

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Cheryl Weiner

2015

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Cheryl Weiner conducted by Katherine Brewster on June 12, 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: Cheryl Weiner

Location: New York, NY

Interviewer: Katherine Brewster

Date: June 12, 2015

00:00:03 Q: And—I'm going to ask you to begin wherever it is in your life story that you'd like to begin. What—right in this moment—kind of stands out, do you want to share right away? And you can start at the beginning. Way back when.

00:00:26 Weiner: I am very, excited and grateful to be part of this process, and find it amazing that still connected to Barnard [College] in some deep fundamental way, and that I've met you as the interviewer, and have a—not just a memory of Barnard, but a life experience of having gone to Barnard as an institution.

00:01:04 Q: So tell me more about that. Your deep fundamental connection and your life experience with Barnard.

00:01:09 Weiner: Well, everywhere I've ever been, when I meet a Barnard graduate or alumna, I have an immediate connection, surprisingly, of somebody who shares similar values, reference sets, experiences, both at Barnard in New York and growing up. And it doesn't matter what year. When I joined the alumni group in Los Angeles and then in Miami, it was a similar relationship to people, throughout the age spectrum. And I find that quite extraordinary—that there is some kind of cultural resonance or, ethical resonance, of some sort, that is sustained by the admissions committee and who they either attract in or what happens when you're there.

00:02:20 Q: Tell me more about the cultural and the ethical values that you find you resonate with in terms of the Barnard community. What are those to you?

00:02:34 Weiner: Well I experienced Barnard as a cosmopolitan place or experience. It had a wide-ranging student body who were from various ethnic groups and races and, uh, geographies. And just even from my freshman year, my roommate was of Chinese origin. Uh, she wasn't from China, but she was very much rooted in Chinese experience. Uh, another one of the people—we lived in a suite—one of the other people was, um, from an academic background, and the other was from a city in New Jersey, I think. But it was just—it was a mix of people.

Being Jewish and having come into Barnard really through five or six of my cohort in the Boston area—who were also Jewish—I felt very much as if I was at home with family in a larger community, which is how I essentially had grown up. And, many of my experiences in my youth were reinforced by the Barnard community. I did not feel like a fish out of water. I felt as if I had come home and just moved away from whatever the constraints were in childhood and growing up. I also loved being in New York, and I think that that's a resonance that I have with other Barnard alumni.

The people who I frequently meet in, particularly now, I live in the Miami area, Hollywood, they don't seem to have a similar reference set in terms of range of what they know, studied, or are interested in. They're not as culturally connected as I am. They don't often go to theater, opera, ballet, uh, the cultural—frequently movies, but we go to different movies. It's very surprising to

me, uh, that when I've asked people or been exposed to when people did go to school that, uh, many of the people who I resonate with and am friends with are Barnard grads. Yeah, it's kind of surprising.

00:05:34 Q: Right. I'm going to stop for just a minute—

[INTERRUPTION]

00:06:03 Q: So for a moment, let's go back for a second. Um, tell me about, um, some of the things that you remember growing up. What are the things you remember culturally, class-wise, race-wise, what's the ethnic background of your parents, and—?

00:06:25 Weiner: Um, my experience as a child was influenced by the fact that I'm first generation American on my father's side, and second generation on my mother's. My parents were first cousins, and my father met my mother when he went to visit his uncle.

00:06:50 Q: And where was that?

00:06:51 Weiner: He was living originally in Winnipeg and wound up in Chicago. And then he went to visit his uncle who was in Boston. And my mother apparently opened the door and the two of them immediately fell in love and they were married six months later. It's a wonderful story. And, uh, my father's experience in Chicago astounded me, actually, later in life.

He had always had a best friend whose name was Aaron Zevit. And my parents used to talk about how they connected when they went to Florida, and the Zevits used to go to Florida. And, uh, probably forty years later, after I had become a rabbi, I met Shawn Zevit, who was Aaron Zevit's grandson. And both of us were influenced into becoming rabbis through our relationship, each with our father and grandfather. And I spoke to his grandfather, who was at that point ninety-six. My father had just died. And he told me some remarkable stories about my father, which I think have in many ways influenced me. My father was a very compassionate and community-oriented person. And the story that was told was that they shared a room, and Aaron had a night job and my father had a day job. And they would switch beds when one would go off to work and the other didn't. And one of them paid for things like socks and underwear and the other one paid to go to the opera, where one of their cohort was singing. She was in school. And that just epitomized for me, a way of living that was communal and was not influenced by one person having and another person not. In order for everybody to go and do, they pooled their resources.

So I have many stories like that growing up. And my father was well-recognized from the war years when he made bandages for the Red Cross. And when he was an elder and moved to Florida from Boston, he would take the paraplegic veterans to the Jewish Friday afternoon Shabbat service. He would go down to Miami every week to the Veteran's Hospital. And until I lived in Miami and actually experienced what it means to drive down from Hollywood every week, I didn't realize how much of a commitment that was. And I think that, in many ways, my choice to become a chaplain later in life was influenced by my father's service in that regard. He was also honored by the Jewish War Veterans when he died.

And my mother had a different way of demonstrating that kind of community-oriented service—hers was very much about family. And she used to go and do—she would—both my parents would do things that were embedded in Jewish communal values and ethics, which I didn't realize until I was studying to be a rabbi and recognized their lifestyle as being advised by that culture, that experience. Um, my mother used to visit anyone in the family who was sick or in need on Friday afternoons. And I used to hate it because I used to have to go with her. So I would sit in the car and she would be delivering food and making a visit, doing whatever was needed—and there are many stories about how when people came to Boston after the Holocaust and they settled in the Boston area. My mother was the one who would bring them to immigration, get them prepared for citizenship, and basically teach them to be an American.

00:11:32 Q: Okay, hold on just one second. I want to hear the rest of this story.

[INTERRUPTION]

00:11:42 Q: Tell me one of the stories that you heard about her doing that, or a couple of them.

00:11:46 Weiner: Well, there were two brothers. They were the Adler brothers. And she brought them to school and signed their papers, and when they were at a point where they were going for their citizenship, um, she prepped them and made sure they were ready. And, there was a bartering system that existed in my family. My uncle owned a grocery store. The Baseman's owned shoes, the Shollers stored furs.

00:12:34 Q: And what did your father do?

00:12:35 Weiner: My father was a clothing designer—a factory clothing designer. And forever after, as I remember it, the Adler boys became—one was the treasurer of the Colonial Theater in Boston, and the other become the vice president of General Cinema Corporation. And we went to—whenever there were press passes that weren't used, we would get them. And so I would come home from school and Mom would say, "We're going to the theater." And whatever we were supposed to be eating for dinner got packed up, and we met my father downtown. We had a box, and we were sitting there eating in the middle of the Boston Brahmin theater. And, uh, it was just—my assumption was that everybody got to go to the theater. But the other aspect was we never got to go to anything that wasn't playing at the Colonial Theater. So it was a very restricted kind of experience. And the same thing with General Cinema. We had universal, life-long passes to go to the movies. So we went to movies very frequently, and we went to musical theater in the summer, um, and we went out to eat, and we only ordered chicken, because steak was too expensive. And we went to this amazing place that was like Chicken House or Chicken Hut or something. And whoever could pack into the car went. Cousins, relatives—we picked up whoever, um.

And my brother and sister are much older than I am. My sister died this past year, but she was twelve years older, and my brother is fourteen years older. And they got married when I was young. My brother, I think, left when I was three—my sister got married when I was seven. She had her first child when I was nine so I was aunt when I was nine. And she went to—her



husband went to Columbia Law School—and she went to Columbia General Studies. And, um, she had transferred from Smith College. So that was my initial introduction into New York.

When they graduated, they lived in the ILGWU [The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union] space on 27<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, I think.

And we were very connected into the Union, as a family, in terms of labor. Which is very interesting, also in terms of growing up, because social justice issues were just food that you ate at the table. And my father was secretary-treasurer of the ILGWU in Boston. My sister married into a family in New York who were very prominent, the Schlesingers, ILGWU and general labor lawyers. My brother married someone whose father was a lawyer, a labor lawyer in New Jersey, who was very prominent, the Kapelsohns. And everybody met at a resort called Unity House in Pennsylvania that was established by the ILGWU for its employees. And kind of a rite of passage was becoming a waiter or waitress there. And, my brother and sister both met their mates there.

And I was sent before college to go and meet my mate, which I tried to do. I met a guy who I went out with for a year or so I think. Lovely guy, but it didn't work out. And he's recently found me on Facebook, which I think is hilarious. Um, and the other part of that that was hilarious was that—part of why we broke up was my assumption that he was going to move to Long Island and have two point five children, and that was not what I wanted to do. And we used to go to his parents' house for Friday night dinner pretty much every week, and that was not a lifestyle that I thought I wanted. And, as it's turned out, you know forty years later—forty-five years later—he actually became a computer entrepreneur and started businesses all over the

world and traveled a great deal to many places that I would have resonated with. He did marry and got divorced. And, um, but his life was pretty much the life I led as an employee of the computing industry. And so, it just strikes me as very ironic. And also the fallacy of making assumptions based on nothing, um, except what one sees and does not query. Because he and I never had those deep conversations about, “What do you want to do with your life?” and “Who do you want to be when you grow up?” And so, it’s just interesting.

It’s also interesting that throughout much of my life, I was always attracted to engineers, and he was an engineer. Uh, I was always attracted to people who did things with their hands, uh, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, bio engineers, which I find curious. And I think, again, that was a result—my father used to do everything—anything and everything with his hands—and I do think that he had grown up in a different period, a different age, that he would have been an engineer just because that was his proclivity. He always just understood physics and mechanics intuitively. Um, at that time, um, my parents had both graduated from high school which was very unusual, and my mother would have gone on to college had her mother not had diabetes and been very ill at that time, and she wound up being the caretaker. And that kind of prevented her, uh, furthering her education.

00:19:38 But women—uh, being educated was very much the norm in the expectation of the family. My sister went to Smith, I went to Barnard, it was—no one ever said to me, “Oh, I think you should go to a teacher’s college.” But part of the assumption was that you would meet somebody who would then be, you know, relatively well-educated, well-referenced person, um, who would be your husband. But my father always said that women needed to be educated in

case something happened to their husbands. They needed to be able to support themselves. Which was again very unusual for the period I grew up in. When I talk to many of my friends and colleagues, their fathers were not forthcoming in terms of their being well-educated and, uh—so I feel very blessed in that regard.

And, uh, I tended to—the role models in my life, related to profession, however, were teachers. Uh, and I was not groomed to be a doctor, lawyer, or Indian chief. That was not part of the role models. And I think about it—even though Barnard had one of the best track records for professional development, and a lot of my close friends at Barnard became, um, doctors, lawyers, and Indian chiefs—I never was attracted in those directions. I really was oriented towards education and social services. And, I see that—

I graduated early and went to work for an organization that was part of the counter culture called Clearing House for Student Initiated Change in Higher Education—that was in Amherst, Mass., and under the direction of Dwight [W.] Allen, who was a big education reformer, and President of the University of Massachusetts. And we worked on all kinds of research methodologies that had to do with counter culture issues. Um—

[INTERRUPTION]

00:22:37 Q: Okay, so you were—the counter culture—so tell me more about the counter culture issues that this institute was—so this was right after Barnard? What years was this you were working there?

00:22:50 Weiner: Um, okay. Because of the disruptions of Barnard-Columbia when I was a student, I lost every spring semester essentially. Um, and so when it came—but I had taken extra courses. So by the time I hit February of '71, I could be graduated. I had enough credits. And I decided that I didn't want to lose another spring semester, so I would just graduate. And I had applied for this position, and got it, so moved to, um, western Massachusetts near the University of Massachusetts campus. And because of the nature, I think, of the whole counter culture engagement at Barnard, I was really oriented toward social change, and that was what this situation was.

I lived in a commune with, uh, men and women, uh—it was, uh, I don't know—I think back on it, and it's kind of amazing, actually. People slept with each other without, kind of, a sense of commitment or it was more of a family, but it was clearly not an incestuous situation. And we worked in a political domain of trying to create change. I remember, for one month, I lived on a women's commune, and we worked on issues related to welfare to work with women in the community. And I will never forget my first exposure to lesbianism. Uh, I walked in on two women in bed and was like, "Oh." [Laughs] It was very shocking and surprising, and my first exposure. And there were all kinds of issues like that that I knew emerged.

We worked with a commune in Washington, D.C. where we were planning the first—it was a May Day march of some kind, and I can remember [laughs]—we used to yell into the phone at J. Edgar Hoover, because we assumed we were being wire tapped. Um, so we used to tell him directly what we were doing. And the commune in D.C., they had big barrels with underwear. It

was all unisex, and you would just take your underwear from the barrel, and I thought that was really weird [laughs]. Uh, we worked on this, um—I don't remember who they were in D.C. None of it was violent political. It was all based on non-violent action.

And we were arrested, and I got arrested in D.C. in '71 standing on a street corner, actually. Um, I was trying to figure out—which I also find very interesting—that I was not committed to going out into the street and locking my arms with people and stopping traffic. I was standing on a street corner trying to make up my mind what I wanted to do and was arrested anyway. And I think that that radicalized me in a certain way, where I figured if I'm going to go out and protest, I should protest. Because I was going to get arrested anyway. And the experience of being—there was that there were so many of us that we were held in a football field—

00:27:17 Q: So go back for just one second and come back to that. What was this? This was a May Day thing—what were the issues? Do you remember what the issues were?

00:27:24 Weiner: It was about ending the war in Cambodia.

00:27:27 Q: Ending the war in Cambodia, and this was a protest in Washington?

00:27:30 Weiner: Yeah, and we were organizers of the march. And, uh—I don't remember very much more about it except that we were stationed in a Congressperson's office. Toby [John] Moffett. And I think he was a Congressperson from Connecticut who was very liberal, Democrat, and we were part of his campaign program, um, and his initiatives. So he was clearly

involved in the march. And I don't remember more about it. Except that, again, years later when I have done advocacy in D.C., I've recognized the roots of that kind of work. It didn't come out of the blue that I was doing that. Um, even though I didn't do much of anything politically for many years, this was kind of a training or an initiation that was latent for many years and definitely grew out of the Barnard-Columbia experience.

One of the things that I objected to strongly within the Columbia experience was when people burned the records of somebody in their file cabinet—they burned all of his scholarly material as part of some kind of protest. They invaded his office—I don't remember who the professor was. But I found that horrifying. It was, um, a person's life work. Why would anyone destroy that? And who was this professor anyways that he—? because the work that he was doing—I don't remember—but I don't think it had anything in particular to do with what we were protesting, but maybe it did. In any case, I just thought that was horrible. And I thought that the violence on campus was really atrocious to me.

The—I think that the—the thing that I can remember most visually was policeman on horseback chasing students down 116<sup>th</sup> street. We were looking out the window—I was in Brooks Hall—and I just couldn't believe that that was happening on campus. And the other thing that I remember quite vividly is that the Columbia radio station played Bach almost every day, every night—all I remember is Bach. And I have to admit that I hated Bach for many years thereafter. And it took me until I was living with a man in LA who adored music that I actually came to like Bach again and would listen to him.

00:30:51 Uh, the other thing that I remember is, um, students sitting on Low Library Plaza in some kind of protest. And I remember being very confused, uh, about what was going on, what the issues were, and why people were protesting. And I was also very, uh, excited, uh, found it meaningful that a number of the women who I was close to at the time were, uh, dating some of the key people on the *Spectator*, like Jerry Avorn, who were reporting on what was going on. And I recognized in myself that that is the nature of my protest. It's writing, it's reporting, it's a journalistic relationship, as opposed to being the person on the front lines, sitting on the steps of Low Plaza. And that has been, I would say probably consistently, true in my social justice. I'm more likely to be the person advocating for the SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] program than feeding people in a homeless shelter on a weekly basis. My choice has always been to write about and advocate politically on the social justice, rather than social service, end of that spectrum.

Anyways, back to western Massachusetts in the commune—

00:32:42 Q: And also hold on—so we segued for a moment—it's fine—from the Cambodian demonstration. And when I asked you details, you were about to talk about—you said you were all arrested and put in some sort of, kind of football field?

00:32:58 Weiner: Oh, yeah. And, uh, Reverend [Ralph D.] Abernathy [Sr.] was there. I remember him speaking. And we were all processed, and then, uh, two days later we were let go. But it was a very scary kind of experience that I've always carried with me in terms of the justice

system. There were—I can't remember—there were issues of where to go to the bathroom and, um, food and blankets, and a whole bunch—

00:33:41 Q: You were there for two days?

00:33:42 Weiner: I believe so. Um, and it was cold if I remember correctly. While it was May, it was cold at night. Again, there were issues with water. And there were people—I remember very vividly, there were people who were rankering and screaming at police and either throwing rocks or something, and they used tear gas—

00:34:15 Q: The police?

00:34:15 Weiner: Yeah. And there was no place to go. You were caught in the teargas, even if you were doing nothing. And again, it was another indication that you could be the victim of mob action and be carried off, um, as part of a protest for something that you weren't even protesting. And I've remembered that in relation to all of the collateral damage and civil unrest and military action. The whole notion of collateral damage has always been one that resonates with me as a supreme injustice. And, uh, I've always thought about the innocence of people who happen to have violent people in their families who are then incarcerated or have their homes destroyed, or are somehow subjected to terrible, um, police violence. Political prisoners—in the Soviet Union, in China, in Israel—wherever, have always—Iran—it's always been a, um, source of sorrow for me that those situations exist. Um, and—



[INTERRUPTION]

00:35:54 Q: I want to pick up later on the western Massachusetts experience because that sounds really rich. For a moment, I'd like to step back just a little bit and ask you about—before you get to Barnard—are there any things that stand out from your life growing up—experiences that, as you look back, felt like they were kind of transformative for you?

00:36:39 Weiner: Well, I think that my, uh, love for Judaic studies was, I don't know, channeled in some way. My parents were not observant Jews. They were more social justice Jews. My father was very spiritually-based and religious. My mother was very values-based. And they were Jewish in terms of family and community and identity, and very proud of that, but they were not—we didn't go to services. I don't remember my mother lighting Shabbat candles. It was not that kind of household.

I can remember my mother saying to me at one point that the one regret she had was that she never learned to read Hebrew. Girls were not allowed to do that. And she was jealous of my having that experience. Um, I went to an after school program that was accelerated—it was a five-day-a-week Hebrew school, which happened every day after school, Saturday and Sunday mornings. And that was my choice. My parents didn't force me into it. And I remember quite distinctly that one of my best friends in sixth grade was in a soap box derby accident, and he hit his head and was killed. And we were in services and praying that he would be okay, and it was at that moment that I lost all of my connection to the efficacy of prayer.

Um—and—as a rabbi, the aspect of prayer that’s always difficult for me is thinking that it will have some impact. And so being a shaliach tzibbur, which is the congregational role, a pulpit rabbi bringing people’s prayers to God, has never been a role that I’ve been totally comfortable with. What I have assumed is that it’s meaningful to other people, and so as the representative, I can bring that meaning to that performative aspect. I think that—it took me a long time when I was in my rabbinical training to realize that it was that experience when I was a kid that had provided the challenge for me in this area. And as I’ve matured into the rabbinic role, I had a much easier time, and actually enjoy doing pulpit work. I really trained to be an educator, a rabbi trainer, and a social justice advocate. That was the aspect of the rabbinic role that I really trained for. And, anyways, that was a very seminal experience, and it was so poignant, because we were actually in services praying for him, and that was the time that he died. And what I realize, again in recognition, is that perhaps what we’re praying for, or channeling, was the best outcome. And that was probably the best outcome for him since he had enormous brain damage. Um, but it did not in any way mitigate against my being Jewish, wanting to be part of the community.

My orientation to Jewish studies was always textual. I learned, um, Shakespearean sonnets from learning Hebrew sonnets. I learned world history from Jewish history. Um, I learned languages and language structure, and issues of logic and argumentation. Um, my doctoral dissertation was based on teaching people to ask questions, teaching sixth graders to ask questions about the texts they were reading. Rather than try to put questions into the text, which is what the research was saying was helpful, my question was, “Well, what if you’re reading materials that aren’t textbooks?” People have to learn how to ask questions themselves—and that’s a fundamental aspect of Jewish learning. It’s not knowing the answers, it’s knowing how to ask a question to

get an answer that is meaningful. And so you're taught from a very early age how to ask questions of the text, and then ask questions of yourself in relation to the text. And when I did this in my doctoral dissertation, I had, um, significant results in terms of comprehension with the sixth graders. If I pursued that particular line, that would have been a major educational achievement, but I went onto other things rather than research and reading comprehension. But the research has brought that out. The way that education materials have been created has born out that.

