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AN INTERVIEW WITH GARA LAMARCHE

FOR THE

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview session with Gara LaMarche on December 2nd, 2014 in New York City with Shaun Illingworth as part of the ACLU Oral History Project for the Rutgers Oral History Archives. Thank you very much for having me here today. To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

Gara LaMarche: I was born on August 26th, 1954 in Westerly, Rhode Island.

SI: Tell me a little about where you grew up and your neighborhood.

GL: I grew up in a small town in Rhode Island on the Connecticut border on the shore. The town was about 14,000 people in the days when I was growing up. My father and mother and all my aunts and uncles had grown up and all still lived in the town. So it was kind of small town life. I went to the same Catholic school my father had gone to and had some of the same nuns that taught him. The community contained beach resorts, like Watch Hill, Weekapaug, and Misquamicut, that many people went on vacation to. So, as a child in the summertime we went to the beach every day and when I got a little older I worked at the beach growing up. I had the good fortune to come from a very lovely, small town that was on the shore.

SI: What did your parents do for a living?

GL: My father was for most of his life a salesman. Neither of my parents had beyond a high school education. My mother worked in a mill when she graduated from high school and eventually did a few receptionist type jobs, then didn't work outside the home until we were grown up and my parents had divorced. My father worked at a few jobs in banks and then was a salesman for a textile firm that made elastic web, which was a big employer in the town and he traveled New England and upstate New York selling this product to garment manufacturers.

SI: Growing up in this environment, what was most of interest to you? Was it school? Was it something else?

GL: I was kind of a geeky kid in some ways. That is to say, I was always very interested in the presidents and states and all that kind of stuff. I was very unusually public affairs-focused from an early age. My outside interests were mostly reading, model-making, sports a little bit--although, I never really did sports. I wasn't much of a joiner. It's a very strange thing, I've sometimes said, because my later life I've been very active in organizations, ever since college really. Many people who know me for most of my adult life would have a hard time understanding that until I got to high school I really didn't do that much outside the house. I had a cousin I was close to, and my brother, and we all hung around together. We had no other friends to speak of. We had a lot of fun and I wasn't a recluse, but I never joined the Boy Scouts, I wasn't an altar boy, I wasn't in Little League. I didn't even have a paper route. I did nothing, really. I watched a lot of television, a great deal of television. When I got into high school--the elementary school was in a small town, but the high school was a Catholic school taught by the Christian Brothers about thirty miles away in Connecticut. [I] took a bus and then I drove there

when I had a driver's license. That was a sufficiently wider universe so that there were more outlets for my particular interests. So more kids like myself who were not that sports inclined. Actually, this is part of the story of how I got to the ACLU eventually, which is as a freshman in high school I entered a public speaking contest that was advertised in like November of 1968 and won it with a speech--which is kind of ironic given what happened later--about why the country should unite behind the newly elected president, which was Nixon. The moderator, I guess you called it on a debate team, was a guy named Brother Philip and the prize for winning this contest was to get a spot on the junior varsity debate team. So I got on the debate team. High school debate was an important thing for me and there's another chapter to this later on in my foundation life where I did some work to fund high school debate, but it was important to me. I wasn't that good a debater. I was good on my feet, so I wasn't a failure as a debater, but I didn't really work at it enough to be very good. It was helpful for me in a lot of ways. Then I eventually became the editor of the newspaper, too. So, I hung around with a bunch of kids like myself and there were things I could do that were extracurricular that spoke to some of the things I was most interested in that weren't available to me in a small town. So, high school was kind of a wider world for me, but the guy who was the moderator of the debate team the year after I won this contest, left both the high school and the Order of Christian Brothers and moved to New York to get a graduate degree. In 1971 or so, he saw an ad in the bulletin board at his college that the ACLU was looking for some part-time staff person to staff its academic freedom committee. He got that job and we stayed in touch. In the spring of 1972, the ACLU Academic Freedom Committee, which no longer exists, but it had been founded in 1925 or 1926 by Roger Baldwin and had been in its day an extremely important body on academic freedom issues in the country and took up all kinds of cases--Bertrand Russell and so on. It had among its members--these names meant nothing to me at this time, but it had among its members over the years, John Dewey, and Reinhold Niebuhr and Mary Woolley, and all kinds of very distinguished scholars and academic leaders. So this committee, which by fifty years later--well, not fifty years later, but whatever--forty-some years later when I came into it, was not quite as distinguished, but essentially was populated by older--so they seemed to me mostly white male college professors. There came a time in the late '60s, early '70s, after the students rights movement and uprisings that they thought they should have a student member, who would represent the views of students. I don't know what process--in fact, that should be an interesting historical exercise because the minutes of the academic freedom committee would be available someplace, I guess at Princeton. They decided to get a student member and my former teacher said, "Well, I know a young man who is coming to Columbia as a freshman and he'd be a good member for the committee." Somehow or another, they liked that idea and so I was asked by him, did I want to do this? I didn't even know that much about the ACLU probably, but I thought, "Yes, why not?" I had to come to New York. I guess I'd already been accepted to Columbia--come to New York in the spring of 1972 to meet the ACLU officials because you couldn't be appointed to a committee. The board had to vote on all committee appointments. It wasn't an automatic thing. So I went to meet with Alan Reitman, who now died a couple years ago, but who was the long time associate director of the ACLU and who oversaw the board and all the committee stuff. I remember nothing about the meeting itself, but I had to be vetted by him and I guess that went well. The great

