to New York at some point. Um, one was about travel. You said you do a lot of travel, or you’re looking forward to doing a lot of travel? What was that?

01:49:42 Kahn: No. Oh, so—you know, so, either I or my husband, when we get invited somewhere abroad, we usually make it a trip. And so, this year, actually, in May, we went to Scandinavia, and in June, we went to China. And, you know, it's a mix, work and play. And I like to have my talks in the beginning so then I can play. Usually, they're not, and I'm—you know—like, I was sitting in China, waking up early 'cause I was jet lagged anyway, and going, oh—you know, typing up my talk and everything.

But, um, you know, it's a nice way to travel. And when we were on sabbatical, we spent the first few weeks in Kenya at my school. Then, we went to Italy for two months. Then, Torino—great time. Then, we went to Sydney for six months. Then, we went to London for two months.

01:50:33Q: Oh, wow. You had a whole year.

01:50:34 Kahn: We had a whole year. Yeah. We always take a year. You can get a year at half pay or half a year at full pay and—

01:50:40 Q: That's very humane.

01:50:41 Kahn: Yeah, and, you know—and, of course, I always want to take the whole year at half pay. And so, we try to travel. And my husband gets invited more than me, but I get invited some places too. But we go together, and we have a grand old time. And, you know, we like doing it.

01:51:00 Q: Good. Good. Good. And I'm curious, also, in terms of you said at one point, "Oh, well, he's more brilliant than I am." But has it been a competitive, sort of, career for the two of you?

01:51:09 Kahn: To begin with, I felt competitive, and then, I realized, Don't bother competing. I mean, he, um, you know—

01:51:15 Q: Yeah. Where does he teach now?

01:51:17 Kahn: He teaches at BU in the Economics Department.

01:51:18 Q: Oh, okay. Okay. Okay.

01:51:19 Kahn: But the thing is that, um, he—I mean, he is literally smarter. Like, you sit in a seminar, he gets it faster. And in economics, like, it's a lot of abstract thinking. Uh, you know, so, it's actually easy to tell if people are actually saying what they're thinking, and it's easy to tell who's really brilliant, because they say something that—you wouldn't have come to for two weeks. And then, if you hear it and understand it, then you're still pretty good. And, um—which I don't always hear it and understand it. You know? But sometimes I do. And you have to think on your feet really fast. And he's excellent at that.

And then, he also had an article that hit big very early on. And it was a very good article, and then, that really built his reputation. And he's, you know, relatively well known. Um, more than

me. I am well known because I've studied economists. So, economists know about my work on economics. But I'm not as well-known as he is at all. And, um, you know, at first, I felt bad about it. You know, and there's a sense in which I do feel bad about it, 'cause maybe that's one of the reasons that I don't feel more confident in myself, is that I live with him. You know, like, when I talk to my co-authors and they say, "Oh, go ask Kevin." You know, like, "He'll tell us what we need to know because he's brilliant." And it's, you know, unfortunately true, but it's also nice, you know. If I have a question I can ask him. And my children are brilliant. And so, it's all worth it for that (laughs).

01:53:05 Q: Well, yeah.

01:53:06 Kahn: They have genes from both us, for sure.

01:53:08 Q: Absolutely. I think you get your part too (laughs).

01:53:12 Kahn: But also, part of it was that they grew up thinking in this way that I probably did not grow up thinking, logically. So, if I had had a good math background in high school—you know, I'm telling you, that this is such an important time, junior high and high school. If I had had people who really loved math and thought abstractly in those ways, I bet you I would have been fine. But, you know, my kids understand statistics naturally. Everyone hates statistics because it doesn't come naturally to most people. And there's been plenty of studies that shows that. They don't think in probabilities. But my daughters think in probabilities. And, you know, there you have it.

01:53:52 Q: I'm trying to imagine your dinner conversations (laughs).

01:53:54 Kahn: Well, you know, we have this lawyer now who's going to be the son-in-law—

01:53:56 Q: Oh, a lawyer now. Okay.

01:53:57 Kahn: And he's learned all these terms. He goes, "Well, I feel an epsilon better." You know, or, "Well, the marginal cost—" Uh, you know, and he starts talking like us. He's learned very quickly.