But in any case, I absolutely loved anything that had to do with Jewish education. Went to a Hebrew high school after public school every day from four until eight, and Sunday. And I have no idea how I did my homework, because I watched enormous amounts of television. Um, and—I did. That was what my life was. And I went to Hebrew-speaking camps in the summer. Did my counselor training at Camp Yavneh, which was associated with the Hebrew Teachers College, then, but Hebrew College now. And was part of the Hebrew high school program, which was called the Prozdor.

And all of that gave me more orientation to Judaism, which I am still passionate about. It's transdenominational, it's pluralistic, it's deeply questioning, and it's, um, loving all aspects—culture, literature, music, dance, the language—it's just part of my world view. And the ethical domain, or the ethics of Jewish study and tradition is basically how I live my life. And it's focused on mindfulness and working on your internal value system, and your—how you transform yourself through your examination of your values, and how you exercise them. It's part of what you call the Mussar tradition. Now, a lot of that went into latency as I moved

through my life, and came back to focus, um, when I was, uh, doing the work that I was doing at McGraw-Hill and the educational game industry, um, which is a whole leap forward, but—um—

And I went to Europe after I graduated from Barnard, and was, you know, it was your typical—in those days—it was so inexpensive to get a plane ticket and to wander through Europe. And I wound up in Israel as my last stop.

00:46:03 Q: And what year was this?

00:46:07 Weiner: Seventy-one. The experience in western Massachusetts gave me enough money to go to Europe over the summer. And then, um, I wound up in Jerusalem as the last stop and decided that I had nothing to go home for because I had been graduated from school and I wasn't in a graduate program, so I might as well stay in Israel. So, I spent a year basically, um, in Israel. And again the experience was pretty seminal.

I went to—I enrolled in the Hebrew University in sociology and education. And all the professors and the people in the library would say, “What do you go to school for? Why don't you meet a nice Jewish boy and just get married?” And I just went, “I'm not doing this. I'm not staying in Israel if this is what's expected.” And I applied to graduate school and eventually went back to the states. But in the—I worked in social services in Israel, which I find amazing. And in January it kept snowing, and I had no winter clothes. And it was—a friend of mine had lent me her warm winter jacket, which I left on a seat in a movie theater going to the bathroom, and when I came back, it was gone. And none of the people I was with noticed. So I was without a

jacket and it was freezing, and there was somebody passing through our apartment who was going to Africa. So I wound up going to Africa for two months.

00:48:09 Q: What parts of Africa? What countries?

00:48:10 Weiner: Eastern Africa, um, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and for twenty seconds, Uganda. I was there during when Idi Amin came in. I was on a boat going in. All the Israelis were there and other expats of various sorts were leaving, so I never—I never got in. Um, and that was an extraordinary life-changing event, going to Africa.

00:48:44 Q: Say more about that.

00:48:45 Weiner: It was everything that I had ever learned as a history major about living in the Middle Ages. Um, I can remember—first of all, I was traveling mostly alone. I had gone there with a man from Holland, and um—we had gone through Ethiopia together, but we had split in, um—I'm forgetting the capital of Ethiopia—Addis Ababa. And I went down to Kenya, and he—I actually don't know what he did. But we stayed in the home—we visited with and then stayed in the home of a family of an Ethiopian who he had met in Holland, who he had traveled to Jerusalem with. So we stayed with his cousin in Asmara. And then, um—we—I went to a village in Ethiopia where the Ethiopian Jews, who were called Falashim [Falash Mura] at that time, and that was extraordinary. It was like jumping back into, clearly, into the Middle Ages for me. The roads were dirt roads. There was a bus, and all the luggage went on top of the bus, along with the animals. And, um, when you needed to go to the bathroom and pee, you basically stopped the

bus—the men on one side of the bus, the women on the other. And I had problems because I was wearing jeans and women would all spread their skirts out, so that was a little problematic. They kind of circled me. Um, and the way that you got the bus was that you waited at the village inn or the restaurant, and you waited until the bus showed up. And everyone knew that you were going to take the bus, so if you were off somewhere, they would come get you and wait for you.

And people spoke English pretty much. I remember communicating with people in English. And the poverty was unbelievable. But there was a drought, and what the kids were doing was they were taking mud and sucking on that, and I thought that was extraordinary—and of course it was. As a foreigner, I could buy water. But the other thing that also was shocking was that the kids couldn't go to school unless they had a pen and paper. They had to supply their own pen and paper. And so I was giving out pens. I would buy pens and give out pens to children. And I remember that forever --- as what it meant to go to school, what it meant to have water—clean water. What it meant—I had real trouble eating, because everything in the poor areas of Ethiopia, they eat injera and wat. Injera is this very spongy sour bread, and the wat is basically, I don't know, tomato something with heavy, heavy spice. And I just couldn't tolerate either food.

00:52:30 And they had been taken over once in their history by the Italians during World War II, so every now and then, you could get spaghetti and a roll. And basically, that was what I lived on. And when we were in Addis Ababa, in the homes of this family, they were very wealthy, and so we had wonderful food. But it was all cooked in outdoor, like, coal stoves, and by women who were squatting and were cooking. And that was how people cooked their food. And there was no electricity, no running water that I remember. And fantastic tasting food when you had

food. But the vast majority of people didn't have food. And we went to one of the ancient—I can't remember the name Axum—an ancient city that had all of the Coptic Church remnants that were heavenly gold. And I kept thinking, “Why are they storing gold? Why aren't they feeding people?” It was a question that I kept having as I traveled throughout Ethiopia.

The other thing that I wound up doing was traveling on my own to a city called Harar, which was basically an Indian city. It was on the east coast, and I was greeted, getting off the bus, by some people who waited at the bus and wanted to be tour guides. So I paid someone something and he was my tour guide. So I stayed at this hotel and it had no lock and it was like, “What am I doing here?” I can remember going to the Hyena Man in the evening who had this big fire, and he threw bones that would tell your future. And, um, it was like a shamanistic practice. And I had a similar experience in Israel. We were camping out near the Sea of Galilee and an Arab soothsayer came and he gave us fish from the Galilee. We ate this incredible fish, and then he used the bones in some way divine. And I thought, “This is not American.”

It was—and I was twenty-one, you know, basically, and experienced the developing world in a way that really advised the rest of my experience. When I was with this family in Addis, the father was the head of something with Ethiopian airlines, and so it was a relatively beautiful setting. And we went to, um, you know the museum, and people had beautiful clothes. And I can remember going by Haile Selassie's palace, and there were the two Lions of Judah that were there. And I bought a tapestry, which I still have, of the Lion of Judah. I'm a Leo. I remember—when Haile Salassie died, uh, years later—that experience, that it was a monarchy, it was nontraditional, and yet there were these absolutely beautiful, wonderful people.

And then my experience in Kenya was really wild. Oh, the other thing was that it was a time when the Eritrean rebellion was going on, and we were in Eretria, what is now Eretria, and it was very dangerous. I remember being on the bus and thinking, “What are we doing here?” There was a point when I went on a journey by myself on the train. I went to the Blue Nile Falls, and it’s one of the most spectacular natural things that I remember, but you got off the bus and you were met by a park ranger, and he had a monkey on his shoulder. And you walked to the falls. And that’s all there was. There weren’t any guard rails, there weren’t any Starbucks. You know, it was—you were out there in the middle of nowhere with this guard and a monkey looking at this incredible natural wonder.

And it’s however many years later—forty years later—and I’m going, “It’s so rare to find places like that.” That type of empty wilderness. Uh—and I became, again, moving forward, I was an advocate for Sudan, for the women in Sudan. I helped create a movement to get them cookers, so they didn’t have to go out and collect firewood, because they would be raped, and if the husbands went out they would be killed. And the children captured. So one of the methodologies for helping with the insurgency there was to provide these solar cookers so people didn’t have to go out of the camp. And that was very much advised, but this experience of being in Ethiopia and being with refugees and being with people who were in danger. And so, you look at what are the seminal experiences in your life—

00:59:11 Kenya was glorious. Kenya was just, again—and I have no idea how I was doing this. You know, I was traveling, I had hair down to my knees in braids, I was carrying a backpack.



And in the middle of Kenya, somehow, I got in to the most exclusive country club and took a shower and sat out in front of a pool and was served drinks and food that I never had to pay for [laughs]. I had no idea how that happened. And, uh—I was hitchhiking and I wore a ring that I turned around. And when people asked me what I was doing, I said that I was pregnant, and that I was married to a Peace Corps volunteer, and that I was going to the doctor. And that kept me safe because pregnant women were taboo. You couldn't harm them in any way. And, also identifying myself in the Peace Corps framework, nobody was going to harm me because they knew there would be someone looking for me. So that was my cloak of safety.

And, uh, a friend of mine—an old friend of mine from high school had worked in—not the Peace Corps—but some kind of organization in Kenya, near Mount Kenya—and, uh—I went to visit the school and that was an extraordinary experience also. Part of being in Ethiopia—I was in Africa for—I may have been in Ethiopia for—it was a long time. It was like, three or four weeks, but—people did not see many white people where I was going, and I began to think of myself as black. I had forgotten myself as white at one point. And then I was at the school in Kenya, and the girls were all surrounding me, and they kept pointing to my face, and they kept asking me if I had a skin disease. And I thought, “Why would you think I have a skin disease?” And they said, “Because you have all these spots.” They had never seen freckles. So that was really an eye-opener in terms of who we think we are, and what our experience is in the world in terms of race and skin and how we're perceived.

The other thing I remember from that experience was the food people ate was maize. It's a form of corn and it has such a tough outer shell that I basically couldn't eat it. And that was all the

food that they had ever had. And I'm thinking to myself, "They're in Kenya. It's lush with tropical fruits, and these kids have never had the experience of it." And when I was in Nairobi, you would walk around, and on street corners, what they would do is they would take a pineapple and with a machete, they'd cut the four sides off and you'd eat it off the stock. And it was the most extraordinary pineapple that I'd ever had. And recently I was in Hawaii, and they do the same thing there in the outer islands. It's a wonderful, wonderful experience having fresh pineapple. And that was, again—not realizing what fruit actually tastes like. Understanding what it means to eat in season and what's local. But Kenya was just amazing. I went to the Ngorongoro Crater, which is in Tanzania. I was traveling with this Canadian guy, and we camped out—again, I have no recollection of how we got there—we were in a Maasai *boma*.

01:03:51 Q: What's a *boma*?

01:03:52 Weiner: It's like a hut in a village. And we were camping out on the hillside, and the chief of this tribe, this Maasai tribe, wanted to trade wives with this guy. And luckily that never happened, but I realized how vulnerable we were in the middle of nowhere in a tent. But we learned the story of the Maasai. And the reason that we learned about it was because of the people there spoke English, and they had just been videoed by a documentary team from *National Geographic*. So this guy had either learned English or knew English, and he was our guide and told us all about Maasai life. Um, and there were many things that the Maasai people do that are very Jewish. They don't mix meat and milk, and they have certain customs that, um, have a Jewish aspect to them of ritual.

01:04:54 Q: Do you remember what some of those are?

01:04:55 Weiner: No. Not at the moment. Um—well they circumcise. And—that’s Jewish—and the milk and meat are—but there is this story in Exodus of a group of Jews who go south instead of north, and that always intrigued me, that maybe the Maasai were part of that group that went south and retained certain rituals or traditions. So, anyway, that was interesting. Um—I just—the necklaces and the clothing and the relationship to cattle and the way they created their huts and—just life was so phenomenal. “Wow. Look, these people live this way, and it’s 1971, ‘72. Where are we, as Westerners?”

It was, again, a real eye-opener. And going from Nairobi to Tanzania to this tribal area, and it reminds me now of all the problems that are going on now in Kenya that I can relate to. Um—their whole political system and the intertribal warfare that goes on. There’s a leading tribe, the Kikuyu. You just—we have no real understanding of how that operates, but having had the experience of being there, I have some sense of it. The other thing—well, being in the Ngorogoro Crater is astounding. It’s an animal preserve, and again, I have no idea how we got there, but we set up a tent in the middle of this place, and we woke up surrounded by lions and zebras—zebras and elephants, sorry—and we couldn’t get out of our tent. And, we got—a park ranger came by, got us out—fined us like \$100. It was exorbitant. And this guy that I’d been traveling with, he was going off to I don’t know where, and I got picked up by a white hunter, who had just been on safari with, um, the prince of England, the what’s-his-name—

01:07:55 Q: Prince Charles?

01:07:56 Weiner: Prince Charles, yes. Prince Charles had just gone home. The back of his Range Rover had all of the kill. And so I travelled with this guy back to Nairobi, which was an extraordinary experience in itself, of who are the white hunters, and who is going out on safari. And he took me through the crater and he showed me the lions and how you stalked an animal—it was quite amazing.

And then, uh, I took a train to Lamu, which is another—it's an island off the coast, and it's where a friend of mine, Ellen Gesmer, had stayed. She was the one in school near Mount Kenya. And she had lived for a while in Lamu. Well, on the train, it was a night train, and I was with Indian women, and in the morning, they woke up and they had to dress themselves in their saris. And it was amazing how they wrapped themselves and how they got everything pinned—it was remarkable. And how they did their hair. Again, it was a complete eye-opener of cultural beauty.

And then I wound up—there was some Peace Corps person whose home we stayed in. I remember the mosquito netting. Um, but this was another experience where we were on the beach in Mombasa, and I think I was alone, and as a white woman, there were these parading black kids—teenagers—who were male prostitutes, who were basically providing services, apparently as they put it to German women who are on the beach. And so they wanted to know if I wanted to go to bed with them, and it was just kind of, “No, thank you.” But, you could just go to like, uh—a resort beach and sit down and be waited on. And that was part of my experience there. And then I took a boat to Lamu, and Lamu only had boat service two or three times a week. So you'd take the boat out. And it's a particular kind of primitive boat with Muslims who

were wrapped in skirt-like fabric. And they drop you. And somehow I wound up in the home of a reporter who was from England who is now retired and living in Lamu. And he had a ten-room house and dozens of servants, and there were a whole bunch of Americans and British people staying with him. And again I remember wandering off to one of the most gorgeous beaches, and there was a remote country club-like hotel. A five-star hotel that was on this beach. And I remember swimming. I did a lot of skinny dipping actually because there was nobody on these beaches anywhere. And God knows they could have been infested by sharks and snakes. I [laughs] have no idea.

01:12:01 But I remember there was always afternoon tea. And always cocktails in the evening. And you could just kind of partake, and there was food—there was always hors d' oeuvres. And I think we stayed on Lamu for a week, because you had to wait for the boat to come back.

And then I went back to Israel because I had to, um, it was Passover. Uh, so I was in Africa for about two, two and a half months. And I was going back. I was seeing someone in Israel, and his two sisters came, um—his two sisters came to visit with him, and we went to a kibbutz. And what I realized later was that it was on the West Bank—again, it was 1971. So it's after the '67 war and before the '73 war, and when I was in Israel, before I left for Africa, I worked as a secretary in the BBYO office—the B'nai Brith Youth Office. And while I was part of that experience, I kept being introduced to Israeli dignitaries. And I was staying in an apartment that was in a very expensive part of Jerusalem then, an area called Rehavia. It was around the corner from the Prime Minister, who was Golda Meir. I used to go out for walks, and she would be walking at the same time, and you could walk with Golda Meir around the neighborhood. And

she would talk to you, and you could talk to her. And, I—clearly, I don't think that happens anymore, but it was that kind of a time.

01:14:00 Q: So, do you remember—?

[INTERRUPTION]

01:14:17 Weiner: So we're back in Israel, and um, just—

01:14:20 Q: You're walking with Golda Meir.

01:14:22 Weiner: Golda Meir was not a seminal experience. I kind of took it for granted. As a teenager, when I was in the Hebrew High School, David Ben-Gurion visited, and he was very warm. I remember, you know, having a conversation with him, as well. And he is very short. I'm short, clearly. So, it was like, I don't know—it was not this overwhelming experience. But in the BBYO office where I worked, Ruth Dayan was very good friends with the woman I reported to, and she introduced me to Moshe Dayan. And Moshe Dayan was really just amazing. He was a swaggering male, um, full of life force and energy, and extremely dynamic. That's all I can remember—and he was really a womanizer. He was all over the place. And they had just gotten divorced.

01:15:43 Q: Who was they?

01:15:44 Weiner: Uh, Ruth and Moshe. Ruth Dayan and Moshe Dayan. The woman who I reported to—I don't remember her name. She was very wacky; she was a wild spirit and a little irrational. It was hard working for her. And we had another person working in the office who was an Argentinian Jew. And she had the most extraordinary red hair that I think I've ever seen. She was a wonderful person, and she was getting married in an Orthodox framework and she was cutting her hair off to wear a wig, which has never ever, uh—I've never understood at all. You're supposed to be beautiful for your own husband and not for the rest of the world. It's a form of modesty, and I could never understand how you would make yourself bald for your own husband and then have this luxurious wig for the rest of the world. And so my confusion about that started then, because it still persists today. I do not understand this practice. And, uh, I went to her wedding, which was a wild and wooly affair of Hasidic Jews jumping around and women on one side and men on the other side, and it was straight out of some European tradition, Hasidic tradition, which still exists today. It was magical. And there was a huge tension in Israel at that time between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic versions of Judaism.

01:17:34 Q: So in case people don't know, tell me more about the two.

01:17:36 Weiner: Ashkenazic is European, and it's what the majority of the Jews in the world practice. The distinctions have to do with food, have to do with the way you read the Torah, the music, some of the rituals—not all of which I'm familiar with—a much more unified practice. There's no Reform, Conservative, Orthodox. It's all Modern Orthodox in some way. Sephardic Jews basically come from Spain, and—Sephardic Judaism is the one frame. It's not Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox. It's all Modern Orthodox of some sort. It's traditional.

01:18:30 Q: Okay, they come from Spain. And what else?

01:18:34 Weiner: Spain, Portugal—and they're also represented in Iran, Iraq, Egypt—but they're designated as Mizrahi, which means east, and they have certain customs. And they came from Arabic cultures. The Sephardic Jews come from a Spanish culture, and their language is Ladino, which is a combination of Hebrew and Spanish. Just like Yiddish is the language of the Ashkenazic Jew, which is a combination of German and Hebrew. Um, so you have all those languages floating around, and you also—in, uh, Israel the majority of people who came, both as original settlers before the Holocaust, and then the remnants from Europe, who came after the Holocaust, they're Ashkenazic. The Mizrahi Jews that came in as refugees from Iran and Iraq, which happened because of persecutions there, and Morocco and Yemen, all of them came in at this time. And they were Sephardic Jews, and there was a clash between Ashkenazic and Sephardic culture. And there was a big political clash as well.

01:20:18 Q: And what years are we talking about?

01:20:19 Weiner: This is '71, '72. And it was very palpable. The Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in general were less wealthy, less educated, more traditional, tribal, um—coming from communities similar to some of my experiences in Africa. Many of the refugees coming in didn't know how to use plumbing and were not familiar with electricity. They were coming from underdeveloped countries. And the Ashkenazic Jews were for the most part, the intelligencia, often, of Germany and Poland and Russia, and they came with those languages—French and



English and American. There was a lot of American immigration at that point because it was a very peaceful time.

After the '67 war, they thought there would be no more wars. They were going to come to peace with the Palestinian community. They were actually going to establish borders and have a Palestinian state next to an Israeli state. And it was very clear that that was going to happen, and that that's what the Labor Government was advocating for. Now, historically, looking back, they weren't so advocating for, because there was always a nationalistic bent in the politics. But I think that had [Yitzhak] Rabin stayed in office, and not been assassinated, that it would have happened. But again, history has its hysteria. But at this time, life was good. Um, people were prospering, but there were these underlying currents.

One of these things that I got involved with was the women's movement in Israel, with a lot of Americans merging with Israeli women. And I remember meeting late at night, and buses had stopped running, and having to walk home from these meetings. And we put a number of really—I believe we put Shulamit Aloni, who was a very important political figure in Israel who died recently—I think we put her in office. And the women who were part of this group, one of them is major—Laura Geller is now a major rabbi in Los Angeles. She was one of the first women rabbis from Hebrew Union College. There were a couple of women who are now in the entertainment industry and are big. It was an interesting time.