significance of the meeting to me was that when I got in the offices of the ACLU in lower Manhattan, which were then at 156 Fifth Avenue, around 20th Street--and remember, I'm seventeen years old, I'm not even eighteen--on the sofa in the waiting area was a fedora hat, a felt hat. It must have belonged to somebody. When Reitman came out to get me he was accompanied by Roger Baldwin who he had been visiting with who was then ninety--yes, about ninety--who had left his hat ... always wore a hat. That was the first time I had met Roger Baldwin on my very first day at the ACLU. I got to know Roger pretty well in what would end up being the last seven years of his life. Anyway, I'm digressing a bit from the high school thing because it actually led directly--very, very serendipitously led to my connection to the ACLU, which became a lifelong connection, but it was an extremely unusual thing there to be kind of plucked out of this small New England high school and then all of a sudden in my first week in New York be part of this very prestigious committee.

SI: You start out in your freshman year debating for the presidency of Richard Nixon. Was there much of a political change in you during high school? Did that come in college?

GL: I don't know if I had a hugely well-developed politics as a kid. My parents are not particularly political. My father was well informed, read the newspaper, was a very fair minded person. I don't come out of any--many people I came to know and deal with over the years in all the jobs I've had grew up in households where people were either--they were academics or they were journalists or they were public interest lawyers or whatever, and they absorbed their politics growing up. I did not have that experience. Mine came more from trying to copy or be like a few teachers who introduced me to magazines and newspapers and things like that. So when I was in high school, I had a subscription--this sounds very pretentious and is I think, but--to, I don't know, the *Village Voice* and the *New York Review of Books* and the *New Republic*. I think that's what got me into Columbia actually because I remember when I went to New London, Connecticut for my interview--I was a good student and so on, but nobody applied to Columbia from places like my high school. It was partly the novelty of it as I later learned when I became friendly with someone from the admissions office. I happened to apply to Columbia in a period of time where they were doing kind of an affirmative action for parochial school students. So they were looking for Catholic school students to apply to Columbia. But I think I impressed the former judge--well, I guess he was a lawyer then who eventually became a judge--who interviewed me, when he asked me what I read and I was like, "Well, all this stuff." My formative political memory was John F. Kennedy, who I idolized like a lot of young New England Catholic kids. Then [Lyndon B.] Johnson seemed to me to be an interloper. I didn't like him. I've come to have much more appreciation for LBJ. I think LBJ was a much more significant and better president than Kennedy, but in my child's eye view of things I didn't see it that way. Then, I liked Gene McCarthy when he ran against LBJ. I had vaguely liberal views. I was against the [Vietnam] War. I wasn't even so much a fan of Nixon as I was--I don't know. I came up with that topic really as a unity theme, but what's ironic about it is that the ACLU itself beginning in around '73 or '74, was very significant in efforts to impeach Nixon on civil liberties grounds long before it became more widespread. They were out ahead of the

curve. When was a college student by 1973, I was petitioning in the Columbia campus for Nixon's impeachment. So, yes, in that sense, it was kind of a strange odyssey.

SI: I'm not sure if you said it on the record. What was the name of the advisor?

GL: Phil Ryan is his name. For all of his significance in introducing me to the ACLU, his connection to the ACLU was a blip in history. He probably worked for the committee for one year. He had no prior or continuing relationship, but he was there at a significant moment for me.

SI: It's very interesting because I also went to a Christian Brothers school and they can be a pretty conservative lot. He was a brother?