01:54:09 Q: Oh, that's darling. Oh, that's lovely. That's lovely. That's great. Okay. So, in terms of the future, you sort of alluded to the fact that you probably won't ever retire because he's not going to retire.

01:54:19 Kahn: Right. So, that's a question—

01:54:20 Q: Do you see yourself cutting back a bit, or doing other things?

01:54:23 Kahn: Well, I have cut back a bit because I got this—I got an NIH.

01:54:26 Q: Oh yeah.



01:54:27 Kahn: And it allowed me—quite a few years to go, but I’ve been dragging it out. It allowed me to get down to a smaller course load, so I could teach one semester a year. And then, I told them, “I deserve a three course load,” and they said, “You’re right.” You know, like, you have to—women don’t ask. I asked for it. I got it. So, now, I’m only going to teach one semester a year, and that’s really a nice way of living. So, I kind of like it. Although, sometimes I think, “I should be doing something different also.” You know, like, my thing with my school in Kenya. But I wouldn’t mind doing more of that. Um, and maybe just having more fun. I don’t know how to have fun enough.

01:55:05 Q: So, do you do anything for fun? You said the travel was great.

01:55:08 Kahn: Oh, yeah. The travel is great. And, um—

01:55:10 Q: Are there clubs or sports or, I don’t know, culture?

01:55:16 Kahn: I mean, you know, we go to plays, we go to movies, we go to Imax 3D movies. I love that. Um, I love going dancing, but Kevin’s not—doesn’t love going a bit of dancing.

01:55:30 Q: Now, this isn’t folk dancing. This is ballroom dancing or—?

01:55:32 Kahn: No, just rock old, you know, like, free dancing—club. Right.

01:55:38 Q: Oh, like, dancing like we did when we were—yeah.

01:55:39 Kahn: Like we did when we were—right.

01:55:40 Q: Oh, good.

01:55:41 Kahn: So, our favorite club, which old fogies can go to, Johnny D's, is closing at the end of the year.

01:55:46 Q: Oh, no.

01:55:47 Kahn: So, that's very sad. But, you know, we almost broke up when we started going out at MIT, because I made him go to a dance class and he was so—he just said, “No, I can't. And I can't move my feet fast enough.” So, you know, I wish I had somebody—that's one thing I wish.

01:56:03 Q: But he does dance. Or no?

01:56:04 Kahn: A little bit, if it's crowded enough, you know?

01:56:06 Q: Oh, okay (laughs).

01:56:07 Kahn: So, um, it has to be crowded and everything.

01:56:09 Q: Well, you can't have a perfect man. Come on.

01:56:15 Kahn: Right. No. That's right. You can't have a perfect man. That's exactly right. So, um—you know, I like doing that, and I like—I don't know. I like having fun. I wish I had fun more. But he's working, and so, it's hard to have fun, um, more. But I don't know. Dancing is fun. Imax 3D is fun. He doesn't like going to Imax 3D. Um, climbing mountains is fun.

01:56:41 Q: So, you do some hiking as—?

01:56:43 Kahn: We do some hiking. I'm not good at it.

01:56:44 Q: Who cares?

01:56:46 Kahn: Uh, but, you know, I love to do it. We always—we go to the Adirondacks every year and hike. Um, what else is fun? Canoeing is fun. We had a place on a lake, and we canoed a lot. Um, I have a trainer now. I—kind of, that's fun. I've been—I'm very weak in general. I've had hand problems from typing and I have had back problems all my life, ever since that chiropractor. And, um, so now I'm doing weights, and I'm trying to get a little strong. So, I'm very happy about that. I don't love exercise, but this trying to be strong is kind of fun. And I don't know. What do you do fun in your life?

01:57:27 Q: Oh, I don't know. I bike and I run. (Laughs) But the knees are giving out. Um—

01:57:31 Kahn: Right. Our knees give out, don't they?

01:57:34 Q: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, life changes. Um, what about the future. Anything that your worried about? Frightened about?

01:57:41 Kahn: So, you mean, like—so, of course, none of us want to be in pain. I've been in pain in my life. I know it sucks. Um, for long periods. And, you know, I take care of, you know, like—people die around me, and I take care of them. You know, my father died, and he was really not there for many years. Uh, my mother is there, but she can't stand. My sister—it was horrible watching her die from cancer. You know, take five years to die from cancer. It was horrible. So, but—you know, as you get older, you say, "This is part of life, and it's not going to be fun when it happens." And that's one of the reasons I have to do weights is to—

01:58:29 Q: Stay strong.