The man who I wound up, um, being—his intern, his rabbinic intern in Los Angeles was the best friend of a jazz musician who I had grown up with who went to Camp Yavneh, Jef Labes—he

was a three-time Grammy Award winner. He played the piano with Van Morrison and Bonnie Raitt. And he was dating this woman who ended up being a major producer in Hollywood. But Steve, uh, Rabbi Steven Carr-Reuben ended up being my mentor and rabbinic supervisor when I went to my rabbinic school. And, of course, nobody remembers anything, but I was almost sure that I dated him, because I knew Jef, and he was Jef's best friend and he played the drums, Jef played the piano. Anyways, they started the first jazz club in Jerusalem.

And it was also a time when the food was awful in Israel. Israeli food was just the pits. As an American, if you wanted to eat and you weren't Kosher, you would go to the Arab sector because their food was absolutely wonderful. And I had several seminal experiences, um, with the Muslim-Arab community. One was buying a dress in the Shuk, the market in Jerusalem in the Old City, which the Israelis never went to—to the Arab Shuk. Only the Americans or the Arabs or visitors would go. And my boyfriend and I went in, and this guy kept saying, "Buy this dress, buy this dress." And it didn't fit. And he said he'd make it fit, and it still didn't fit. And I said, "I can't buy it." And his son came in after me with a knife. And all of the elders from all the surrounding stalls held the son back and they said, "Run. Get out of the Shuk." Um, so me and my boyfriend ran. And when I told the story, the Israelis said, "Well, what were you doing in the Shuk in the first place?"

Not, you know, condemning the Arabs, but more, "stay on your side, they stay on their side, everybody will be happy." The other thing that happened was that when I went back to—I'll tell you another Jerusalem story because it's hysterical to me. We were three girls, three women, who rented an apartment with this guy. And the guy—his name was Howie, and he thought that

he was going to make out in the black market. He was doing money exchanges. And so he changed some money, okay. He thought he was rolling in dough. Got home, and realized that every third dollar had been taken [laughs]. They had done a slight of hand on him, and he wound up like \$100 short.

01:26:55 Q: Which at that time was a lot of money.

01:26:57 Weiner: So there were all kinds of experiences like that that people had. And, for example, I never smoked in Israel—hashish was really big—because I didn't want to get arrested. I had no interest in defying the law in any way. But there were people that we knew that got arrested because there was a big crackdown. But hashish was everywhere. Um, and one of the things that I really used to love was walking through the Arab quarter and seeing men sitting smoking the hookah and playing *shesh besh*, backgammon, and drinking Turkish coffee. And I developed a love for Arak, which is an ouzo, actually passing though Greece.

01:27:55 Q: It's a licorice-based.

01:27:56 Weiner: It's a licorice liqueur.

01:27:58 Q: I'd forgotten Arak was the name of—

01:28:00 Weiner: Very similar in consistency in taste. But when I came back for Passover, my boyfriend's family was there, his two sisters, and we went to this kibbutz. Well, it was not really

a kibbutz. What it was was the beginning of the West Bank settlements. And I worked in the kitchen, which was one of the worst experiences of my life. Plucking chickens for Passover. And I could understand why my mother really loved packaged chicken, because clearly when she was growing up she was plucking chickens as well. She also used to love canned vegetables, which I could never understand. The first time I had fresh broccoli was in the cafeteria at Barnard [laughs]. I was one of the few people who loved the cafeteria at Barnard, because it had fresh vegetables, which were unheard of in my household. We had iceberg lettuce and all the other fixings, but we had great fruit. We had wonderful fruit.

Anyway, back to Israel, we're at this kibbutz, and I'm discovering I'm not a kibbutznik on any level. I don't like communal whatever this is—very different from communal in Washington, D.C., or western Massachusetts. And it's being run by these obnoxious guys from Brooklyn. And there was an incident where a kid was beaten up in the garden for stealing tomatoes. And he had explained that these were the tomatoes that his family had planted there—he was a Muslim-Arab kid—and was just taking what was his. And these guys from Brooklyn beat him to a pulp. And the Israeli police came in and prosecuted these two Brooklyn guys and told the Palestinian kid to go back and just take care of himself. It was my seminal experience of why the West Bank settlements didn't work, and why we didn't belong there.

01:30:34 I can remember saying to the two guys from Brooklyn, “Why don't you go back to Brooklyn? You have a home there. These kids have a home here. This is their home.” And, um, you know, to this day, I have that sensation in working on Israeli-Palestinian issues, even though I think the Palestinian government destroyed whatever trust value there was, and whatever ability

to come to peace easily. And of course the—after the Yom Kippur War, there was no trust whatsoever, and there was no belief that the Arab population wanted to have peace. And a lot of propaganda on both sides. But I can remember what it meant to people to have a united Jerusalem. And how horrible it had been with what the Palestinians had done in relation to holy sites, the Jewish holy sites, and the desecration of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. And, um, Rachel's Tomb—a whole bunch of historical, uh, religious sites.

And, there was something that was both profound and magical about my year in Israel. One, you could stand at the top of Mount Scopus and see the Judean Hills, all the way down to Bethlehem and beyond. And you really had a profound sense of ancient history. You could also walk through the Jerusalem stone and the old city and just have a sense of the world as it might have been. And then you had Tel Aviv and West Jerusalem, and it was like, Oh my God, look at these two worlds in conjunction to one another in one place. One of our hilarious experiences was going—a friend of mine and I were going down to Eilat, and the bus got stuck in Hebron in a snowstorm. And you didn't want to be stuck in Hebron in a snowstorm, because Hebron was really an occupied Palestinian city. It was their territory. And there was this guy who came by on donkey carrying milk with an umbrella as the snow was falling. And the bus drivers were just arrogant, um—with no love towards women. It was just a very segregated group of people. Anyways, the two women—three of us. One from Sweden and both of us were from Boston—kept telling this bus driver we would get out of the rut if he would put a blanket or towel under the tires. And he would create traction and be able to move. He would not listen to us at all, and would not allow us to do anything. So we sat there for twelve hours until the snow melted. We were just fuming, as women, and none of the men in the bus would take our side. And we were

the only foreigners, I think, in the bus. In any case, we wound up getting to Eilat, which was really something.

Oh, getting to Ethiopia I had gone with Thon de Lange this Dutch guy, down to Eilat. We hitched this fishing boat, but we had to wait for the boats. And we hung out in a tin shack of some sort, and it was very hot. So we used to play chess and checkers in the airport, which was like the size of this apartment. Um, and waiting for the boats. And we took a fishing boat down—we hitched on a fishing boat, down to—boy I forget the name of the port town in Ethiopia [Massawa]. But port towns along any coast, I've discovered in my life, are these really raunchy places with sailors looking for women with a lot of drink and a lot of gambling. And they're kind of remarkable because they're the same almost everywhere. I mean you could just juxtapose one to the other. And it always amazed me when I saw the movie *Casablanca*. They're all like that—black markets and women and booze. And again, it kind of infused my understanding of places.

And recently, when I went to Ghana on a rabbinial mission with the American Jewish World Service, and we were in the capital city there [Accra] on the way going home, it was the same kind of area. People barking at you to go buy things, and trying to take the women and—it was all about making sure you're with a guy and in pairs or triplets, and don't talk to anyone, which was not true in the rest of Ghana. It was only in this particular area. So, anyways, my experiences really have, um, formed a lot of my deeper understanding about developing countries, non-western countries.

And, uh, as I look at it now, my whole orientation to the Israeli-Palestinian situation was forged At that time. And I've always been a supporter of a thing called Peace Now, or *Shalom Achshav*. And there's a peace village in between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem called Neve Shalom, Wahat al-Salam, which is a joint Arab-Israeli village. And I've been a supporter of the Waldorf School trainings up in the Galilee, which has a residential community for Israeli and Arab teenagers. And I've always been aware of both narratives, and the challenge of the Israeli narrative for the Palestinians, and the Palestinian narrative for the Israelis.

01:38:03 I've been back to Israel twice. Originally I was there in '71, '72. I went back in '93, and I was just recently there in 2015. So it's a twenty-year period basically. Um, and the growth is extraordinary, and the technological accomplishments in all areas of Israeli life is remarkable. The situation in terms of the West Bank and the geography is also remarkable. But when I was saying that you could stand at the top of Mount Scopus and see all the way to Bethlehem, now you see condominiums. It's all built up. And the life force there is just unbelievable. And many, many people here have this sense that the Palestinian community is a mess. And it is in a certain sense. So is the Israeli community. But there are businesses and people who are working on peace. It's just—it's a remarkable mixture of—it's a mashup of everything going on in the world. Between the Russian immigrants, the French immigrants, Latin American immigrants, the immigrants from South African and Yemen—it's just—and the issues with the Ethiopian Jews and the refugees from Sudan coming in. I mean, it's just a potpourri of everything.

But when I was back at Barnard, one of the things that was interesting looking back in that period, it was like my non-Jewish period. It was like I had done all this Jewish stuff, and I had a

choice when I went to Barnard takeoff taking—there was a joint program with the Jewish Theological Seminary, which I chose not to do. I wanted to, uh, have a vacation from Judaism. Um, but I had this remarkable—I used to date guys from the seminary because there were all these joint programs—social programs. And I’ll never forget—one of the most horrible things I’ve ever done in my life, but I didn’t know it at the time, was that I seduced this guy to sleep with me in front of his Talmuds. He’s like, “You can’t have sex in front of your sacred texts.” And I was like, “Yes, you can!” I was very irreverent. And then he wanted to marry me. It was like—and I was just, please. And I keep thinking that I must know this guy now as a rabbi. He’s been a rabbi for a gazillion, million years—who was he? What is his name? I need to apologize to him [laughs].

You know, I was very irreverent in so many different ways and experiences. Not mean, but just, you know. It was defiance to authority. That was where it was coming from. Like, my childhood friends, Amy Jacobson, grew up in an observant home, and she told me that if you cut paper with a scissors on Shabbat, God would strike you dead with lightning or something. And I can remember sitting there, bringing a scissors with a piece of paper and cutting it just to show her that God was not going to strike her dead with lightning, or me. And she went on to marry the head of the Reform movement, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, which I think was very interesting, that that was her journey—and mine was to become a rabbi, and be irreverent.

01:42:40 So, uh, anyways—Barnard was very instrumental in, um, broadening me. I was an American Studies major. I basically majored in dance, ballet, music, literature—I did everything you could do in the city. And I can remember being really ticked off because of the curfews. We



had to be back by ten thirty, and the ballet and the opera were not out by ten thirty. So I used to have to sneak in when I came back. And I never signed out, which recognizing again, in loco parentis, that they were responsible for me, I was really defiant. But they had these tickets for free or student that you could just pick up, and I just went everywhere, and did everything. I remember taking history of American dance, and history of theater, and history of film—took classes with Andrew Sarris, who was a famous critic. I took literature with Edward Said, which was my orientation to Islamic—the Islamic world, the British world—he was a professor, a professor of British literature.

And, um, I also became—had a very solid grounding in historiography. Lee Benson—was that his name? This is professor I remember, but he must have been a scholar in residence, because he no longer taught at Columbia. I can't remember the professor at Columbia who was a major influence in my life in understanding how to do primary research of historical documents. We had a whole project when we went to the New York Historical Society, and we were looking up the relationship between wealth and religion in colonial America, and we would go through all the old tax dockets and determine what religion people were and their relationship to wealth. That was just phenomenal to me in terms of understanding how you do primary research.

Catharine [R.] Stimpson was one of my literature people in my freshman year. I hated the required literature course where the professor—I don't remember her name—she made us do things like understanding the first paragraph of Emma in relation to the rest of the book, which I just thought was so stupid. It's like, Who cares? But Catharine Stimpson taught a class called Rebels & Revolutionaries, and the first thing we read was the first chapter of Genesis, where she

was looking at Adam as the first rebel. And that like opened my understanding of biblical literature, and the Bible as literature, and I will be forever grateful. She was one of my—I loved her. She was irreverent.

And, Kate [Katherine M.] Millett ran the Alternative College. And at that point—I was very lucky because I was designated in terms of leadership roles throughout my Barnard career, and I wound up on the faculty—after all the mish-mosh with Linda LeClair, and going through whatever we went through. I wound up being a student representative to the faculty, and administration. There was a policy-making committee. And [laughs] I'll never forget sitting there where the head resident was sitting there talking about this sweet smell that was coming from peoples' rooms. And I said, "It's marijuana." What planet are you from? You're the head of residents? I can remember the woman who was the gynecologist, the doctor, was just the pits. She was from another universe as well. And, you know, there were the great—but Kate Millett ran this Alternative College.

01:47:34 Q: And this was after—?

01:47:40 Weiner: This was '71? It was after, it was after '68—

01:47:42 Q: It was after the '68 strike.

01:47:43 Weiner: And the College was opening up. We got rid of curfews. We could have men in the dorms. There was a whole social revolution, um. We could live off campus. And, I think—

I was much more impacted by that than the Columbia political stuff. The crisis at Columbia stuff. That, to me, was a political opening up, looking at authority and truth, values and reporting, and all kinds of stuff like that. But personally, it didn't impact me in the way that the women's stuff did, and the opening of the campus, and tradition, and the letting go of in loco parentis, and women being much more powerful and authoritative.

And I can remember years later when the question came up about whether to merge with Columbia, that one of the big issues was that women at Barnard were going to lose their chairperson roles and get subsumed, and we voted against it. And I think that was the absolute correct decision.

01:49:14 Q: I do too. So I'd like to, for a minute, just to take a segue back for just a little bit. Tell me what you remember about—starting in the fall of 1967. And if you were to say—how would you describe yourself? You stepped in the gates and then what that fall was like, and what you remember about before the strike happened.

01:49:45 Weiner: Let me take you back a little bit to high school. In high school, I had a leadership role in a lot of capacities. One of them had to do with social justice issues and leadership. I was on this national student council stuff, and did debates. And I was a bulkhead of left political kind of leanings. I was an American studies person in high school. American history, European too—where they called me the—I don't know. Like, the bulwark of labor against management. So there was that kind of understanding on my part that many of my friends had been in Newton South, which is where I went to high school, were nouveau riche,

management, business people, wealthy. And I didn't come from that kind of background. And that was more represented in my Hebrew High School, where people in my class were from all over the Boston area, and from poorer sections, and most of their parents had worked their way up because we were from immigrant backgrounds.

When I came in from Barnard, I brought that with me, and one of my experiences was that about six of the women who were upper classmen were people that I had known from high school, from my Hebrew High School. And they kind of welcomed me so that I felt as I were embraced by the campus. Um, my mother, God bless her, had provided me with a trousseau of clothes that was ridiculous when I think back on it. I had this shocking pink jumpsuit thing with a gold belt and it was like—God only knows what happened to it—with pink stockings. And I can remember, there was something that happened in the fall, and there were all these guys outside the window.

01:52:23 Q: The panty raid?

01:52:24 Weiner: Yes! And I remember releasing my pink stockings. And God bless—there was a guy who, somehow we got connected through this pink stocking. And I said I wouldn't go out with him unless he got all As. And apparently he got all As, and sometime in January, he called me and said, "Now will you go out with me?" And I went, "Sorry, I'm already going out with someone else." That was another one of the, I wish I knew who he was. I would apologize—terrible thing to do. It was outrageous, you know.

But I really loved something about that campus, um. I loved the layout, you know. I loved having a suite in Brooks. Um, I never saw my roommate. She was this, uh studyholic. She was always studying. And I barely saw her, but I had arrived with all of these clothes. And I think everybody thought that I was from some wealthy background or something. My mother wanted me to fit in, and of course all I wore was jeans—that's all anybody wore. But I can remember them and I remember there was a woman down the hall from me, her name was Gail.

Unfortunately, she's one of our people who died. And, um, she had some therapeutic issues, but I loved her. She was brilliant and wonderful. And she and I kind of teamed up—Gayle Riordan was her last name. And I used to go to her room and we used to read poetry or do something like that.

And, uh, I loved having a cafeteria that you could just go to and sit and eat with anyone. And I remember thinking that the Black kids were impossible because they were so noisy in the cafeteria and they never hung out with us. They were, like, separate. I couldn't understand why they were so separate. And the Chinese kids also hung out with each other also, the Asian kids. Uh, and then the Jewish kids all hung out with each other. Somehow, I got connected in with a whole bunch of commuters who came from Brooklyn, mostly Brooklyn. And they used to sleep on my floor on the weekends. And it's ironic because now one of them is in the Miami area and we see each other. Um, but she's never kind of welcomed me into her world, which I always find interesting because she slept on my floor, and we were very good friends, as I was with this whole cohort of people. And one of the things that's been an ironic twist to me is that many of the people that I was friendly with in the Barnard world have become wonderfully successful, marvelous contributors and people. They married and stay married, or if they got divorced and

they got married—they've led traditionally conventional lives. They've become professors, they've become social workers, and they've made contributions in their own way. So different from the way that I lived my life. And it was like how were we so closely connected then, and then how did I become me? And I still wonder about that. It's the same thing with assuming the guy I had dated was going to move to Long Island. Because that's their lives. They moved to Long Island and have two point five kids.

Um, the other thing that happened is that I—there were certain courses I took that were stupid. They were less than what I had done in high school—I can remember French in particular. My French professor was the uncle of someone I had dated in high school, and we were reading excerpts from books that I had read in their entirety in French. And so French, for me, was a waste of time. And they made me take the class because I think I got a B+ on the incoming whatever language thing. Um, anyways, so I did my year of requirements. I loved science and I never took enough of it. Um, and, I hated political science, which I do to this day, and still do not know what the government system is in England and France.

And I loved American Studies. Annette [K.] Baxter was, like, solid and the classes were solid, and my senior thesis was wonderful. I did a senior thesis on defying authority in higher education, and why the way that higher education was structured made no sense. It was a good paper. I've read it recently, and I still believe the same thing. But it was motivated by—in my senior year, I took the hardest class I've ever taken in my whole life. I was a senior, and I had taken absolutely nothing that had to do with Asia. Uh, and I went, "I can't graduate school without knowing anything about Asia." So I took a senior seminar on Asian culture. And we had

to read all kinds of stuff on Japan, China, India, uh, and write in a journal about our experience of it. And it was the most complicated, difficult class I'd ever taken. I got the only C I've ever gotten in my life, which brought my whole average down. And I loved every second of it, and I was terrified going into the class, because there were two professors and three students—I was one of the students—and I couldn't even pronounce the peoples' names that we were reading.

To this day, do I do anything with European culture expansion? No. I'm totally Asian. The cultures that I love are Indian, Chinese—I've been to China, Japan—haven't made it to India. It's on my bucket list. Um, it's just—and do I resonate—? You know, I went to Europe, I loved what I experienced there. I love European culture, but I had learned a lot about it through my Jewish historical stuff. Um, I loved Turkey, Afghanistan, um—and it all started from that horrible course in Columbia that I suffered through, and adored, and just was incompetent at.

You know, my freshman year, it was those first four classes. It was, you know, Jane Austen and French that I'd already read. And um, I don't remember the other two courses, but it was like, “What am I doing in college?” And then it opened up, where I knew—because it was beyond requirements, and I could take what I wanted to take. And the other things that I immediately went towards was things like I taught swimming on Saturday morning to kids from the community. So I was working with a lot of Black kids in the pool. I taught reading in Harlem somewhere. I used to take the subway up to somewhere in Morningside Heights, I did something—like that, the issue with the gym in Morningside Heights was more—hit me harder than the Vietnam War.

02:01:53 Q: So tell me more about that hitting you.

02:01:55 Weiner: The whole notion of being able to control your neighborhood and control what happened to you in your local community and the impact of, um, if you will, imperialism on a community resonated more deeply. I could connect to it. I understood it more. I understood the whole notion of—that was the time of the [Ocean Hill – Brownsville]—and the, um, local control of the schools. And it's one of the reasons that when I graduated, I went and worked in—after I came back from Israel, and I got a master's in education—I worked in a Jewish day school [Maimonides Day School] because I wasn't going to work in the Boston public schools because it wasn't my community. I was very influenced by that idea that a white privileged Jewish girl going in to save the ghetto, uh, was not an appropriate philosophical stance, and it wasn't a good rationale. That evolved from, um, those experiences.

One idea that I never connected to Vietnam until—when I was in graduate school in Oregon, I worked at Lane Community College as a reading specialist, and I worked with returning vets who wound up in Oregon, and I worked with a number of guys who had brain damage of certain sorts, and had to retrain their ability to read and acquire language. And, it was my orientation to understanding why people went to war, and, um, how they got hurt. And I—it was the first time that I really, you know—Jane Fonda was like, not so good. Um, her stance was not so justified. And again, it was white privilege talking about people who needed to go to war because they needed the G.I. Bill to get their education, and they believed in an America that I didn't know until I began to know them. And, um, I have always had a particular resonance with what we did that was awful in relation to the returning vets. Ignoring them, dissing them, not recognizing



what their experience was, and not honoring their decision to go to war. I was a white liberal snob, and, um, I think that that's part of why the whole thing at Columbia was confusing to me. Because I didn't understand on some level what we were protesting, because my father was a veteran also. It was like, well, America went to war, you went to war. And who are we—?