GL: He'd been a Christian Brother. He left the Order [of Christian Brothers] and came out eventually as gay, which a lot of them did. This weekend, my wife and I are going out to spend an afternoon with another former brother who's married and has kids and grandchildren, who was my advisor on the newspaper. So it's my nature to stay in touch with people anyway, but I'm in touch with several of the high school teachers I've had who are still living. You're younger than me by probably a generation, so the Christian Brothers--the moment at which I was in a Christian Brothers school was in 1968 and '69. So you're still in the relatively close post-Vatican II period. [Editor's Note: The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) was opened by Pope John XXIII in October 1962 and closed by Pope Paul VI in December 1965. The Council focused on issues related to the Roman Catholic Church's role in the modern world.] You have all the changes in the '60's in the society. The brothers, most of them dropped their habits while I was there and wore blazers and ties. Most of the younger brothers who taught me left the within a year or two of their teaching me and very few actually stayed in. The school itself was a very progressive place. I myself was not really that--by that time, I was not that Catholic. I didn't know what I believed and I stopped going to mass when I was fifteen or so. In the school, while it had obviously religious character, it had very little religious content to it. A lot of the teachers, both lay and clerical, were in the context of the times kind of '60s progressives and there was almost no discipline or dress codes. So people think when I went to a Catholic high school that that must mean that I went to some kind of authoritarian discipline place, but it was actually one of the most intellectually lively places I've ever been a part of and it was a very, very good high school experience for me for that reason. A little bit after I left, the diocese began to follow more conservative trends in the church and the diocese cracked down on the high school and eventually--I still get all their newsletters and stuff. There's hardly a religious teaching in the high school now, but I think I was there through a period of time that was unusually liberal.

SI: Did you find it to be a shock to go from that environment to Columbia? What was it like going to Columbia in 1972?

GL: Columbia in '72 was probably a low point for Columbia. Again, had they become as competitive as they now are, I probably never would have gotten in. You had in '68 the Columbia Riots, SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] and all that. Then you had

another set of them in 1970. That coupled with the being around the low point of quality of life in New York City--crime rise and everything else--Columbia was still prestigious, but a less desirable institution. For me, Columbia--was it a shock? Well, I never had set foot on the Columbia campus until I matriculated there. My parents, not having gone to college, we didn't go on these college visit kinds of things. I applied to four or five colleges. The only other that was very selective that I applied to was Yale, which I got waitlisted for. I went to Columbia. My parents didn't know much about college so we didn't go around to visit places. I had been to the city a few times when I was sixteen, seventeen, in fact, one time to visit this teacher who had moved there. So, I knew the city a bit and the city was--no, it wasn't a shock to me. It was very exhilarating to me. I wanted to be in a city. I didn't get to explore the city beyond Columbia too much for the first six months or so, but once I did, I really considered the city more my campus. Well, I don't know, since this is ACLU-focused, how much of this you're into.

SI: Well, it's about the people who make up the American Civil Liberties Union. So it's germane.

GL: So, I had an odd Columbia experience because I was in the dorms the first year and then I heard about housing available across the street in a fraternity house. I was kind of the least likely fraternity recruit. The fraternities were at a very low point then, too. There was this house called Phi Epsilon Pi, which had lost its national sponsor. So somehow or another Phi Epsilon Pi, which was an historically Jewish fraternity, had some financial problems. The national fraternity vanished and the local was orphaned, by itself. There was another fraternity called Zeta Beta Tau, also historically Jewish that was thriving nationally, but had lost its Columbia house some years ago. Anyway, this was more like a boarding house than it was like a fraternity, but I heard there were rooms there and I pledged the fraternity. I went through some weird initiation ritual and then I got in. I lucked out in the room selection because I got -- this is a brownstone right across the street from Columbia--I got a single room with a bath for myself the first year. It was in wretched state because it was a frat house. When my father came to take me back the second year, whatever he was paying for Columbia [University], I mean he just couldn't believe that I was going to live in this hovel, which I made into a fairly nice place. Eventually I became president of the fraternity, which is another story. So I lived in the fraternity house, but I wasn't that active--I wasn't that focused on my studies. I'd be one of these people that if I became celebrated and they went back and interviewed people in college, there would be very few people who would remember me. So my best friend today was my roommate in my freshman year. So we're quite close and remain close, but I hardly have another friend from Columbia--not because I lost the friends because I actually was focused elsewhere. I was active in the ACLU. They began to give me work in addition to being on the committee. So by the time I was a junior I was working part-time at the ACLU and from the time I was a sophomore I was teaching nursery school in Morningside Heights just south of Harlem in this housing project that was the first racially integrated housing project south of 125th Street in New York. That was also serendipitous. One of the things about being as old as I am and as kind of over sharing as I am--all the things we've talked about I've written about some place or other. Like the story about how I met my wife through going to a meeting on Nixon's