01:58:30 Kahn:—kind of, fight against the dying of the light.

01:58:32 Q: Yeah. Yeah.

01:58:33 Kahn: So, to be strong and so, you know, it's not going to be great. And that's what happens. We're getting older, and that's what happens. But we don't have to lose our spirit, and I really think I still have a spirit.

01:58:46 Q: Oh, sure.

01:58:47 Kahn: You know, like, I was having terrible problems with my feet, and I went to podiatrist, and she—I talked to her about my problems, and then, I went there and she goes, “Oh, you’re so spry, you know, for somebody who has these problems. You’re awfully spry.” And it’s like, let’s get on with life. Let’s have a little fun in life.

01:59:05 Q: Yeah. No, you’ve got a great energy. It’s contagious. It’s great. I’m sure your kids are just full of exuberance and—

01:59:12 Kahn: Yeah. Well the—oh, the oldest one is very exuberant. Though, the second one is very different. But she’s so much fun. They’re both great kids.

01:59:22 Q: Great. Great. Okay, um, just two final things. Is there anything that you would—knowing what we’ve all gone through in the last, whatever, four, five decades—anything you would say to young Shu entering college way back then that might have put you in a different track? You mentioned the math. Is there anything else you would’ve—?

01:59:42 Kahn: Right. Well, but that’s from really—that was, like, way before I went to college.

01:59:46 Q: That’s really early. Yeah.

01:59:47 Kahn: I had no clue I wasn’t getting the best—and I wouldn’t even know—my parents

wouldn't know what a good math education was, and what a good math teacher was. So, you know, it just wasn't there then. Um—

01:59:58 Q: So, what advice would you give that person?

02:00:01 Kahn: I would advise that person to lighten up. Because I think I feel too oppressed in my life. So, I think I would advise that person to lighten up. And, you know, yeah, it's important what you do with your life. But it's important, um—but, you know, it's also important that you're happy and that you're calm and that—so, lighten up and enjoy myself, um, 'cause I think I was depressed too much. You know, I was depressed at different parts of my life. And I think I was depressed part of the time I was at Barnard. Um—

02:00:41 Q: It was such a confusing time, though.

02:00:44 Kahn: It was confusing.

02:00:45 Q: I mean, you talked about feeling like you had found yourself, and yet that was hard to do. It was hard to do in that maelstrom, I think (laughs).

02:00:54 Kahn: I guess it was. So, I had this thing. And I mean, I—wouldn't tell myself not to do it. I felt very—I think what happened is that, our family was so close, and we had these kids, and we were, had our—uh, you know, we had a fun family, in that sense. And so, when I left my family, it was less fun, because I was lonely. And then, I had a boyfriend in high school, in

Chicago, and we were very close, and it was wonderful. And then, I left my boyfriend. So, from then on, you know, I've been looking for, kind of—I think, we really are, we being myself and my daughters, we are incredibly social people. And it's the social things that were hard when it was hard. And, you know, I did have friends, but didn't have boyfriends. And you know, things like that really did affect me. And I can't tell myself it's not important, because it really was important.

02:01:52 Q: Okay, is there anything we haven't talked about in this interview that you feel should be—that's reflective of your life, that you would like to have included? I'm sure there are lots of things. It's hard to think what (laughs)—

02:02:06 Kahn: I'm sure there are lots of things. I guess, in what—well, I guess—I mean, if I were to talk to—not about my life, I don't—you know, like, I've had periods of depression and, you know, periods of happiness and stuff. But you know, that's life. I guess, the other advice besides lightening up is, um, you can do a lot of things if you think you can. And I'm still finding that out. You know, I'm still finding out—like, I was in this committee—I mean, this thing. And I was talking to students, and blah blah blah. And then, I said, You know, liven it up here a little bit. For myself. And I said, You know, pretend you're great. And it helped. So, I guess I would say to everybody, do you know, to be confident of themselves, because everybody has greatness in some way. And everyone is a wonderful person. And let it shine (laughs).

02:03:12 Q: Great. Great. Well, good. Thank you so much. This has been very, very good. I appreciate you thinking the time, and—

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