And then, it was—I got it and I was irreverent and anti-authoritarian enough that it made sense. And I really hated the way the University treated its students who were protesting, and I thought that the people in authority were extremely aloof. And I'd use the word stupid, but it wasn't stupid. I was like, "Who do you think you are? What world do you live in?" It's like, I was the head or the chairperson of Greek Games at Barnard, and, um, they got canceled. Every spring—

02:06:32 Q: This was the spring of '69?

02:06:33 Weiner: Yeah. And, um, it was like, "What are we thinking, running around like Greek Goddesses?" I mean this is just—and I loved it. I was a Greek Goddess kind of person, but it was—this doesn't make any sense. It was anachronistic. And, of course, I think it's hilarious that a lot of my development after Barnard—I did a lot with Greek mythology and creating games and stuff and spent a lot of time in Greece. And that was inspired by Greek games, I have to say, even though it was cancelled. I have a lot of memorabilia actually from the planning of the Greek games—that's somewhere in a box.

02:07:29 Q: That would be interesting to have as part of the archives. It really would be, yeah.

02:07:31 Weiner: I have a bunch of stuff.

02:07:35 Q: What do you remember about hearing about the protest and then the building occupation? And what went on for you around that, and where you were during that ten-day period?

02:07:58 Weiner: I don't remember. I remember—what I do remember is feeling, um, discombobulated or as if I were living in an alternate universe. My parents were very concerned. I remember calling them and telling them that I was okay, that things were fine. I remember not connecting with the way the faculty were dealing with the situation. And I remember, as I said earlier on, this whole, um, Why are you burning this person's papers? Why are you doing all this destructive stuff if you're protesting protests, why are you destroying? You're as bad as the people that you're protesting against. There was some of that. I do think that it was a conscious raising event and an eye-opener, followed by a lot of the national stuff between Kent State and the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley.

02:09:23 Q: Free Speech was actually before. Free speech was '65.

02:09:27 Weiner: Free Speech was before, yeah. But being aware of it, I guess. Um—and the other piece of it, which was kind of my personal piece, is that I worked at Unity House the summer after—this resort in the Poconos. And I waited on the table of the judge who was trying Mark [W.] Rudd and the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] crew. And I remember having

long conversations with him about the nature of protest and the judicial system. And, um, he was extraordinary. He was a wonderful person.

And I didn't like Mark Rudd and the SDS movement, and I didn't like them, in part, because of the way they treated the women. I was very conscious of the male-female politics, and continued to be so where it was, you know, "Why are the women getting you food? This makes no sense to me." And I think that kind of sensibility informed my choice in terms of why I went to Barnard in the first place, and then informed my choices in my career path. I chose Barnard very deliberately. My mother wanted me to go to Smith or Wellesley. She was really, "Go to a—"

02:11:05 Q: And you chose Barnard because?

02:11:06 Weiner: Oh, she wanted me to get married to some lovely man, and—

02:11:10 Q: Right. But you wanted Barnard because of—

02:11:11 Weiner: The city. Um, being far enough away from home. Um, the fact that it was Jewish and not WASP-y. And that there were political gatherings, and the salon nature of it was different. The energy was different, and—you know, when I used to see Barbara Bush with her pearls, I used to think, "Thank God I didn't go to that school." My sister went to Smith, and she moved to Columbia. And she used to describe that all of the women used to sit around and play bridge in the evening. And I was like, "I am never playing—" I like bridge. I like card games, but that was not something I was going to do. I was going to go to the theater, I was going to go

to the opera. I used to stand for four hours at the opera at the back, and then would go and sit if somebody left. And I really remember that as my initiation into the world of culture. Barnard really supported all of that on every level, and, um, even though they had a curfew [laughs].

02:12:42 Q: And that curfew—that was only the first year.

02:12:44 Weiner: Yeah, it may have been only the first semester. We fought against it. You know, we've skipped—

02:12:58 Q: So we still have quite a bit to cover [laughs].

02:13:04 Weiner: You know, I graduated, got my masters, I became a teacher—

02:13:07 Q: Right. I cut you off at one point around, um, the Alternative College. You were starting to talk about there was Catharine Stimpson—

02:13:15 Weiner: It was Kate Millet.

02:13:17 Q: Kate Millet, sorry. And the Alternative College and there was something you were starting to say, and then I segued back to something—say more about that.

02:13:23 Weiner: I just thought it was really remarkable. Well, my senior thesis was on alternatives to—and it was inspired by the most influential course—the course I got the worst

grade in—that our college—that the impetus in college was to take courses that you could do well at to get a high grade point average, and that basically, many people took programs of study that they already knew about, rather than taking risks and going towards, um, areas of study and experience that would—they might fail at.

02:14:09 Q: And would expand them.

02:14:11 Weiner: Yes. And, um, that was, um, and so the college—University without Walls? It had a funny name. Anyways, it was an alternative within the larger—and they were experimenting with different ways of learning, different ways of studying. I thought that it was intriguing. And what was intriguing to me was the battle that went on between Kate Millet and other faculty members about what they were doing in that college. Now, I don't remember the detail of it. All I remember was the conflict.

02:15:00 Q: Because you were a representative, student representative, on that faculty committee following the strike.

02:15:03 Weiner: Right. And I wasn't—I wasn't that fond of Kate Millet as a person. I liked her book, I liked *Sexual Politics*. I thought that was an amazing book. And the other thing that I didn't really know, was kind of the background—a number of women, like Kate Stimpson, Kate Millet, were lesbians. Um, and that there was a philosophy professor that Stimpson was going out with—there was a lot of that in the background that I didn't realize until sort of after the fact. Didn't know or recognize, and, um—and so it's a layer of what you know and what you don't

know when you're having an experience, and what you can understand retrospectively about that experience, you know.

I mean, there was a lot going on at Barnard that had to do with higher education, academics that I had no—the other person that was very influential for me was Barbara Novak, who I thought was a dynamo. That's the other thing about my experience. For example, I didn't have money. So taking a course, um, was expensive. I discovered, um, that you could be the slide person in the art courses and they would pay you. I think they paid us \$2 an hour, which was a lot of money then. So I took every art course that you could take, and was a slide projectionist. That was, you know, I find that astounding to this day, that I took all those art courses.

And I remember taking a studio course, which was just brilliant, and wishing that there would have been creative art, studio courses, lab courses—more experiential stuff, and really advocated for that when I was on the faculty committee. And advocated for an alternative in relevancy in courses. If you were taking ancient history, how to make it more relative to modern history—how to make the links, the connections. As I said, one of the things that really distressed me was that I was paying all this money. I had loans and a scholarship, which I paid back. That every spring—I don't know any history from the Korean War on. I was an American Studies person, I took American history—I know nothing about the Korean War. I know nothing about America in World War II. I know nothing about the Roosevelts. I'm so enlightened by the PBS specials on certain topics. And I go, "I missed all of that." I missed modern literature, I missed—I mean, everything stopped. I know virtually nothing about the twentieth century in any of the areas that I was involved in, because everything stopped.

And that, I think in terms of '68, that was a major, uh, issue for me, was that my education was being interrupted. And I was very resentful about that, because my parents had worked very hard and I was in school and I wanted to study. And how was I ever going to make that up or learn that again? So, I think that was part of my experience.

02:19:24 I mean, I was, you know, left liberal—I was into it, my friends were involved. You know, the guy who wrote the seminal book that has a green cover. *Up Against the Ivy Wall*. What was his name? He was dating Karen—what was his name? Jerry Avorn. Anyways, he wrote that book, and I was like, “Oh, yeah, I know him.” He’s recording the experience that I had. And there was another person that wrote something that was a history, Todd Gitlin, and it was like, “Oh, we’re a part of history.”

And that, I think, has been a consciousness that I’ve had my whole life, that one of the things that I feel very strongly about, in doing retrospective on my life, is that I was at historical moments in a lot of different areas. I feel like I was historical with the Columbia demonstration. I feel like I was historical in the women’s movement. I feel I was historical in Israel. I feel I was historical in the Jewish—everything that that to do with Jewish renewal. I was there from the very beginning. I knew people who you won’t know but, Shlomo Carlebach, Zalman Schacter-Shlomi. That really started the resurgence of Neo-Hasidic thought and engagement. And \_\_\_\_\_ [??] is a direct result of that lineage. Um, I was the, uh—host chairperson for the American Jewish World Service in 1985, which was the first chapter in Boston. And went to Ghana with them two years ago on a mission. And have been associated with them since '85 in one of the longest-

running connectors with that kind of social justice movement, human rights movement within the Jewish world for sure. And, with an emphasis, the American Jewish World Service provides Jewish values and texts for people doing service in the non-Jewish world. Um, it's a light unto the nations sensibility. My whole career—

[INTERRUPTION]

02:22:49 Q: All right, so continuing about, um—so just before we go on, is there anything else you want to say about your experience with Barnard? If not, that's okay. We're going to jump ahead to coming back from Israel. So let me know if anything else from the Barnard experience you want to mention, talk about—

02:23:30 Weiner: I think that one of the things that, um, has been really interesting or intriguing for me is where people have wound up and what their life pathways were. And, for example, um, I can remember from one of our reunions—I think it was early on, like ten or twenty. I don't remember—Linda Elovitz said something about being intimidated by the fact that everybody had gone off and done a career, and that she had married, had children, and was living on their farm and taking care of the kids, and that Barnard as an institution seemed to support the professionals and not the homemakers, that there was a dichotomy in what it valued as an institution. I remember having that conversation and thinking about it and wondering what it was about that period of time, and the truth value of what Linda was saying, and also to look at it, the comment, “forty-five years on.” And I do indeed think that one of the issues in our period at Barnard—I call it the six-year hiatus—there were six years of not knowing who you were as a woman, where



a lot of people in our class got divorced. A lot of people didn't marry, have remained single. And I think it's because there was a real discrepancy between what we were taught growing up, versus what was emerging in the women's movement—but what the role of women was / is in the world. And there was this six-year confusion when no one knew what the roles were.

02:26:13 Q: And those six years were—

02:26:15 Weiner: Two years before us and two years after us. I think the Class of '69 to the Class of '73. So it was that six years. Um, and I think that if you look across the board—and I'd be curious to do so—the lives of women in that six-year period were impacted. For some, negatively, for some, positively. But there was a shift in society about who women were, how men were supposed to behave towards women, how women were supposed to behave towards men, expectations, a lot of issues that had to do with that differentiation between homemaker and professional.

And, um, forty-five years on—I think when Linda first mentioned this, uh, I sort of dismissed it as, You made a choice. Why aren't you happy with your choice? Or maybe you are happy, but you're expressing—and at the time, I think that I was feeling, um, like I would like to be married. But I didn't want to be married and not be professionally oriented, and for me, that was a very hard—it wasn't even a choice. It was that living my life, it was not happening. And when I look at it as being sixty-five, sixty-six, Linda is such a much happier camper than I am, or at least in expression or external ways. She's been married for fifty years, has grandchildren, is now writing children books for the Jewish community that are wonderful. They're just delightful. She

has a really full, rich life, with a lot of hopes, dreams, and aspirations for her future. And she and her husband are pretty successful. They travel a great deal. She's healthy.

And I look at it in terms of my life, which I think has been a wonderful life and I don't have any regrets per se, but it's not as full and rich. And I think that the fact—my expectations of being a wife and a mother and a grandmother were not met. And I think that there's a certain kind of absence that has been a result of that. Um, I think there's a lot of experience, there are a lot of experiences that I've had that have also been a result of that, and have made my life the way it is. And many of my friends have had terrible marriages, and terrible relationships with their children, real hardships that have evolved. And so it's—looking back, you can't always go, "Oh, well, my life would have been wonderful if I'd had kids."

And a lot of the counseling as a rabbi reflects that as well. A lot of the work that I do is, um, grief and loss work. And has much to do with regret and lack of reconciliation, lack of relationship. Um, so, I think that Barnard really did do a fabulous job of professionalizing our role as women, but I'm not sure that they did a good enough job on issues of balance and how important it was to be married and have a relationship. And I think that was just a sign of the times. People were rebelling against, breaking away, from those traditional roles. And I think because of that, the emphasis was on that professional career trajectory. Also, at some point, I remember having heard a statistic that Barnard had the largest number of women professionals in its alumnae group than, I think it was, other sister schools. I don't think it was in general, but I do think it was—and it was a really big statistic. It was really quite astounding.

So, moving, then, from college into, uh—I was thinking, is there anything else about Barnard that—?

[INTERRUPTION]

02:32:23 Q: So you were thinking about anything else about Barnard. Well, you could say, right now—so, looking back on the you that walked into the gates, is there anything in your hindsight now, with your experience of life since then, that you would like to say to her? Advice, wisdom you offer her?

02:33:00 Weiner: It would be a funny, like “pay attention to relationships,” “get married,” “get out of your own way.”

02:33:17 Q: Great.

02:33:18 Weiner: Um—so the shift out of Barnard was into this project in Western Massachusetts, and I think it expanded out all my consciousness about the counterculture and all the issues that have subsequently become part of our world: equality, good eating, gender relationships, authority politics, um, even self-help kind of. And I remember one of the big things in the women’s group was that we would sit in a circle and there was a consciousness about how much space you took in a circle, and what you were sharing and what you weren’t sharing, and how much. And, I remember that coming up years later in the work that I did with Jewish-Muslim dialogue women. Because the Muslims rarely spoke, and the Jewish women took

up all the space. And we became conscious in it, in this group. And one of the things that the Muslims shared was that they don't have space in a group. And one of the things that the Jewish women shared was that they have unlimited space. Um, and, but, that that space is an aggressive space—you have unlimited, but you have to fight for it. So in terms of communication, Jewish women in general—as is common in the Jewish culture—we interrupt, we finish peoples' thoughts, we barge into conversation, and it's all cultural. And whenever I've been in either interfaith or mixed cultural groups, this becomes an issue.

It became a really big issue in one of my work environments because a lot of the members of the group were Asian, and they couldn't figure out a way of entering the conversation. There were four Jews, two Asians, four WASPs, and the Jews dominated every conversation. And it was not conscious, and it was not deliberate, but what we learned to do in the Muslim-Jewish women's group was—before we interrupted, we'd have to pause, number one. And number two was, after a Jewish woman spoke, somebody else had to speak. A Muslim woman had to jump in. And then another Jewish woman could not speak until a Muslim woman spoke. And what that built up over time, which was very interesting, was that the Jewish women learned to be much better active listeners, and the Muslim women learned to express their personhood in very positive ways, which impacted them primarily in their familial relationships where they started to feel more assertive and more—that they had more permission to express their opinion or their views, particularly in groups with men.

And, that whole dimension of communication—for example, I was a woman very much in a man's world for many years. And, one of the things that I've become very conscious of is that I

could say, “The sky is blue,” and nobody would pay attention to me. But if a guy said, “The sky is blue,” everyone else would say, “Yeah, look how nice it is.” And so I became aware of that as an issue way before they started talking about in the public literature.

02:37:52 Q: So what places do you remember that? You said you were in a man’s world—where were you, what were you doing, and is there a particular story you remember around that. You said, “The sky is blue,” no one noticed. What were some of the places where that was a key issue, you were a woman in a man’s world?

02:38:09 Weiner: Well, I started out professionally—ok, so, went to Israel, came back, went to graduate school, and I got a master’s degree in reading as a specialty in education at Northeastern University in a wonderful program that—and again, it reflects kind of how I’ve led my life, where I came back to the states, could not get a job doing anything. I was trying to figure out what to do, and on a telephone pole, there was a flyer about a new master’s degree program at Northeastern, um, where they were going to pay you \$7,000 to go to school and get a master’s degree. And \$7,000 was going to pay my rent and everything else for the year, and get you a master’s degree. So, I thought, Fine, I can’t get a job, I might as well get a master’s degree. So I did. So that was kind of the trajectory for my career in education.

And, it was a very—it was a wonderful program, and I did my internship teaching adult basic ed, which again oriented me towards other issues related to education and class. And, I worked in a children’s library, and so I read every book related to children’s literature, which has stood me a good stead. I had a paper stolen by a professor, which he published under his name, which was

very disconcerting, which he never admitted to, and I—you know, these were the days before computers, and I would have had to of copied that paper, um, rather than—I didn't have a copy. I had turned it in and then I have no copy of it.

02:40:37 Q: So you turned in the only hand-written copy? You hadn't made a—What was the term we use? You put a sheet in between?

02:40:46 Weiner: Carbon paper.

02:40:47 Q: Carbon paper. You didn't have a carbon copy? Oh [winces].

02:40:49 Weiner: The other thing that happened was that when I was in Israel, my parents decided to sell their house and gotten rid of stuff that was significant to me. Um, for example, an entire collection of comic books. My uncle had owned a store, a neighborhood store, and every week when my mother went to get groceries and visit relatives in that neighborhood, I would hang out in the store and he would give me comic books. So I had every copy of like every comic book, and my parents just got rid of them. They had no idea, one, that they had any value, and two, that I would want them. But also, there was a, "What do you want me to save?" And I wanted them to save that and they didn't. So there were many times in my life when I would say I want X and my parents would do Y. The children's voice, a child's voice, was not recognized as being significant.

And my brother has a very similar kind of relationship to me. If I say I'm a vegetarian, and he says, "Where would you like to eat?" and I say, "A place that has lovely vegetables or a salad," he would take me to, um, Tony Roma's, which is basically meat and chicken and ribs, and—because he, in that time period, he had no idea what vegetarian really was. And because he wasn't vegetarian, what would I be doing with that? So that has had a psychological impact in terms of influence. How your voice influences other people's recognition, or hearing you. So I grew up with a sense of not being heard. On the other hand, people who know me will say that my voice is very influential, that I've always been heard in circles outside of my family. So I think that's a very interesting discrepancy, and I don't know the truth value from my internal psychological state. Um, but I have to—I mean, I do look at the evidence and go, "Oh, yeah, they did pay attention to me over there."

So I learned in the circle, and the women's collective, that I took up space, and, um, that I was assertive in my communication style. Thirty years later, I met the woman who had really dissed me for that, if you will, um, and who I thought hated me, or—and she said to me that she really found that annoying, but as she got older, she learned how to assert herself and recognize her own voice and it was through my influence. And she thanked me, and I thought, "Wow, you never know how you impact people." And I had lived all these years thinking that I had somehow negatively impacted, when I had actually positively impacted. That was an interesting learning experience.

From that, uh, collective and going to Israel and coming back and then being in the master's program, um, I didn't quite know what I was going to do, but I, uh, got a job at Jewish day

school in Brookline, which is where I was from—the Brookline, Newton area. I'm laughing about it because it was a disaster on so many levels. And, so reminiscent on where my life has gone on other levels that it's hilarious to me. Maimonides Day School is probably one of the most premiere day schools in the country, Jewish day schools. It was led by a man named Rabbi MJ Cohn, and Rabbi Cohn was a very authoritative, dictatorial, old world rabbi who actually listened to me, with great distress. And I think about him now and I think, "What a rabbi." He was really a remarkable man.

02:45:57 I came into a program where half of my sixth graders needed psychiatric care in one way or another. I mean, one kid was peeing into a glass and throwing his pee around the recess playground. There were a lot of kids—I had thirty kids, and like ten, fifteen of them had various types of learning disabilities. And I was able, through the help of the school psychologist, to get kids into programs that were paid for by the Brookline school system, because we lived in Brookline, and even though it was a private school, they had access to the Brookline social services. And the rabbi, to his great credit, when I said, "I think you need a learning disability specialist," didn't say to me—you know, he didn't ignore it and he didn't push it under the rug.

And I remember three things about that experience. One, I had a girl who wanted to go—her parents wanted her to go to Boston Latin School, which was an all-boys school. She and several of her cohort wanted to be rabbis, and they couldn't understand why they had to sit behind a *mechitza*, which is a separation in prayer spaces. And, one of the boys was an absolute, um, livewire of energy and, um, a certain kind of intelligence, but he was not academic, and his parents wanted him to go to Harvard. And I remember saying to them, "You know, I'm not sure



your son is going to go to Harvard, but your son could be a millionaire, because he could sell the Brooklyn Bridge. He could convince anybody to do anything. And you should acknowledge that gift, because that's his gift. And he's wonderful and people love him and he's very smart. He just is not a scholar and not an academic." And I remember those three things really clearly. I also remember [laughs] getting so mad at the kids one day that I walked out of the classroom and slammed the door, and as a result, I broke a gourd doll that I had brought back from Ethiopia. It was on a shelf, and it fell off and broke. And it gave me an awareness of what anger can do. You don't necessarily hurt anyone else but yourself. And that was really painful, it was really painful, the loss of the object.