impeachment, which also led to my being a nursery school teacher. I worked twenty-five hours a week as a nursery school teacher in my final two years in Columbia--some of the most fun I ever had. Then I was also working another five or ten hours a week for the ACLU. So I just shoved my classes into the interstices of that, such that I barely graduated. I would say my Columbia years were my introduction to the city and to various worlds that became significant for me but, the school itself made relatively little impression on me or vice versa. I mean, Columbia now tries--I'm happy to say--to claim me as some kind of alumnus and I am an alumnus, I've been profiled in the alumni magazine. I'm happy to meet with Columbia students and do what I can for Columbia, but I don't have a lot of school feeling, not because I have anything against Columbia, just because I was kind of using Columbia as a place to do whatever else I ended up doing. I just wasn't that focused on my student life, but I loved being in New York and I've been in New York with the exception of a short stint in Texas, my whole life since.

SI: The nursery school teaching is very interesting. You said it was the first integrated housing project. Was it predominantly African American?

GL: No, it was a very, very racially mixed environment, both in the faculty and the parents and the students. It had started in 1957. The school doesn't exist anymore. It was called Gardens. It started as a private nursery school with a very kind of progressive approach to education. The kids would go--and most mothers didn't work--three hours in the morning or three hours in afternoon. Sometime in the late '60s, early '70s they became--changing with the workforce--kind of an all-day program and they also began to accept subsidies from the city for kids who couldn't afford it. So there were always scholarships. So they had Columbia professors and International House people and the whole academic world of Morningside Heights, Jewish Theological and Manhattan School of Music, and so on. Then they had kids from the middle class housing co-op that housed the school, but across the street were the Grant Houses, which were a public housing project. There were working poor people. There were international students. I'm going to surprise you given what I said about my high school teachers--some of the kids who I taught over three or four years, four or five years, I'm still in touch with. They're forty-four years old now. They're not kids anymore. Among the kids that I'm still in touch with, one is an African American girl who's a physical therapist and then Jody Rosen, who's the music critic for *Slate*, and Sasha Koren, whose father was a *New Yorker* cartoonist and is the digital op-ed editor of the *New York Times*, and then a guy named Paul Haven who's an AP Bureau Chief in Mexico City. You had an unusual mix of all races and internationally and income levels, from a lawyer's kid to a housekeeper's kid. The significance of that experience for me was in addition to liking working with kids very much, was I had never been before in any kind of racially integrated environment. I grew up in an all-white town. Columbia itself was virtually all white. The diversity that I experienced there was different. Non-ethnic Catholics was my entire childhood. I wanted to go to a place like Columbia or Brandeis because I was smart enough to know as a high school student I should broaden my universe of people. You know what I mean? I shouldn't be with people just like me, but I wasn't thinking Blacks or Latinos at that point, so much as other religions, but the nursery school was a great exposure to working with people and with families with kids--and that was probably, to

this day, the most multiracial environment I've ever worked in. That was the social significance of it for me. Not only that, but being more exposed to people of different backgrounds and class backgrounds and income levels. The first kid I ever met being raised by gay parents was there, which was very unusual at that time and not always embraced by the other faculty members at the school. One of my co-teachers was an Orthodox Jewish woman who was about my father's age. She died a couple of years ago, Mariam Levy, who was very, very traditional, married a rabbi, wore a wig, did the ritual bath thing, took twelve days off for every obscure Jewish holiday. It was unusual for her to even be working, much less in that kind of environment, but I learned a lot from her. It was a great--much more than Columbia itself, it exposed me to more--and I must say than the ACLU itself, which in those days had very few people of color.

SI: Tell me a little more about the work of the Academic Freedom Committee from the time you started in 1972.

GL: In the early days of the ACLU, and for many of years afterwards, it was substantially a volunteer organization. The number of paid staff was very few. The work of the ACLU got done through volunteers, for instance, legal representation. You'd get some lawyer to represent you pro-bono. I don't know when it was when the ACLU hired its first paid staff lawyer, but it was at least the 1940's. It certainly wasn't during the 1920's. Then, what you might call casework--so the ACLU had a couple of standing committees and one of them was in academic freedom. In the '40s and '50s with the Red Scares and the Smith Act, and all the various state Un-American Activities Committees and the loyalty oaths for teachers, it was a huge amount of work on what you call academic freedom. [Editor's Note: The Red Scare is the hysteria associated with the perceived threat of Communists within the United States in the post-World War II Era. Historians also refer to this era as the McCarthy Era as Senator Joseph McCarthy accused many people of being communists and adding them to black lists. The Smith Act or Alien Registration Act of 1940 was passed by Congress and made it illegal to be a member of a group that supported overthrowing the United States government.] The ACLU would investigate these cases, issue the findings, campaign on behalf of people who were wrongly dismissed, all that kind of stuff, and then also debate policy on the limits academic freedom because as you know from doing this work, the ACLU had points in its history it wasn't as faithful to the Bill of Rights as it has been in more recent years. So there was the 1940 Resolution that barred Communists from the ACLU leadership and a lot of stuff that the ACLU, in the light of history, was wrong and many people saw it as wrong at the time. But having known a lot of those people--I'm not that old myself, but because I came in at such a young age, I knew a lot of people who had been through it, I generally hesitate to second guess people because it's hard to appreciate the pressures that people were under at the time. Alan Reitman, who I worked for, who was one of the more conservative ACLU people who had a strongly anti-Communist bent--liberal anti-Communist--his feeling was that the ACLU survival was at stake in a period of time when to be put on the Attorney General subversive list might have meant the death of the ACLU. Certain compromises that people made, they felt they made for the overall good of the organization. The organization did survive and correct its course. Who am I say? I wasn't there. Plus, I didn't live under the pressures that people lived