The other things that the experience provided me with was a real entrée into the intimacy of the Orthodox world, which was not a world that I really knew about. And one of the things that came up because I taught the English stuff, the secular education, and my counterpart was a male rabbi who taught the Judaic stuff, and he could not control the kids. He was six feet tall and big and had no discipline. And I was me and I could control the kids without much effort, and he could never understand how he as a rabbi had no authority in relation to the kids, and I as a woman could control them. And that's always been something that I've been aware of. What is it that gives you the sense of authority in a group? Where does it come from? Where does the legitimacy of that come from? In this situation it clearly didn't come from being a rabbi, uh, the sixth grade kids were not going to sit still for him just because he was a rabbi. And he was a lovely man, very lovely.

02:50:36 The other thing that happened is that every Shabbat, every Saturday, I was invited to peoples' homes for lunch. Nobody wanted to leave me alone in the community. And it was also very important that I got married. That was a really important value, but there was nobody to marry.

Um, another, uh, thing that happened for me in terms of curriculum development was that there were no books. There was no curriculum for me to use that was intriguing in relation to these kids. So I created a year-long curriculum that had to do with geography, people, and culture. And so I taught—the first session and how plants and animals connect, and the second part was how do people engage in that ecology or geography. Why did people settle around rivers and create agriculture, and then, how did cultures evolve? How did people create cities and the arts? And how did civilizations appear over time, and then disappear over time?

So I created this year-long thing, which I think is one of the most creative things I've ever done. I loved that, and wish that I could have published something, created something that was actually replicated. But in order to do this, I had to gather all the materials. So I went to every library within a ten-mile radius and took out twenty books in each library and brought them to school for the kids to use as resources. And, um, I did that all year. And I'm astounded by the energy, number one, and two, by the reflection onto what happens in education. The role of the teacher. What is it that kids are really experiencing? Because, also, everything I did in the classroom was experiential. The kids had to create their own questions about what they were interested in learning about, and they had to create a resource list of where they could go to find that

information, and then they had to write a report. And, um, I still think that that's a great way to learn.

So, anyways, those were my lessons from the school. What I also had was the sense that I was a reading specialist, and I didn't know how to teach kids how to read. That I was limited in some ways because I didn't have enough information. I didn't feel competent, so I applied to graduate school for a Ph.D. And I wound up going to the University of Oregon, which for me was a disappointment at the time, but wound up being one of the great miracles of my life. And when I was telling you at the beginning of this tale that I saw this "What you're going to do with your life," on a flyer on a telephone pole, a lot of my life has gone like that. Not knowing and looking up and saying, "Oh, there's a flyer on a telephone pole. I think I'll go do that." I wound up at the University of Oregon because Jeanne Chall, who was my great heroine in reading, was taking no more doctoral students at Harvard, and the University of Washington wouldn't take my Masters credits, Stanford lost my application, and the University of Hawaii, um, was too much money. And the University of Oregon gave me a doctoral fellowship. And so I moved to Oregon.

Um, I had my little red car, my Datsun, and somebody, um, drove with me. And we went cross country on the trans-Canadian highway. Did we go that way? I don't know. Anyways, we got across the country, and I remember not being really nice to this guy, which was really too bad because he was a nice guy. But he had a physical problem which he never described to me. So it caused a lot of, um, distress. I think he had had a colostomy, and it took him so long to get ready in the morning. And had he just told me, I would have been much more compassionate and gracious. And it's another one of those learning experiences when after the fact when I

understood that, it really impacted me in making assumptions about people's behaviors, and to check out, to express what distress was and how it was impacting—and so that was a really, an important learning experience.

02:56:13 Anyways, we got out to Oregon. Oregon was like being in a completely other world. Nobody from Ivy League schools. It was a state school. I was in the college of education. And I'll never forget my first teaching experience [laughs], where people said to me, "You're speaking too fast." And so I slowed down, and then people said, "Well, we can understand what your words are, but we don't know what you're saying. It's not making any sense." So I had to figure out a way of contextualizing what it was that I was saying, to give them a reference set so they understood that theirs was different from mine. And, um, then when I went through grading, I was giving everybody Cs and my advisor said, "You can't do that." And I said, "Well, but they can't even spell." And he would say, "You have to ignore that. You have to go into the deeper experience of what they're producing, and look at it in a relative frame. And look at who's succeeding and being at the head of the curve, and then gauge—"

02:57:38 Q: Grading on a curve rather than some kind of an absolute—

02:57:42 Weiner: And that was really shocking. It was like, "How can I be, um, certifying people to be teachers of English if they can't spell?" And that kind of introduced me to public education in a very different way, of where people were going to succeed and where they weren't, and who was going to be successful in the schools and why, and how I was going to be able to, um,

impact them in a way that was better for them. Make them better teachers, not make them better me's, but was going to make them better.

02:58:24 Q: Better teachers. Right.

02:58:25 Weiner: And see, one of the things you asked me about, and I was talking about, was certain kind of influences. I'm segueing a bit. But I had a graduate student who got really pissed at me all the time, and what we determined was that it was really a male - female thing. He couldn't deal with me as a female authority. And, I had a really hard time with that, because I didn't know how to reach him, and I was not willing to recognize that there was a gender issue. Uh, and an authority gender issue. But my professor was, you know, willing to explain that or saw it.

The other thing that I experienced at Oregon was the enormous power differences between professors and their students, and that the male professors, two or one in the college of education, were having affairs with students, their graduate students. And it was not until a new dean came in, who had been the dean at Harvard actually—and he was a little bit full of himself and a pain, but he was very—he had certain kinds of—he was brilliant in the area of moral education. That was his field. And he put a complete stop to that. He basically read the Riot Act. And the men were young men, um, the professors, and many of them were in marriages that were no longer appropriate to them, and they all wound up getting divorced, which was also very interesting.

Um, and, uh—I had an interesting experience with that, where there was a relationship I had with one of my professors. His wife didn't live in town, and I had the impression that they were separated, getting divorced. And then discovered, into the relationship, that his wife was pregnant. And I basically said, “Over. That's it. Done.” And his wife then moved to the area, back. And I wound up babysitting for them. Um, and the irony is, um, move ahead thirty years, his sister lived in the complex that I moved into in the Bay Area. And, um, she and I became friendly. We played Scrabble together. He would come to visit and we got reconnected. And he's still with his wife. Unfortunately, his son contracted some terrible disease, which—right after he had graduated from college, and he had been a brilliant student. It was something like ALS [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis], but not ALS, and recently, within the last year, he died.

But I got friendly with his sister and then his older sister, because his mother was in the Jewish Home for the Aging in San Francisco. And the irony was that she wasn't Jewish. Um, his father had been Jewish, his sister and he were Catholic. And his older sister became Jewish because she married somebody that was Jewish. So, again, it was an experience of the mixing and mashing. And one of the things that I find really curious about myself is that I don't lose people. I mean, that could have been a situation where there was a rupture, or a rift, and it didn't—it just transformed into, “Okay, this is not an ethical situation, and I'm shifting it.” And he was a fabulous professor, and a wonderful person, and he's still—he's gotten all kinds of honors awards.

But I'll never forget, during my doctoral dissertation, he was my advisor. And those were the days when you were typing your dissertation, or having it typed. And every time something was

changed, you had to retype it. And he kept changing words and punctuation, and every time I had to have it retyped, it was \$150. And there was a point, almost at the end, where I looked at him and said, “Is there a substantial change here, that you want to implement?” And he said, “No.” And I said, “Well, then you’re done. You’re going to sign this right now because I’m not paying another \$150 to retype this because there are only five people in the world who are going to read this—the four people on my committee and my mother. That’s it, and she doesn’t care if the punctuation is wrong.” And that was how I got through the dissertation writing process [laughs].

Um, and the other things about Oregon that were just really interesting, um—was the, uh, being in a place that was not Jewish, and having to create your own Judaism. And I wound up connecting with three people, um, through the synagogue who were, uh, people like me who were there and we created a *chavurah*, a group for the Jewish community. There were three things that were a part of that. One is, my first year there, I went to the rabbis for Passover Seder, and was stopped by a policeperson for speeding. And I said to him, “I’m going to a Passover Seder, and I have to be there before the sun sets, and it’s going down right now. And if you give me a ticket right now, if you give me a ticket I’m going to be late. And I have to be there or the rabbi’s going to get mad at me.” And he said, “Oh,” and just let me go. And I thought, Well, that’s really interesting. It was true, but, um—and, I really appreciated that. I thought that was a really nice gesture.

The second thing was that two of the men that I started the *chavurah* with became very big names within the Jewish renewal movement. And, what’s curious, one of them I went out with for a year, slept with, um, hung out with, has virtually no recollection of that relationship, which

I find absolutely fascinating. The other man unfortunately died a few years ago, and he was a rabbi in Portland and had—there was a woman who needed, I don't know, blood transfusions or something in the LA area, and he put out an email on a listserv that I responded to and I helped this woman negotiate that process in LA, and she lived. And it was, for me, this interesting connection that had started when I was in graduate school and manifested itself, you know, thirty years later.

03:05:52 Um, so those were—what else can I tell you about Oregon? Oregon, I learned to ski, cross country ski. It's one of the great experiences of my life, which I never would have done. Can't imagine I would have done anywhere else. I learned to hike. I learned to play tennis in covered courts, because I hated the sun. They had rain coverage.

And I'll never forget the experience I had with the therapist there, the counselor. Because I was unhappy, I didn't know what I was doing. And he had me do this activity where I wrote all the things that I love doing on index cards, and had to spread them all out and go, "Which ones do I actually do now? And how often?" It's a values clarification exercise, which I have used, actually in my own practice. And other people use them in terms of doing life legacy and transitions to look at what it is that you do now, what you think—what your parents did, how much the things that you do cost, which ones do you think you'll be doing five years from now, and to look at that in terms of what gives you pleasure or meaning in your life. And, it's a really, really amazing kind of exercise that, for most people, they realize they're doing a lot of things their parents do. That most of what they love they don't need any money for. And that there are



certain things that they're not going to be able to do five years in the future, probably. And dealing with each of that.

But it was—there I was. I was like, I don't know, twenty-three, twenty-four years old. Trying to come to grips with, “Was I doing the right thing? Was going into education what I really wanted to do? Was getting a Ph.D. what I really wanted to do?” And this whole experience was really very self-reflective. Again, um, Mussar, in terms of reflection, that kind of experience—

And there were all kinds of things about being in Oregon that were different. I mean, so they didn't do psychoanalysis. They did real action-oriented therapy.

03:09:36 Q: Oh, interesting. Even back then, right.

03:09:39 Weiner: I mean, it was really, um, they did cognitive therapy, which was new. Albert Ellis, rational emotive therapy. So I got involved in a whole other way of looking at the world, world view, and really learned to reflect in a particular way. And then there were crafts. I just fell in love with pottery and all kinds of craft objects.

And I had a relationship with my roommate who was from Iowa, and she was the first person I had encountered who had had a background of sexual harassment abuse in her family. And it impacted her in a lot of different ways where some of my behaviors, for example, she thought were promiscuous, like wearing tight turtlenecks, which, for her, were completely off-limits. And years later when we talked, she actually became a therapist for women who had been

abused. Um, and I helped her—she adopted a young woman from China, a baby from China—and it was—those kinds of experiences are introductions into different ways of being. Uh, that were really influential in my life long-term. You know, eating corn that you picked off the branch—

03:11:35 Q: From the field, right.

03:11:36 Weiner: And, also, we didn't have a lot of—we didn't have theater, and what people did was they played music. So it was a new concept of how you did entertainment, that it was your own entertainment that you created. And all of that was really quite remarkable. And then all the learning I did. The dissertation was really quite—I loved doing it. I'm one of the few people I know who—

03:12:06 Q: What was the topic of you dissertation?

03:12:07 Weiner: It was, uh, how to teach—what the impact of teaching questioning was on the comprehension of middle school children. And, um, I loved doing research on textual analysis. I loved creating my research methodology. I thought it was really intriguing. I loved teaching classes that I knew how to teach because it was a longitudinal study, and then I loved analyzing the statistics. I had a statistic teacher from heaven. And she won all kinds of awards as best teacher. But she created statistics as a narrative. She made us understand how numbers talk. Um, and actually, statistics were a language that we could use—when you were in the education

school, you didn't have to take a foreign language. And I wound up taking program evaluation and statistics as my two languages, which I have used in all different environments. Just magical.

Uh, when I was graduated, I wanted to go into academia, and could not get a job to save my life. There were so many reading specialists that had been graduated in that year, that all of the positions were taken by people who came from the real high-end universities. Now my education was, um, really fantastic there because Oregon was known for learning disabilities, special education, and for cognitive science. And I studied with the great names in cognitive science and memory attention, learning theory, and they were world reknowned. And I was the education major who was taking all these courses. Partially because in my master's degree, I had taken a lot of the curriculum and instruction materials. So they let me branch out. So I became a specialist also in linguistics. Linguistics, cognitive science, and special ed were my area. Um, and—

03:14:40 Q: You said you were having a hard time finding a job—

03:14:43 Weiner: And I wound up going to a Christmas party at my brother's, uh, where somebody in the neighborhood worked at Educational Testing Service, and my sister-in-law at the time said, "My sister-in-law needs a job." And he had an opening that was coming in the spring, just when I was graduating.

So I trotted into my little car and went across the United States on the Canadian border with this man who I had known from high school who I had always adored. We were best friends, and we

were trying to be lovers, which worked for a while, and then there's a sad story. When I was at Educational Testing Service it became clear. We broke up. I had seen him in Israel, and the woman he was dating got pregnant, had an abortion. So he broke up our relationship in Israel and went back to the states to be with her. That hadn't worked out, and we reconnected. But it didn't work out. Um, there are many of those threads.

I got to Princeton, and started in this remarkable professionalization of Cheryl. It was semi-academic. The woman, Carol Dwyer, who was my mentor and supervisor, taught me how to use an American Express credit card, taught me how to do an expense report. Taught me how to write a paper, how to make my dissertation into a published paper that was published by the American Educational Research Association. It was fantastic. I learned how to run board meetings.

I was the Director of the Basic Skills Assessment, which was a competency based program, testing program, that was given all over the country as an indication of standards. And, um, I learned how to do portfolio assessments and how to write test items for ETS [Educational Testing Service] for their Graduate Record Exam and their AP history class test. And I developed all the manuals for how to test and then teach to them afterwards, once you got the scores, what the scores indicated and what curriculum you could bring in. I worked with the best testing people, the best statistics people—fantastic professional experience.

And Jules Goodison, who was my supervisor, taught me that when you're working in a company, the most important people are the people who work for you, below you. He said the

most important thing about testing is getting the test packaged and out in time to get to the schools. And he would take me to the shipping room floor and introduced me to all the shippers. He said, “Because, there’s going to be a moment when you’re late, and they’re going to have to work overtime and they’re not going to get paid for it. And the only reason they’ll do it is because they like you.” It was an amazing learning experience.

Um, and then I got connected to all the state testing directors, because I ran this consortium where they all had to come together. So I learned how to do that. Then, [laughs] I got promoted into being the Title I consultant for the Virgin Islands, New York, and New Jersey—that was my territory, and also state testing director for Bermuda. So I got to go to the Virgin Islands every year, and also to Bermuda every year. And I did teaching workshops for people on how to use test results and designing curriculum, which was wonderful. And again, Carol Dwyer taught me how to have a facial at a spa in Bermuda. And, uh, Bermuda was just—it was like heaven. And the school system was so terrible. It was really sad. And the Virgin Islands was worse.

03:19:39 I had learned to snorkel, by the way, in Israel and had a wonderful snorkeling experience on St. John, all paid by / for state testing, by the Title I materials. I paid for the actual recreational portion, but the airfare was covered. And, actually, one of the things that started in this pathway is that I got to go all over the world, all over the country, doing professional things. And what I learned to do was package it so that everything happened on a Thursday, Friday, and I could stay Saturday and Sunday, on my nickel but the airfare was paid. And, uh, that started at ETS.

The other thing I learned at ETS was how to play poker. I knew from my family, but there was a women's group, and they were all the women executives who were not paid attention to at ETS and there was a whole wage discrepancy, which they won. Um, and they—it was a statistical analysis of who got promoted and who ran departments and they won. It was a whole lesson for me, as my first job, real job, in, um, discrimination, on sexual discrimination in wages and experience. But the women that I was with were often very strident and aggressive, and the men that I reported to resented them, but liked them. They were incredibly smart people, unbelievably smart people. And one of them, Marlaine Lockheed, became one of the senior economic specialists at the World Bank. And years later when I was in between jobs and didn't know what to do with myself, she hired me to create a presentation for the World Bank on primary school education, because as an economist, she recognized that, um, see—secondary education was paid for in most developing countries, but primary education was not. And women are the major teachers and they were not getting educated. So she wanted to switch.

So, going back to my statistics as narrative, I asked her to give me the statistics, and what we did was we constructed a presentation in 1990 for the World Conference on Education in Developing Countries that was put on by the World Bank. And, um, the essence of the presentation was to show statistics as a narrative and to illustrate that with pictures that came out of the World Bank. And one that I remember was the women bringing the produce from the field, like, wheat, into the marketplace. They have to know the mathematics of selling it at a profit. So the picture was of a young girl with a stick with a cow—with the wheat baskets, or the bag—the burlap bags over the oxen, taking this to market. And that was the illustration with the statistics. This girl

needs to know mathematics and this is why. And we changed world policy through that presentation.

She [Marlaine] was going to do the presentation. When she showed it to the president of the World Bank, he liked it so much he did the presentation. And it was done literally in between jobs for me, when I didn't know what I was doing. I went to visit Marlaine because I went to D.C. to see my relatives and she and I had visited. And she said, "Oh, I don't know how to do these things." It was—and I often think about that as, you know, later I had a 20 million dollar budget and 150 employees and six teams doing X, Y, and Z. And this was a small project that impacted the world.

03:24:32 Q: Where was this?

03:24:33 Weiner: This was at McGraw-Hill, many years later. And, you know, who knows what our stuff impacted or whatever, but here I was. It was a \$20,000 project that I did from my pocket when I was unemployed. So it's made me really, you know, look at what's important.

So, okay, ETS, playing poker. They're eliminating the entire—there's a shift in the testing industry. They're running out of money. They sell their elementary and secondary school programs to Addison-Wesley. My division is now gone. I need a job. And, one of the people who is the boyfriend of somebody we're playing poker with says he was a salesperson at McGraw-Hill. And he said, "Why don't you move to McGraw-Hill? They have a position open for an instructional designer doing computers in education." I said, "What are computers?"

Because it's 1979. And he said, "Oh, they're these little boxes that do things." And it's in this company that does educational projectors and equipment. So I apply and they like me, and I move to New York. And I'm commuting back and forth for a year, and I never see the light of day, but I'm the happiest camper in the world, because all I get to do is push buttons and work with these adorable little machines.

There were two things that happened in that particular—well, there were many, but—one is that there was this man in corporate. Blond hair, short, he was arrogant. And I was doing the instructional design for the computer, and it was with an Apple 1. Um, and every time I needed to do something, he would say, "Call me and I'll come down and turn the machine on." And I said, "Why don't you just show me how to turn the machine on?" And he said, "No, no, no. I have to do that. I'm responsible. I'm in charge." So I watched him, and it was basically flipping a switch. So I didn't call him down, and he was like, "How are you doing all this work?" I said, "Because I'm working on the computer. I'm doing my job." And he got very upset. In any case, he wound up getting fired. Not through me—it had nothing to do with me—but if all he was doing was showing people how to turn on a switch, one can assume.

I made three of my very closest long-term friends for much of my career path during this period because we were all fascinated by these machines, and I worked with a Commodore PET, and they used to call it a Trash-80, a TRS-80 from RadioShack. um, and Texas Instruments. And, um, I was having the greatest time, and we were working with all these very interesting developers, and it was the first time that you could use a computer that was not just a machine, and you were using punch cards. And I do really good work, and I go to my boss—it's my



annual review—and I say, “I’d like a raise.” And he says, “I’m not going to give you a raise.” And I say, “Why?” And he says, “Because you’re a woman. You don’t need a raise.” And I said, “What do you mean?” And then he said, “If I give you a raise, I have to give everybody a raise.” And I said, “This doesn’t make any sense. I’m doing really good work and bringing business in.” And he said, “As long as I’m the head of this department, you’re not going to get a promotion and you’re not going to get a raise.” And I thought, “Whoa. Who are you?” As it turned out, he also got fired. I didn’t have anything to do with it.

The division got sold, I don’t know, to somebody or other, and the computer stuff reverted to the, um, McGraw-Hill Book Company. But before all this happened, I was meeting with Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak about the educational materials on this computer, and we were—I was put in charge of a project. It was called Computer-Assisted and Management Instruction. It was called the Cami Project. And I was working with a man on the west coast, Gordon —what was Gordon’s last name? [Wainwright] Anyway, Gordon was in the testing division of McGraw-Hill and he was into computers. And the two of us went to test every computer software company in the United States to look at what McGraw-Hill should acquire. So we did a whole analysis and we came up with Microsoft, Apple, a company called CP/M, which died. Unfortunately the leader of it died. It was an operating system. There was a company called Brøderbund [Software], and—I don’t remember, but we came up with six or seven different companies. The Learning Company and Tom Snyder Productions and maybe Visitech / Lotus. And of course McGraw-Hill said, “No, we’re not doing that kind of stuff.” And they bought an accounting company, Aardvark Software.

03:30:36 Q: An accounting company?

03:30:37 Weiner: Yeah.

03:30:38 Q: I'm sure there are some people rued the day they didn't buy Apple or Microsoft—

03:30:41 Weiner: Yeah. Well, one of the things that happened was, I used to visit the media lab at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] in Boston, and on several occasions, Bill Gates was wandering around at the same time. Again, I'm a woman, I'm little and young, and he's telling secrets to the people he's wandering around with. They're talking about all kinds of things and I'm thinking to myself, "He doesn't know who I am." [Laughs] And I would go back and tell the—Byte Magazine was part of our group and I would say, "I just overheard Bill Gates saying X, maybe you want to go follow it up."

But it was a very exciting time. And I said it earlier on that I was on the crest of—well, I was on the crest of the wave of the educational computing industry. And I set up and was part of a National Science Foundation, uh, American Academy of Sciences program on computer literacy in the United States. Establishing standards and protocols and what it would look like, and met everybody from the labs from the Xerox PARC and RAND Corporation, and everything in the valley. And it was wonderful. It was very heady, and I was in charge of what was becoming a very large area in the educational world. And, um, I met two of my very closest friends, who are still—actually Karen [Billings], I met in Oregon, and it's a long story.

But, um, anyways, that division got sold, and, um, there was a man named Tom Snyder and there were a whole bunch of educational computing people. And I had gathered them together and McGraw-Hill wasn't going to publish them, so I was able to give them to Scholastic as part of their catalog, and Scholastic's whole business emerged and educational computing emerged from that. What McGraw-Hill did was they went ahead with computer literacy as their foundational element, until years later, in which case they branched out again. But we were all—there was like a whole collective of publishing people. And what happened is that, at McGraw-Hill, the vice president of the whole computer thing, wanted me to come work for Data Communications magazine as their special project manager. So I did that, and that was my entry into the networking community. Um, it was local area networks, wide area networks—it was right when AT&T was being broken up, and communication technology was booming. And I owned the very first IBM PC in McGraw-Hill. I also owned #16 McIntosh that came off the line at home. I owned Apple machines since the very inception—Apple 1, Apple 2, Apple 3, 2C, all the SEs, the McIntosh's. And I had them all and if I'd kept them all, I would be very wealthy right now.

Anyways, in New York—and I was in that building that was across from Hebrew Union College—I was telling you—

03:34:53 Q: Right. Yes. Yeah. Right.

03:34:54 Weiner: Um, where I had been standing in a phone booth going, “I can't find an apartment.” I was talking to my brother and I looked across and it said, “Now renting.” And it

was a factory that had become lofts. Um, and it was a fabulous place to live. Anyways, um, and twenty minutes from work on the R—I loved it, I loved my life. It’s just a wonderful life.

03:35:26 Anyways, Data Communications—I got to hang out with all of these amazing people who were engineers and creating all the networks which we now know. The Source which became AOL [American Online] and anyways—I’ve had the same AOL account from that, same name, same everything. cweinermh@aol.com—the MH used to be McGraw-Hill, it’s now “My Home.” And I ran conferences and seminars. I went all over and taught business people on various computer stuff, and I did conferences in London and Paris and Amsterdam, and, um, it was just glorious. It was really wonderful. I went to every—pretty much every major city in the United States, and saw regional theater, and art, and music and, um—

03:36:37 Q: And how big now was—? A while ago you had mentioned that at some point you were managing—

03:36:44 Weiner: Later. I’ll get there. Okay, so this is about 1985, and everything in publishing went down. All of my friends in publishing were laid off, and I was laid off. I was in Special Projects, they laid off the entire layer. And I was waiting for this wonderful apartment to go condo. And as soon as it went condo, I couldn’t afford to live there anymore, and I got a fantastic job in Boston, um, working with a company that was a startup. And, again, it was in the office of the person at Scholastic, who I had given all this material to, looking at what I could do. Somebody walked in who had this job in Boston, and was leaving and wanted —so it was a total—it’s how my work worked—

What I forgot to mention was that at McGraw-Hill—you had asked about influence and women—I was one of three women in—so it was ten percent women, thirty men, thirty people in this division. And the way that Dan McMillan, the vice president, used to bring our meetings to order, was that he had a bell that was in the shape of a breast with the bell as a nipple. And that's—I just found it incredibly offensive and I said to men who were sitting there, "What do you think of that?" And they said, "It's horrible." "Well, why don't you say anything?" "Well, he's the vice president." There was also a moment in time when, um, I was asked to hire a particular woman in advertising. I loved her, but she was apparently having an affair with a Corporate VP, so there were all these things, you know, that kind of happen, and I was this cute little innocent person. I really was, too. I mean I just—what I kept doing was being successful, doing whatever I was doing.

So, and then, um, there was another incident that I wanted to share with you from that period. Um—oh, I got it. Shelly [Sheldon G.] Adelson, who has become very rich and famous—he's probably now one of the ten richest people, and he's Jewish. And he pours money into the Republican campaigns and Israel. Um, and he started with McGraw-Hill, running a thing called COMDEX [Computer Dealers' Exhibition], which was this huge trade show in the computer industry, business computers. He made a fortune, um, and I had to work with him as we all did, and he was just icky. Um, and [laughs] never forget this—and the fact that he's so powerful now is just amazing. But he's—all of this stuff happened in Las Vegas, and McGraw-Hill said we don't want you [the Publishing Company] involved in this any more because it's a trade show and we don't do that, and there's the mob, and we don't do that. So we pulled out of that

particular aspect of the business—but I will never forget how creepy it was. And again, I’m at all these meetings. I’m the only woman in the division. Okay? And, I mean there are so many—

We were stuck in a blizzard in Atlanta at an Infotech—one of the conferences, and I met there Jacques [F.] Vallée, who was the French scientist who worked for—I mean, who was the inspiration for Spielberg’s *Close Encounters*, where he was the scientist who said you would talk through music, that was Jacques. He became a close friend, um, and I—he was a kick. He’s a wonderful man. He and I met in the snowstorm in Atlanta, and there were no cars running, and a bunch of us had to go back to the hotel walking. And we played poker and ate shrimp in this hotel, which was the only food available because everybody was stranded. And I kept winning at poker with all these guys, because I’d learned to play poker at ETS with all these women.

03:42:05 Q: Right, exactly.

03:42:06 Weiner: So, the other thing that happened was the Editor in Chief, who’s this wonderful man, George Davis, bet me—I said that the IBM PC was going to replace terminals. Computer terminals. And he said, “No way!” And I said, “You watch.” And I had been on the magazine two months, three months. I knew nothing. I was a kid. He had been an editor of this major magazine on data communication for years and was an industry guru. And I said, “No, the IBM PC’s going to take over.” And he said, “I bet you—” and we did this bet. And a year later, he came into my office, and he said, “You won.” And it was so hilarious. I had already totally forgotten.

03:43:07 Q: Right. That is great [laughs]. So hold on a second.

[INTERRUPTION]

03:43:24 Weiner: Okay, so we're in about 1985, and I'm leaving New York, which is very sad. Uh, but I'm excited about going to Boston. And I move into—I grew up in the Boston area, so I feel like I'm going home. And there is this, um, transition where I'm working for an entrepreneurial startup. I've moved from personal computers and education into data communication and network learning. And now I'm moving into videodiscs, CDs, and I'm working—my major client is Federal Express. And this is a period where Federal Express is just growing, and my role is to do the quality control, and the instructional design, with a team of about eighteen people, working on a \$60 million project, with \$20 million of software, to create a training program for call center, um, couriers, and desks where Federal Express does its business. And, um, it's an absolutely amazing time and I do the program evaluations. So I have to go to Memphis and set up the test runs and the evaluating of the program. So I wind up living off and on for three years in Memphis, which is in and of itself an experience because it's the south, and um, there's all kinds of issues between Whites and Blacks, and old world and new world, and classes. And it's all within the content specialists, the SMEs [subject matter experts].

03:45:44 Q: Within FedEx?

03:45:45 Weiner: Within FedEx.

03:45:46 Q: All this is going on. Wow.

03:45:47 Weiner: Because we have to get all our information from them, then we convert the subject matter and the content into instruction based on what the outcomes are. So, our outcomes were that in a call center, we would slash fifteen seconds off the communication between the person taking your call so you would call up and say, “I want to send a package to Des Moines.” And they say whatever. And we have to cut fifteen seconds off of that, so we have to cut things out like, “Hello? How are you? What are you doing now?” Blah, blah, blah. And we have to do it in relation to these videodiscs. So what we did was we created scenarios for people to follow, who were call agents. Then we created scenarios for the people in the customer service centers. And we created, uh, the “How do you set up your van, if you’re a courier.” So what we had to do was—I ran around being a courier for a week, learning how to set up the van, learning about routes, learning how they traded off. And the two videodiscs that I did—one was on the domestic air bill, and—I forget what the other one was. It was some kind of customer service.

So you worked with video people, screen writers, actors, um, and the computer programmers to create the scenarios and the discs. And then you worked with the programmers to create the logic trees, and you as an instructional designer, created the logic trees. So one incident, for example, is a woman had lost her engagement ring. What do you say? So some of the sequences were things like, “How stupid were you not to—?” They weren’t as blatant as that, but it was really, really engaging and fun for me because I love video. I love being in the studios. I loved working with the testing of the program.



And I can remember we were at the point where we were doing a program evaluation in Memphis, which was going to be the jumping off point for the whole next part of the project. The computers stopped. They were broken in some way, and we were going to lose all our data. Had I turned off the computers, we would have lost everything. But it occurred to me that as long as the computers were on, the data was somewhere. It wasn't gone. So they shipped down our engineers and they extracted the data from the machines that were still running and, um. So those were the kinds of things. And I'll never—we also had these great times where other people would come. We would have this little cohort, and we would go out dancing and country music and eat ribs, and it was just hilariously fun. The part that was not fun—oh, and the connection here for me—I watch *Nashville* and I love it because it reminds me of what my life was like in Memphis. And I got to stay in the Peabody Hotel, and they had these ducks that would go up the elevator, and go up stairs. They had ducks trained ducks. [Laughs] It was just hilarious. And it was just so much fun.

03:49:54 But the day-to-day in the office could be really ugly because there was just—there was a hierarchy in the way that women were supposed to work with the men, and I didn't fit. I did things on my own authority, and I didn't always check in. And there was a moment when I was invited by the U.S. Information Agency to go to the Soviet Union to do a six-week tour with a project called Computers in the Home School & Office. And I needed two months off from work. And we were at the end of the stage of one of the projects and they were in development. So I walked into this VP's office, who's this young guy who was really not—

03:50:57 Q: And this was at FedEx or the startup—?

03:50:59 Weiner: No. I worked for the start-up and FedEx was our client. FedEx was wonderful. FedEx was incredible. It was this young guy, and he said to me, “Why would they invite you to go?” And I looked at him and I said, “Because I’ve done a lot of really exciting and interesting things in this industry. A lot of people know me and they want me to go and do this.” And he said, “Fine, but we’re not going to pay you while you’re away.” And I said, “Fine, that’s good. That’s okay.”

Um—the FedEx, the whole experience with FedEx was so exciting, because FedEx was exciting. I never loved a company so much in my life. I bought so much FedEx paraphernalia. I had FedEx key rings and sleep things. You know, it was just my house was just filled with FedEx. And I loved—to this day I love filling out an air bill [laughs]. It’s just—and I understand all the components to it. I learned everything they had to know about hazardous waste and it was just a wonderful, wonderful experience working with them. And the people, for the most part, when they weren’t hating each other and fighting with each other, they were really wonderful, wonderful people. And it was only a few people who were really a pain. And they ran the company so beautifully, and people loved working for them. I mean, the testimonials for people about—

03:52:33 Q: And where was the hierarchy? You said something about there was a lot of hierarchy—

03:52:34 Weiner: There was a hierarchy within the trainers. It was the training division. Um, anyways—and they were really lovely people for the most part, but God help you if somebody didn't like you. It's typical corporate stuff that happens in big corporations.

My favorite experience was when we were in Memphis and we watched the planes come in and the planes go out overnight. We were examining the overnight delivery. At ten o'clock, every minute, another plane came in. And there was a conveyor belt that would empty everything out on the conveyor belt. Somebody was standing and tossing things to zip codes so that they would get into these big baskets, and then the baskets would go and they'd bring another basket. And, um, they would then—people actually knew the weight—they could tell by just lifting something what weight it was. And they would throw things that were not marked correctly into another basket for recharging. And this would take about two, maybe three hours—all of this sorting and everything coming in. It was a hub—and, um, and then, like at one o'clock in the morning or two o'clock in the morning, every minute, a plane would take off. And then, they had kids on roller-skates go down the conveyor belt to make sure that no package had been lost. And it was like watching a war movie or something. It was like, "You do this every day?" It was magical. It was really incredible. And people loved it. There were a lot of students who worked for FedEx because they could work at night and go to school during the day, and FedEx paid their tuition. It was a great company. I don't know what it's like now—this was before UPS and the Post Office started doing stuff. The one failure they had at this time had to do with the fax machine. They put fax machines into their offices, and nobody wanted to use them. It was an office-to-office fax, not a personal fax. It was a business that never took off.

Anyways, I'm now off to the Soviet Union. And, um, how did I get to the Soviet Union? My friend, Karen, who I had been following—she and I met in the cemetery in Oregon at the University of Oregon. She was dating the dean who had come in and they were very good friends. And I had house-sat for her, which she didn't know, with a friend of hers. Anyway, we all got connected. She moved to NY and I moved to NY. She moved to Boston, I moved to Boston. She moved to Apple, I moved to Apple. She moved to Microsoft, I said I'm not moving. And she and I have been friends since then. Her close friend, Bobbie Kurshan, became one of my suppliers. And Bobbie is now a world renowned business, education person. Has won a gazillion, million awards. And, um, why am I telling you this? Um—oh, because they—we're sitting around talking and they're saying, "Oh, I'm going to Russia." "Oh, I'd like to go to Russia." So I got the invitation, and I could choose where I wanted to go and I wanted to go to central Asia. So I traipse off in February.

Okay, now. Ten steps back, in December, my mother dies, and, um, she's seventy-eight and unexpected—she had a heart attack. And it's like crazy-making on many levels. And, um, I had gone to the March for Soviet Jewry in Washington prior to her dying, and she had said to me—I said, "Should I come to Florida this weekend?" She said, "No, go on the march. It's more important." And that was the weekend she died. It was all very poignant, very sad. My father was a complete mess. Because we had all, expected my father to die first. Anyways, that's a segue, but in February, I'm going to the Soviet Union.

03:58:02 Q: So just two months later?

03:58:03 Weiner: And my father says to me, “Why are you going to Russia? I left there. Why would you go back?” It’s interesting.

03:58:11 Q: So that was—he was from—?

03:58:15 Weiner: He was from the Soviet Union, well, from Russia. He left Russia in 1917, something like that, right after the war.

Um, my mother was thrilled. My father thought I was crazy, and, uh, and I’m still in this [makes a sound] place with my mother having died and this work being what it was. And I arrive in Moscow, and have to get to Tashkent. And wind up traveling through the Russian system in miraculous ways, and spend six weeks in Tashkent with, um, Monica Bradshaw from the *National Geographic* and we get to go on these wonderful adventures. We went to the Tien Shan Mountains, and we went to Bukhara, and we went to Samarkand. And I got to see the central Asia that I had dreamed of—in all of this, I was thinking of a computer game that had to do with, um, Marco Polo and the Silk Road. And Tashkent and this whole area of Central Asia is part of that. We had—I mean, the experiences were fabulous. Um, you had to, uh, travel with somebody. You could never go out in the evening without another person from the group.

04:00:04 Q: From the group—a guide, you mean? A Russian guide or just someone else?

04:00:08 Weiner: Everybody spoke Russian except for me. Monica had been married to somebody who was in the diplomatic core, and he—not diplomatic, sorry—he was journalist

from the AP, so she knew Russian. And everywhere we went, we were followed. And, um, by these people—they're called the friendship circle, or the friendship guys. I don't know.

It was right at the beginning of Perestroika, and [Mikhail Sergeyevich] Gorbachev was in power. And, this group, Action for Soviet Jewry, had come to me in Newton, before I left, saying, "Would you take this stuff?" because I had diplomatic immunity of some sort. And they asked me to ship ink and toner for computer printers. I think I was shipping computers as well. So they all went over to Tashkent and then they went to Moscow with me. And, who knew—I mean, I had no idea what I was doing. Uh, that I somehow was supposed to be making contact with Jews in Moscow to deliver all this material for the underground network, trying to get the Jewish scientists out of the Soviet Union who had been denied visas. In the meantime, a young man, who had gotten out of the Soviet Union but whose parents were still there wanted me to take a bunch of stuff to his parents, who lived in Leningrad. So—

04:01:53 Q: And how far is Leningrad from Moscow?

04:01:56 Weiner: Uh, it's a train ride, sort of like Washington to Boston. I think so.

04:02:03 Q: Boston to Washington is five or seven—

04:02:09 Weiner: I took a train. So I'm in Tashkent and we're being followed and I'm like, "Why are we being followed everywhere?" The phone keeps ringing and somebody hangs up when I'm in the room. The television, either you get sound or you could get a picture. You

couldn't get both. And I'm thinking to myself, "This is a world power? They're going to take over the United States? Forget about it." They didn't even have clicker pens where if you push down, the pen would actually work. You had to, like, put an elastic around it in order to get the top of the pen to stay down so that the ink would come out. I mean it was, like, ridiculous.

We had disks, uh, floppy disks. I think they were eight-inch at that time, that cost us like \$1 apiece. They cost \$100 over there. So we used to give them to the kids that came into the computer lab. No one could believe that I had a computer at home and that I had one at the office, and that I had both a McIntosh and a PC. Just unheard of. One of the weirdnesses is that they had no maps that worked, and they had no numbers on buildings that you could find. So the only way you could figure out where you were going was if you somebody drew you an accurate map, or if they took you there. So when we would have dinner at night with somebody, they would meet us, and we would go with them, and while we were outside, we couldn't talk about anything until we got inside their house.

I accidentally kissed a guy goodbye on the subway who was a brother of one of the people we were meeting with, and he got taken in by the police and interrogated. And, um, there were all kinds of stories like this. And, um, one of the things—because I had all these names of these Jews I was supposed to be visiting with, Monica often came with—other people came with me, or people would invite us to their homes. It was an amazing experience. People would ask us about God. They were curious, they'd never seen a Bible, they didn't know who Jesus was, they didn't know who Moses was. They had sort of heard about it. We got invited to performances,

um, art exhibits, people kept giving us stuff. Pictures, um, and, would we take a letter to their relatives.

In the meantime, um, so I discovered, there is a story of [laughs]—we had to get up very early and we worked until very late. It was very hard work because we were in the computer lab and we were showing kids stuff and all kinds of stuff. One night there was just so much noise on my floor, and I went out and was like, “Be quiet.” And they were not very nice. I went down to the front desk.

04:05:45 Q: And you’re staying where?

04:05:47 Weiner: In some hotel—we were staying in what was considered a five-star hotel in Tashkent. And the people at the desk said, “Oh, they’re pilots from somewhere. Czechoslovakian pilots.” And like, “Well, they’re making noise.” “Well, but they’re pilots. They’ve been flying all day.” And I looked at them and I said, “You run a police state! Get the police here. And get them to be quiet!” And they were like [laughs]—um, but there were many stories like this. And what I discovered at the end of this entire journey was that Monica’s husband was in the CIA, and he was the front desk for the studies on Afghanistan. And the reason we were being followed everywhere was because people knew about her husband. Anyways, it was just—it was an experience.

I fell in love with two, three different people. Marvelous people, mathematicians, and through some intervention, the mathematicians wound up at Bell Labs. I got them out. There was a



theater person there who wanted to come to the States. He was related to somebody in Hollywood, but he didn't speak English well enough, and he was afraid he'd lose his language as a playwright. Um, as a writer. His wife was an artist. Very talented, just extraordinary, groups of people. And they were all being persecuted because they were Jews.

When I left [laughs], uh, Tashkent—I'm trying to remember if I went to Moscow first or I went to Leningrad for Passover. Weirdest Passover I ever had. And, um, the parents of this young man who I had met, had just gotten their release papers—they had just gotten visas to come to America. But they couldn't come unless they got jobs and had a living for expenses. So my friend Bobbie and I brought them over from the Soviet Union—we both pitched in. And they were in the same town—their son was at Brandeis [University]. And all of them are brilliant scientists. I mean brilliant. The father went to work at MIT in the cold fusion lab. His son is now a bioengineer, molecular biologist, who is now in a company in Germany that's doing a bunch of pharmaceutical whatevers. All of them were persecuted—the mother was a mechanical engineer, I think. None of them could work in the Soviet Union. They were doing menial jobs. Gene couldn't go to college, or university either, they wouldn't let him. Um, so it was this kind of miracle.

When I think about life, I had thought that I would be influencing lots of people, and at some level, through a lot of the publishing or whatever, that was probably true. But when I think about the individual experiences, like bringing this couple to Boston. In the Talmud it says, "If you save an individual life, it's as if you save the world," a whole world. And you see that each individual represents a world. Um, and so it was just this amazing thing that on Passover, they

got their visas to come out to the United States. It was really this miraculous kind of freedom celebration.

04:10:05 The other things I got to do, which were wonderful, was that I got to see the Bolshoi [Ballet] and the Kirov [Ballet], and their theaters. It's the most incredible, gorgeousness on many different levels. And Tashkent was just, uh, incredible. Samarkand was just breathtaking. But there were all these experiences of, "How do people live like this?" or "What's going on here?" We had this fashion show in Tashkent with beautiful Tajik silk, all this stuff that Chico's is now copying. And, um, I wanted to buy fabric and bring it back. I wanted them to make me clothes. And they said, "No, this is just a fashion show." "I want to buy something." "No, you can't." And I thought, "Oh, these people are never going to survive under capitalism." They had no idea. When you went to a restaurant, they would have three drinks you could have coffee, tea, and a soda. And you couldn't do, like, "Well, I'd like a 7Up, or—" It was like, "We have one soda. If you like that soda, you get that soda." When I was in Moscow, on my way home, they had no food because I wasn't part of a group. As an individual, I couldn't find any place to eat. They had no food. It was, yeah, I mean, it was like you couldn't walk into the hotel restaurant and order anything. "What group are you in?" "I'm not in a group. I'm by myself." "Nope. No food."

04:11:51 Q: But if you're in a group, then they get you food.

04:11:54 Weiner: Yes, if you were traveling with a group. There were so many experiences. And then, on my last day there, it was six-thirty in the morning and I'm going through customs, and I'm carrying from the—I have all kinds of things like their marriage certificate, photos, tea cups,

and a book by [Mikhail] Bulgakov called *The Master and Margarita*. And it's in Russian and I have all these books that people have given to me, either in English or Russian, whatever. And the custom officials pulled this book out and they said, "This book is forbidden. How did you get this book?" I looked at them, and I said, "It's in Russian. Somebody gave it to me." "Why would they give you this book?" I said, "I don't know. I don't speak Russian. I don't read Russian. They gave it to me. I'm taking it home." And they said, "We're going to have to take you to the Ministry of Culture, and you're going to be investigated. You're going to be interrogated." I said, "I don't know anything." And they said, "This is an antiquity." And I showed them the copyright page, which of course, said it was written in 1973 or something. I said, "Not an antiquity." And they said, "We thought you said you didn't know Russian." And I said, "I don't know Russian—that's a number!"

Oh, my God—because what they had given me—I had every name of every Jewish Soviet scientist who was looking for a visa in my belongings. Okay? And I'm sitting there and I'm going, "Don't let them look through—and don't let them do this—" because I had hidden—everything was—and I looked at the guy, and I gave them each a pack of cigarettes, the two guards, customs people. And I said, "My visa is about to expire. If you take me to your Ministry of Culture, I'm going to miss my plane. I have no visa, I have no way of being here, and the U.S. Embassy is going to have to intervene." And they looked at me and they said, "Cigarettes?" and I gave them the cigarettes and they closed my suitcase and put me on the plane. And we were going out of Soviet airspace, and as soon as they announced on the loudspeaker, "We are now leaving Soviet armed airspace," I burst into hysterical tears. I thought, "Oh, my God."

04:14:33 The other piece of this story was that we were in Moscow, Monica and I, and we were delivering the computers to where we needed to deliver them, and we had just had a meeting at the Academy of Sciences, [laughs] and the guy who was the head kept saying, “Let me drive you.” And Monica and I are going, “No, no, no, no. You can’t drive us to where we’re going.” And he’s insistent. And so we get these boxes and we say, “We’re going over here.” And it turned out he was Jewish. He was part of the Jewish underground. He was taking us to the Jewish—the head of the Jewish underground—with all of this stuff. He said, “Oh, I can take you there. I know where it is.” He wanted us to deliver stuff to his sister, who was in Boston. And [laughs] he didn’t know—that’s why he was so insistent. And as it turned out, these two guys run the computer division at MIT now. Um, but it was this—it was just like, “Am I in the middle of a spy novel?” I mean, it was just inconceivable. But when I now read spy novels or I watch—I go, “Yeah!” These things happen and innocent tourists get pulled in and it’s—

But I was very pleased that I was able to bring all this stuff for this couple who—because, if you emigrated, they wouldn’t let you take your heirlooms. They wouldn’t let you take your photographs, so you had to leave with nothing. And so I just—and they were hilarious. They said, “Should we try and get our bookcases there?” I looked at them. “You want to ship wooden bookcases from Leningrad to the United States? I don’t think so. They have bookcases.” Anyways, there’s lots more from within that saga, but I’ll move forward.

04:16:43 That company that I was working for as a consultant, um, was sold. One of the things I had said early on was, “There’s a mistake in what we’re doing, and it’s not going to all fit on the computer when we’re done.” And they said, “We’ll worry about it when we’re done.” We got

finished. It didn't fit, and Federal Express made them do it all over again. And it cost a gazillion million dollars and I was like, "Don't listen to me. I'm just a kid. I'm just—" Um, the company got sold, and we got a little bit of equity, which I unfortunately didn't cash in right away because there was a whole—this thing with Federal Express. And then the company that bought us got into a whole accounting whatever. And so there was a lot of, you know, Wall Street junk that went on.

And I moved—what had happened was that I had been working on—I did a bunch of other video discs. American Airlines, IBM, I did a Learning-to-Learn thing for IBM, but I was the project director for a project at Apple. And they wanted me to come to Apple as a consultant to finish the project, so I did. And I had a fantastic experience working for Apple.

04:18:14 Q: And what was the project?

04:18:15 Weiner: Oh, it was a training program, um, for people selling. It was a sales training videodisc of some sort.

04:18:26 Q: A sales training program, for Apple salespeople?

04:18:27 Weiner: Yeah. And then, um, my friend Karen again—uh, connected me to their educational marketing division, and I ran a project for Apple, um, doing teacher-developed software. Educational software working with a company in Santa Barbara. So I moved up to Palo Alto, leaving my stuff in Boston. I still had a condo in Boston. And I commuted back and forth

to Santa Barbara. Lived for long periods in Santa Barbara doing this work. And then the woman whose house I was living in in Palo Alto, she said, “Move all your stuff out here. You can stay.” And then she sold her house. A lot of grief and loss, by the way, in all these transitions.

Um, so I was stuck, and I wound up getting a fantastic little apartment in San Francisco overlooking the Bay in a gentrified area, which is now a gazillion million dollars. In each of my homes that I left, had I stayed there, I’d be a gazillion millionaire, but at the time—and I started working for a company, CCC Paramount. No sooner had I started—I was a project manager for an at-risk sales curriculum, it was brilliant, it was wonderful. And Bobbie came and she was one of my people, uh, my developers. So there’s all of this in my life. There’s ins and outs of working with people.

And, um, there’s sexual harassment going on with my boss that I wasn’t really aware of. But this guy, my boss’ boss, you know, he was giving me a hard time and I looked at him and I said, “You know, if you’re going to keep harassing me, I’m going to leave, because I don’t care about this job, and I care about my ability to be comfortable at work.” And, um, he stopped. It was like going up against a bully and then years later he wanted me to come work for him. He had been rehabilitated and whatever. He had been fired for this job because he eventually got convicted of sexual harassment.

Um, and, uh, I loved my boss. She was absolutely wonderful. And, um, but I had this project from hell. And I had this woman from Boston who I’d brought out to do this project. And she was brilliant but she was nuts. And she was like, “You spend more time with the engineer than

you spend with me.” And I’m like, “He’s not your brother. I’m not your mother. This is not the reenactment of your family dynamics.” In the meantime, I introduced her to a friend of mine and they got married. They’re still married—living happily ever after. I think the only reason I was in this job was because I was supposed to introduce the two of them.

Um, and, um, no sooner were we in the midst of this job, um—do you remember the expression, “There’s no crying in baseball?” with Tom Hanks.

04:22:04 Q: No.

04:22:05 Weiner: Oh, there was a wonderful movie, and there was one point where she was crying in a business meeting, and I was like, “There’s no crying here. We’re not crying in this meeting.” [Laughs] Anyways, it was a brilliant project. It was millions of dollars of all over the country, doing life skills. It was an amazing—we did an amazing job.

04:22:33 Q: Say the project again.

04:22:23 Weiner: It was called “Choosing Success.” And it was about making choices in your life that would lead to success. And it was teaching basic skills, so it was teaching how to read a newspaper, how to do your bank account.

04:22:55 Q: And this—the market was what?

04:22:57 Weiner: It was high school kids across the United States. And it was particularly aimed at kids who were considered at-risk. But it was really globally accepted. And it became an award-winning marvelous thing. It was a year-long curriculum, and it had dozens and dozens of, um, materials. Um, and, uh, there was a point—oh, I know. There were two things that happened. One, our partner in this project was Miami-Dade Public Schols. And they had a hurricane. Hurricane Andrew. Blew the roofs off of our schools. I said to our vice president, “Is there any relief that we can—?” I sent him an email or a memo. And his secretary said, “You spelled his name wrong.” And I said, “We’re talking about a hurricane and disaster and you’re worried about how I spelled his name?” It turned out that he was gay and the head of Paramount, whoever they were—he was gay. They were having a relationship, and it blew up and I don’t know—I don’t remember the whole story, but it was ghastly. The whole thing was ghastly. And it was before being gay, knowing gay—it was, um, everything was hidden. Oh, it was just awful.

And I—the second incident was, um, Texas. The state of Texas said that you couldn’t talk about self-esteem because that was eliminating Jesus as the most important person.

04:24:47 Q: So this was the beginning of the whole resurgence of Evangelical Christians?

04:25:04 Weiner: And I went, “You got to be kidding me.” Because one of the things we were teaching through this program was self-esteem and identification and—so I said, “Okay, we have to cut out this whole level of curriculum because this whole program won’t sell in Texas. If it won’t sell in Texas, it won’t sell.” You have all these political things in the school system.



The other thing that happened [laughs]—I still can't believe this. We were teaching kids who—high school girls that had gotten pregnant and had babies. So we went to the pregnancy high school in Miami to visit and find out what was going on. It was the most gorgeous school I think I've ever been in. And they hired babysitters to take care of the babies while the girls went to school. You can understand that. But then, when they were teaching home ec on how to take care of a baby, they were using dolls. They were diapering dolls instead of their own babies. And I thought, "This is the height of idiocy." In the program, we were teaching that getting pregnant when you were twelve was not a good idea. We were getting pushback from the African American and Latino communities that this was a girl's way of building self-esteem.

04:26:33 Q: You're kidding me.

04:26:35 Weiner: And that we were messing with the values of the community. So we had to go back to the drawing board and figure out how to deal with that one. In the meantime, the Black woman, whose name I can't think of became the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Donna Shalala, she was African American, and she said, "The biggest medical risk in our community is twelve and thirteen-year-old girls giving birth to illegitimate children." Once she said that, we were allowed to move forward with our curriculum. But when we said it, no way. And it was at that point that I said, "I got to get out of the public schools because I can't deal with these marketing issues when it comes to curriculum development."

04:27:49 Q: Plus, these aren't marketing issues. They're belief issues. Seems to me that their belief issues are getting in the way.

04:27:55 Weiner: And they're basic values. Um, and, um—so I was at a trade show, once again, a friend introduced me to this guy, Peter Doctorow. He and I hit it off, and I decided that I wanted to move into the game industry. And in the background of all this, I'd been doing leadership development in multimedia and knew all the people who were creating things like the multimedia stuff, um, all kinds of software that I can't think of the name of it. It was a movie system, Macromedia, and I knew the people at Adobe, and, um, all the CD-ROM people.

The CD-ROM industry was going under, and, um—no, not yet. Sorry. Anyways, I decided to shift into the gaming industry, and Peter Doctorow is the vice president of, uh, Activision which is one of the major gaming companies. Just starting out, they just—so I got to be Executive Director of their children's game division, which was one of the best jobs in my entire existence. Fantastic. And, so I got to do entertainment. I was interviewing writers and actors and directors—all kinds of stuff in Hollywood. The Hollywood film industry was going under, and, um, a lot of writers and, um, your not-A-list people were trying to do games because they thought it was going to be fabulous. If you write a 120-page script for a movie, you get \$120,000. If you write a 700-page interactive gaming script, you get maybe \$20,000. So very quickly people realize this was not—um, but they were still interested. Many people were still interested.

And we were at the cusp of adventure games, and I got to meet fabulous people. But my particular project was, um, working with the Muppets on Muppet Treasure Island. So I was working with Jim Henson Interactive, and got to meet, not Jim Henson, but the current Kermit

and Piggy and the whole crew. And, um, I was a co-designer and writer of this game. Fabulous, fabulous, fabulous. And my friend Eddie Dumbrower had moved from Activision because he got this job as head of Jim Henson Interactive, and he had me come in and I was working, as an instructional designer, with two fabulous people who were screenwriters. And we developed, Lindy's Neighborhood, Things That Go. And Lindy was the most adorable Muppet. He had these little striped feet, and he was just wonderful. I fell madly in love with him. But when he was on the stand, he was lifeless. The muppets don't do anything. Like, who is this? And as soon as the puppeteer puts their hand in, they're people. It was fabulous. It was really interesting and the games and stuff that we created were wonderful.

And then Jim Henson Interactive went under in terms of what they were doing. Muppet Treasure Island came out. It was one of the best-selling games in that time frame. Um, and we got a bunch of awards. Um, but Activision had laid me off six months into—and I had a contract that said, “If you lay me off before six months, you have to pay my salary for X number of years and blah, blah, blah.” They wouldn't honor the contract. And I had to hire a lawyer, and it was—I got one of the incredibly wonderful entertainment lawyers and she said they were the worst people she'd ever dealt with in all of her experience.

04:32:34 Q: This is Activision?

04:32:35 Weiner: Yeah. Bobby Kotick and Howard Marks. In any case, we got some severance from them, but I got to continue with the project, which is what I was really interested in, and credit on it. And I'll never forget, at the end of the whole experience, Bobby called me into his

office and said, “You did a fabulous job, and you didn’t harass us or do anything.” And I said, “Why would I do that?” And he said, “Well, that’s just what people do.” And I just thought, “Boy, this is a weird world.” But I learned a lot about agents and writing—the whole business, and it was interesting. It was really, really interesting to me. And it fulfilled a dream. I had certain kinds of, um, dreams and aspirations.

And no sooner had this project been finished but I got another job with another Internet startup, horrible. Ex-Disney people, this woman—oh, she was just horrific. And they went bankrupt. But they lied to all of their employees, and it was just like, “Who are these people?” Um, and I’ll never forget—I quoted a Bible section to the board of directors. I was so pissed off at them. I said, “It’s really a terrible thing not to pay your workers for their work.” And they were like, “Oh, you’re quoting the Bible?” Then they said, “Are you going to sue us?” And I said, “No, I’m not going to sue you. You’re too stupid to sue.” And they were like, oh, okay. But they were really nervous for a while there.

And my employees, who I hated—the only people I ever disliked who ever worked for me, they were these three guys. They all decided to steal their computer equipment because they weren’t being paid. So while the video cameras are—because everything was, you know—they take their computers out of the building. And I thought to myself—so then management came to me and said, “Do you know what your employees did?” I said, “They’re not my employees anymore. You take care of it.” So they had to call these guys and say, “Look, if you don’t bring the equipment back, you’re going to be prosecuted.” And I said, “What kind of a company is this?” Um, anyways, so that was that—I was there for about thirty seconds.

04:35:22 Then McGraw-Hill picked me up. They were starting a consumer gaming division in their—and it was an entrepreneurial division that they were mounting in San Francisco. And I said I would do it, but I wouldn't move to San Francisco. I wasn't moving for two years. I said, "If the company lasts for two years, I'll move." So I had this fantastic job, the job of a lifetime with WGBH in Boston doing a science project, and an animation company in Vancouver doing a math project. Two companies in Los Angeles doing two social studies projects, a "European" history game, which was on ancient Egypt, called Pyramid, and an American history game called Pony Express Rider. And in the background I was developing a game of Homer's Odyssey, which had been part of my life for years. Um, and we had about a million dollars invested in it, and we were designing something called David's Harp, which was on the cultural interaction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Jerusalem over the centuries that was based on teenagers going to Israel on an archaeological dig, and, um, falling through the cracks of the city of David. This is like fifteen years ago, all of which has actually happened. I was prescient in some way. They didn't find David's Harp, but they found a whole bunch of stuff in the tunnels.

04:37:10 Q: And isn't there—? There's some kind of a show on TV about that.

04:37:16 Weiner: The Dig. It's on the tunnels. It's, uh, it's a whole other kind of—

04:37:25 Q: It was interesting to me that it at least has some premise around the tunnels and the—

04:37:33 Weiner: Absolutely. It's all about—but again, this was fifteen years ago. Before, um—and the premise is that David's Harp has ten strings. Each string has three strands so in order to solve the game, you had to solve ten puzzles. Each puzzle had a Jewish, Muslim, and Christian component to it. And when you solved the game, there was this magical song that would take over the world on peace and love and whatever. It was a great game. Um, conceptually, it was a great game. So I had the treatment written for that.

And then we had a story-telling game that was out of this world that was based on building role and character and, um, psychology. It was an amazing game. Anyways, the four games got developed, and McGraw-Hill decided to kill the company. Prior to that, they had decided to get rid of me. There was a new person who came in as the head, and I had been promoted and given all kinds of money in stock that was going to be vested in, um—I don't know, whatever. But I was, um, fired, like—I don't know—a month before anything vested. And it was this guy who was the president—the new president—who I had brought in, and I thought, “Huh?”

Anyways, my lawyer told me a story that was very interesting that had to do, again, with, uh, a male-female thing. He was gay. He was the person that reported to, my boss. And he had—he disliked women, women in authority. And, um, she also told me about a management thing where when people are promoted as managers, they fire everybody who had anything to do with hiring them because they didn't want to owe them anything. So that was a whole—it was a whole thing. And the controller didn't want to finish *The Odyssey*, because he hated learning *The Odyssey* when he was in high school. And they both decided that doing a game on *The Odyssey* was, even though we had a million dollars invested in it, was not going to go. And, six months

later, Robert Halmi, Jr. a big Hollywood person, came out with a big miniseries on *The Odyssey*, which earned a gazillion million dollars. And of course, this game would have come out at exactly the same time. And it was a fabulous game. It was following *The Odyssey* through the eyes of Telemachus, the son. So if you knew *The Odyssey*, it could help you, but you were on your own journey, trying to find your father. It was a great game. Um, my other game was on Marco Polo's Silk Road, which hadn't gone into development yet.

So anyways, they wouldn't give me the rights to any of this. They wouldn't give me the rights to *The Odyssey*, to any of it. They weren't going to publish them, they wouldn't let me have the rights. So they all died. All these games died. The four games that were produced were written up in The New York Times as being "the best educational games ever to hit the market." They were brilliant. They were really brilliant. There was a chemistry lab, there was a mathematical thing, and there were these two social studies games, Pyramid and Pony Express Ride. They were just wonderful games. And filled with content and, um, curiosity.

04:41:47 And that was where I had been the VP of Creative Development and Production. And I had working for me 150 employees and six teams, and, um, and I had—my technology VP, we had a fantastic rapport. The one thing that I did not do, and I didn't understand it at the time—I didn't create a cash cow, which would have been a series of basic skills games. And eventually, McGraw-Hill bought Knowledge Adventure, which was in that realm. And as it turned out, the Knowledge Adventure guy, who made a million dollars—a billion dollars—was a congregant in my congregation in Los Angeles. And I at one point said to him, "You owe me and God some respect." Um, he was an interesting character, very smart business man.

Anyways, I loved, loved, loved my teams. I loved these projects, and I was absolutely crushed. This was like losing—It was like a stillbirth. Losing *The Odyssey* after I'd been trying to develop it for twenty years, having a million dollars invested in it, getting through all of the strum and drum of creating a game that was going to be brilliant, and it was gone. It was all gone. And people would say to me, "Oh, it happens in Hollywood all the time. People pay for a screenplay and they never produce it." I'm like, "How do you deal with that?"

So in any case, you ask, what was the—? This was the moment of Weiner becoming a rabbi. Because I had gone as far as I was going to go in terms of the corporate world. I was the VP in a Fortune 100 company. Um, I was at the top of my game in terms of, um, computer gaming and education.

Oh, I forgot to mention another thing that was very cute. Um, Brian Waters, my partner in crime here, and I saw—we knew that there were some issues. He was meeting with Google, and he brought to the front a partnership between AT&T, Google, and McGraw-Hill to do content-oriented searching. Okay? Um, the Google people needed money, AT&T wanted a venture, and AT&T was the person content company, because they're a big technology company in the business world. [Laughs] The people who knew, you know, in the company said, "What's search? Why do we want to do this? Who are these college kids?" And we kept going, "This is Silicon Valley. McGraw-Hill is so New York. It's so financial. It's so—" And so they passed on this whole deal that Brian had cooked up. And I just looked at it and I went—oh, and the other



thing was that Google didn't want me because I was too old and I was female. They were not so into females, um, and they didn't want Brian because he was too old. We were too old.

04:45:32 Q: How old were you at this point?

04:45:33 Weiner: I was about fifty. I think I had just turned fifty. So I was at the top of my game, the top of everything, and I said, "Okay. Been there, done that. I'm done." I had a year's worth of severance and money that I'd saved up, and I was still living in, uh, Los Angeles. That was the other thing. The boss who let me go—oh, by the way, I was let go in August. And the reason I didn't go the Barnard reunion that year was because I went to this big computer show to introduce all of our software instead of going to reunion. Anyways, they laid me off in August, um, and then McGraw-Hill shut down the whole division in December. And they lost about \$20 million dollars and took a tax write-off. I mean, it was just—but we had been, when we went on, you know, we were given five years and \$20 million as an investment. And they were going to wait and see how it went. And, it didn't. They took it, as I said, as a tax write off. And what they determined was that they couldn't compete with Disney and Mattel and the consumer marketplace, because we were consumer—that they really needed to focus on the school market and, um, and then the whole industry shifted away from CD-ROMS. All our games were CD-ROM, into—they really were the boxes, the game boxes—

04:47:27 Q: So the platform changed although the content was still—but the platform up and changed. Right.

04:47:32 Weiner: And the technology was no longer relevant, that we were using. So I discovered that I was taking eighteen credit hours of Judaica while I was figuring out what I was doing for the rest of my life. And I went, “Oh, maybe I should become a rabbi and do something with all this studying of Judaica.” I didn’t want another Ph.D.—I didn’t need it or want it. But I always wanted to serve in some capacity as a Jewish educator. And I’m at a stage in life—I’m fifty—um, where’d I’d like to do something that could sustain me into old age. And, um, there was a new seminary starting in the Los Angeles area. I had, in the background of all of my life, been studying Judaica and going to Jewish programs and camps and adult camps and all that. It was very much a part of my life and my lifestyle.

This seminary was starting. It was very interesting. I went through HUC, which is Hebrew Union College, the Reform movement, and they were like, “You’re too old.” I mean, they say this to all the women. They changed their tune five years later. But, they were not accepting older women. And the Jewish Theological Seminary was in New York. I wasn’t moving. American Jewish University said, “You have to be an observant Jew for us to take you in. We won’t take you in and then have you transition.” And the Academy for Jewish Religion-California said, “We love you, and you’re exactly what we’re looking for.” A lot of my cohort in Los Angeles were either on the board of directors or they were faculty, and it was a no-brainer for me in some way. It was just the right thing to do at the right time.

And, um, I got a rabbinic internship that a friend turned over to me, Kehillat Israel on Pacific Palisades, working for Rabbi Sheryl Lewart and Rabbi Steven Carr-Reuben, who we met in the ‘70s in Israel. Um, and, uh, I had a terrific run there. It was five years. I was an educator. It was

the Reconstruction movement. Rebecca Trachtenberg [Alpert], who was in my American Studies program, had become a rabbi through the Reconstruction College at that time. I had never heard of Reconstructionism. I was a Conservative Jew and if I couldn't go to JTS [Jewish Theological Seminary], I couldn't be a rabbi. And so it never ever occurred to me that I would go to HUC [Hebrew Union College] and be a Reform rabbi. The first Reform woman rabbi was ordained in 1972. First conservative was '85. The Reconstructionist was 1974. Um, and, uh, it was like, "Wow, I could have done this in 1971, but then I wouldn't have had this life."

04:51:18 Um, and parallel to all of this, um, my father had died two years after my mother. Um, and I have all of these interactions with my family. When I was at McGraw-Hill, I visited a niece who was in, um, she was in Amsterdam and then she was in Ireland and then she was in Greece—so I have all of this side, you know, what was going on in my family. But as I tell my story and think about my story, family was not at the center of it in that way. Really, the center of it, um, was this trajectory in—it was being on the wave—on the crest of the wave, and jumping from the crest to the crest, to the crest.

And when the Internet came up, it was "I'm done. I just want to swim in the swimming pool. I'm no longer interested in the ocean. And I'd like to swim in the Sea of Talmud." And, um, there were issues that came out with Kehillat Israel. I wanted to put up a computer lab, they had the money, I had the expertise. The executive director had a thing about my working her too hard doing innovative things. She didn't want to do it. We got into altercations. I created a program there called Menschlichkeit Matters, which was a values-based Jewish education program that was a catalyst for synagogue change. And, um, it was funded by a major organization in New

York, Covenant Foundation, and working in collaboration with the Josephson Institute of Ethics. And it was—it transformed the entire religious school and the synagogue.

Um, but I did it too quickly, and with too much—arrogance is the wrong word—but without an understanding how changing a culture like that can backfire on you. And, um, again, it was like having a stillbirth, because the program should have continued and it should have been replicated, and a lot of programs since have built on that material, because I gave it to people.

Um, but I didn't own the intellectual property. That was owned by the Josephson Institute. And as soon as the temple board of directors realized that they weren't going to make money off of it, they didn't want to continue with it.

And then, life and times changed, uh. I had done a lot in Jewish education throughout Los Angeles, and had, um, a really deep spiritual experience in something called Sarah's Tent, where a woman named Dr. Savina Teubal and another woman, Rabbi Judith Halevy, built this spiritual organization that really transformed the dynamic of, um, women's worship in the Los Angeles area. And, um, I took that energy and went to the Berkeley area, which didn't work out for a lot of reasons. Mostly because Berkeley is one of the craziest places I've ever, in my life, tried to be. And that was true when I was there working for CCC Paramount. I was only there for like two years, and then I came back for two—there's something about San Francisco that doesn't connect with me, whereas I lived in LA for twenty years and it was just a nurturing, wonderful environment.

04:55:42 So fast-forward. Berkeley didn't work out. The crash of 2008 happened, and I was financially destitute. And my brother said to me, "We have an apartment in Miami, in Hollywood, Florida, and I'm not going there very much anymore. Why don't you go there and see what happens until the market settles out." I came to the area. I didn't know anybody, and I walked in to an adult Jewish study session. A wonderful woman, named Rabbi Efrat Zarren-Zohar, was the head of this organization and she said, "There's a rabbinical association meeting right after. You're new. Why don't you come?" I went. I was sitting next to this wonderful young man and he said, "Would you like to be a chaplain?" I had nothing else going on. I said, "Why not?" The program was starting in a week. They needed another Jewish person. I went to Jackson Memorial Hospital and became a chaplaincy intern, and I did that for a year. And it was fabulous.

And then, um, uh, Rabbi Simcha Silverman, this young man, moved to New York. And he had been a resident at Jackson Memorial Hospital, and he left his residency, and the Director of Chaplaincy asked me if I wanted to do a residency, so I did. At the same time, I got Simcha's job, um, with the Greater Miami Jewish Federation running a program called Refuat HaNefesh Fellows Program, um, the alumni section of it—it's a training program for the people visiting the sick. And, I created programming for people who had graduated from the program. And, um, the following year, um, I got a full time position as an interim education director at a congregation. Ran up against a parent who wanted me to fire a teacher, uh, which I wouldn't do when I first—I came in November because somebody they had hired didn't come, and she wanted me to fire this person. "Well, I just got here. I need to—" And I did a lot of investigating and team-teaching and all kinds of stuff. There was no reason to fire this teacher. "If your child is unhappy, then we'll

move your child to another class.” She said, “No. Then it will be my child’s problem. And she wants to be with her friends.” I said, “I’ll move all of them to the other class. They don’t mind.” And she said, “No. This teacher needs to be fired.” Well, I went to the rabbi, went to the executive director.

It was just one of these things where it’s an issue of entitlement that comes up in congregational life, both Jewish and non-Jewish, all over. This person was a major donor, um, and she made a lot of noise. And at the end of my contract, they basically didn’t renew the contract, and I took a look at my life again, and—I did wonderful things in the year, but the people who adored me were the elders. And we did Rosh Chodesh, which is a once-a-month women’s group. The adult confirmation class adored me. The family education was great. It was the religious school. And the rabbi was desolate. Um, and I looked at the whole scene and I said, “What do I want to do next?” And it was, “I think I’m done with religious school education. I don’t want to work in these programs anymore, and I have gifts and talents. And I have an aspiration to do some real-change projects within the Jewish community. And maybe this is God’s way of telling me, “Go do it.”

So, what I’ve been doing was, I took on the directorship of this training, uh, in this past, I had gone to Ghana with the American Jewish World Service over the summer, and I did a whole bunch of programming on slavery and human trafficking, working with our Jewish Community Relations council. And did some writing—

05:00:36 Q: You say “our Jewish community relations council—”

05:00:39 Weiner: In Miami.

05:00:41 Q: So was this part of the synagogue or was this part of a separate Jewish relationship council?

05:00:47 Weiner: Okay, so the way the Jewish community is organized—there's a Jewish federation in most major cities and communities. It's a central agency for raising money and distributing it to different people, some in need, some not. So Jewish Family Services, which are social workers, they take care of lots of different people in the community who need help. Counseling, Russian Jews, Holocaust survivors, hunger, charity. The Federation does programs like teen programs, the March of the Living, the Jewish film festivals, disaster relief, supporting the Jews in the Soviet Union, um, doing South American Jews. I mean, whole bunches—and community projects.

So *Refuat HaNefesh* is a community project. It's the community chaplaincy program, and we visit—um, we now have 168 alumni, uh, and we visit, um, probably twenty different agencies in the city, visiting people. And, um, there were about eighteen congregations that are now starting community caring committees. And what I'm looking at doing is, um—I don't know if you know what the Village Networks are. It's intentional living related to aging in place. And it's creating interactions between volunteers and people who need services. So you pay a membership, people volunteer to help out other people. And so it economically allows people to stay where they are.

Um, and what I want to do is merge that concept with synagogue congregational membership, because synagogues are dying. Older people don't join synagogues because they see no services that are aimed at them, and so they want to—I'm thinking that this may be a way to merge both concepts. It also gives an outlet for intergenerational connection. Because the teenagers could do a lot of the volunteer work and visit with elders. And a lot of people in the Miami area don't have grandchildren, in their life—and so there's a mutual symbiosis. So that's a project that—there's another project that has to do with mikveh, which are spiritual immersion systems. When you're changing from one status to another within the Jewish faith, um, your—you go through a mikveh. It's a water purification system used in the Orthodox community, but there's a counterpart in the communal level. But Miami only has Orthodox mikveh, and there's a model for creating the educational-based mikvehs in Newton, Massachusetts, Mayyim Chayyim. And what I'm trying to do is get one going in the Miami area. So those are two big projects that I'm—and in the meantime I'm going to figure out how to earn a living, um, and have accommodated to, um, being in Miami, which I had for a long time, really wanted to relocate to Los Angeles. And I realized that you can't go home again.

05:04:54 And I financially can make it in this area if I can pull a few things together, and so I'm looking at that as my spiritual rational for why I'm in Hollywood, Florida. And I say to people, "I moved from one Hollywood to another." Um, and my family is mostly based on the east coast, and so there is a certain familiarity. And a lot of my friends and cohort and business associates have retired. And a lot of them are ill. So the world has changed. And, I look at my life and I go "You know, it's like, again, the flyer on the telephone pole." I got a call from the University of



Miami asking if I wanted to participate in a project that has to do with Jewish peoplehood. And I've done a lot of thinking in this area, and so maybe that'll be a great opportunity. And the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem recruits rabbis to join their cohort, dealing with the next century of Jewish life and peoplehood. So I'm going—and they asked me to apply. So I applied, but I did not get the fellowship.

I don't know if that will happen. It's a three-year program, and I have to come up with a—it's a matching grant kind of experience. And, you know, we're having our forty-fifth reunion, and I'm looking forward to doing a workshop on transition and transformation [laughs]. Um, and here I am in the middle of transitioning once again, and transforming. And, um, really appreciate the connection to New York City, and, um, an institution that I think was very formative foundational and in life, and meeting you, uh, and participating in this project.

05:07:22 My association with Judaism is all about narrative. It's all about telling the story. And, I believe that our lives unfold as our narratives unfold and we have the opportunity at all these different places in our lives to rewrite our script, and reconstitute our narrative, to have a fuller sense of meaning, uh, to who we are and what we do in the world—the difference that we can make. There's a saying, which is on my email, "It is not your responsibility to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it." And, you know, it's not over until it's over.

And I'm sorry I didn't present my family, but as I've been telling—it's like they're so foundational and fundamental and in the mix. But in terms of my story, they interject in ways that have to do with the unfolding of a different narrative in certain ways. And because I didn't

marry and don't have my own family, I think that that—where I was talking about family versus work, I think that my life has really been molded, um, by the work that I've been able to do.

When I was reading Steve Jobs' biography, I was recognizing how I was there as a fly on the wall in each stage of what his narrative was about. And it was a different narrative, but it was running parallel, and I feel like I've been very blessed to have run the parallel of the twentieth into the twenty-first century as a woman, as a Jew, and as a daughter in my own family.

And what I can end with—you know, I get teary when I say this—when my father came home from the second world war, he said to me—I mean he said to my mother, that he wanted to have another child, because of all the children that had been lost in the Holocaust. And I was born in 1949 after the establishment of the state of Israel. And I believe that my life has been a journey to reconstitute that community through, the technology and spirituality that I've had the pleasure of being a part of in—[pause] sorry. And just concluding the anecdote is that I wound up doing High Holiday services and Yizkor, which is our memorial service in Honolulu, last September. Right before my sister died and one of my great nephews was bar mitzvahed. No, actually, it was after. It was after both of those events. Both of those events had occurred. And I kept hearing my father, who loved being stationed at Pearl Harbor after the bombing. For him, it was all about the adventure. And I feel like I've been on a spiritual adventure, which is continuing. So thank you.

05:11:34 Q: Thank you so much for sharing all of this, and for being on this spiritual journey.

05:11:40 Weiner: Thank you. Namaste.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**A**

Aaron Zevit, 4  
 Academy for Jewish Religion-California, 112  
 Albert Ellis, 71  
 Alternative College, 40, 50  
 American Jewish University, 112  
 Andrew Sarris, 39  
 Annette K. Baxter, 44  
 AT&T, 81, 110

**B**

Barbara Bush, 49  
 Barbara Novak, 52  
 Barnard College, 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 34, 37, 38, 40,  
 41, 42, 43, 47, 49, 50, 52, 54, 56, 57, 111  
 BBYO, 27, 28  
 Bell Labs, 94  
 Bill Gates, 80  
 Bobbie Kurshan, 90  
 Bobby Kotick, 105  
 Bonnie Raitt, 32  
 Boston Latin School, 62  
 Brandeis University, 95  
 Brian Waters, 110

**C**

Carol Dwyer, 74, 75  
 Catharine R. Stimpson, 39, 50, 51  
 Clearing House for Student Initiated Change in Higher  
 Education, 9  
 Columbia Law School, 7  
*Columbia Spectator*, 13  
 Columbia University, 7, 10, 12, 39, 41, 45, 47, 49, 53  
 Covenant Foundation, 114

**D**

Dan McMillan, 83  
 David Ben-Gurion, 28  
 Donna Shalala, 103  
 Dwight W. Allen, 9

**E**

Eddie Dumbrower, 105

Edward Said, 39  
 Efrat Zarren-Zohar, 115  
 Ellen Gesmer, 26  
 Eric Yoffie, 38

**F**

Federal Express, 85, 87, 88, 89, 99

**G**

G.I. Bill, 46  
 Gayle Riordan, 43  
 George Davis, 84  
 Godla Meir, 27  
 Golda Meir, 27, 28  
 Google, 110

**H**

Haile Selassie, 21  
 Hebrew College, 17  
 Hebrew High School, 28, 42  
 Hebrew Union College, 31, 81, 112, 113  
 Howard Marks, 105

**I**

Idi Amin, 19

**J**

J. Edgar Hoover, 10  
 Jacques F. Vallée, 84  
 Jane Austen, 45  
 Jane Fonda, 46  
 Jeanne Chall, 65  
 Jef, 31  
 Jerry Avorn, 13, 53  
 Jewish Family Services, 117  
 Jewish Theological Seminary, 38, 112, 113  
 Jim Henson, 104, 105  
 John Moffett, 11  
 Josephson Institute of Ethics, 114  
 Judith Halevy, 114  
 Jules Goodison, 74

**K**

Katherine M. Millet, 50, 51

Katherine M. Millett, 40  
Korean War, 52

**L**

Lane Community College, 46  
Laura Geller, 31  
Lee Benson, 39  
Linda Elovitz, 54  
Linda LeClair, 40

**M**

Maimonides Day School, 46, 62  
Mark W. Rudd, 48, 49  
Marlaine Lockheed, 76  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 80, 95, 98  
Mayyim Chayyim, 118  
McGraw-Hill, 77, 79, 81, 82, 83, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111,  
113  
Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, 92  
Moshe Dayan, 28, 29

**N**

*National Geographic*, 24, 91  
New York Historical Society, 39  
Northeastern University, 59

**P**

Peace Corps, 23, 26  
Peter Doctorow, 104  
Prince Charles, 25, 26

**R**

Ralph D. Abernathy Sr., 13  
Rebecca Trachtenberg Alpert, 113  
Reconstruction College, 113  
Refuat HaNefesh Fellows Program, 115  
Ruth Dayan, 28, 29

**S**

Savina Teubal, 114

*Shalom Achshav*, 37  
Shawn Zevit, 4  
Sheldon G. Adelson, 83  
Shlomo Carlebach, 53  
Shulamit Aloni, 31  
Simcha Silverman, 115  
Smith College, 7, 8, 49  
Steve Jobs, 79, 120  
Steve Wozniak, 79  
Steven Carr-Reuben, 32, 112  
Students for a Democratic Society, 48, 49  
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 13

**T**

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 7  
Todd Gitlin, 53  
Tom Hanks, 101  
Tom Snyder, 79, 81  
Tony Roma, 61

**U**

University of Hawaii, 65  
University of Massachusetts, 9, 10  
University of Oregon, 65, 90  
University of Washington, 65  
University without Walls, 51

**V**

Van Morrison, 32

**W**

Waldorf School, 37  
Wellesley College, 49  
World Bank, 76, 77  
World War II, 20, 52

**Z**

Zalman Schacter-Shlomi, 53