under then, where you could lose your job or your livelihood. I've never had to face that kind of test, so it's easy for me to say I think the ACLU was wrong in some of what it did, officially and unofficially, but those are not the easiest questions. They're easier to answer from the comfort of 2014. Historically, the committee did casework. If you look back at the history of it, which I did because I actually wrote a history of it in 1976--which I've forgotten most of--it was mostly casework. By the 1970's there was nothing of that, partly because they weren't the kind of academic freedom issues--dismissals for political views. There weren't many of those. A lot of it centered around tenure and why tenure was important, to protect academic freedom and already there was a lively debate about whether college professors were conflating job security through tenure in their own professional prerogatives with academic freedom. The committee debated those kinds of issues, fairly one-sidedly because there were mostly tenured college professors on the committee. I got joined eventually by a few other people who were either younger or diverse racially and gender-wise. There was, I think, one woman on the committee when I joined out of twenty members. What we did was debate policy statements. I co-chaired a committee with Alice Kessler Harris, who's still around, who's a historian, who was a member of the committee--I'm all of twenty-one--on student rights. We wrote a manual for the ACLU on student rights--stuff that would now be done on a staff basis. Then we debated knotty policy questions and we made recommendations to the national board. There were seven committees in those days. I was a member of the Academic Freedom Committee and then eventually was hired to be a staff associate for a few other committees--the Equality Committee, the Communications Media Committee. Then skipping a little ahead in the story, in 1978, I guess, there were seven part-time people staffing these committees and I was one of them, making twelve-hundred dollars or something like that. I was doing this part-time and teaching nursery school because I continued to teach nursery school after I graduated in '76, and making a pretty good living for myself--living on \$6500 dollars a year or whatever my combined income was in 1976. Then the Skokie case hit in '77 and '78--as you probably know from whatever source, big deal for the ACLU. [Editor's note: *National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie* was a famous case in 1977 regarding the right to free speech, in which an ACLU lawyer named Burton Joseph successfully defended the right of members of the National Socialist Party of America--formerly the American Nazi Party--to march through Skokie, Illinois, which had a large Jewish population.] Many members resigned over Skokie. There's an alternative history of that that you may have heard--whether it might worth going into at some point--which is there's a school of thought that the Skokie case was overblown as a explanation for the ACLU 's financial difficulties, that the ACLU was actually not that well managed financially and used various tricks and chicanery to balance the budget and that the Skokie case was in that sense a gift because it enabled them to run around and raise money. They took the right position, the free speech position. They lost some number of members. The way the story generally gets told is that to take that stand on principle, the ACLU lost a lot of members. But then they gained a lot of people who supported them because they took that principled stand. The members who remained were much better members because they were really committed to civil liberties and not just fair-weather friends. I think that's generally true, except I think it also is the case that the ACLU--I wouldn't know--at that time I was too junior to know, but I've come to know over the years that Aryeh Neier, who was running it at the

time, who was my boss subsequently in a couple jobs and still is somebody I'm close to-- I'm going to have lunch with him on Monday. He's in his late 70's now. I'm not so sure the ACLU's finances were in good shape before Skokie, but in any case, the finances weren't in good shape. So in '77, '78 adopting the budget for the next--'77 I guess it would be--adopting the budget for next year. You'd have this national board meeting of like eighty people and then they would present a budget. Then they put a big chalkboard up or a whiteboard and people would make amendments to the budget--really not a good way to operate professionally. People would say, "I move that we cut this so that we can restore that," that kind of thing. The committees, by that time many people had thought had outlived their usefulness because there was a professional staff operation managing the work of these committees, which were mainly debating societies about policy was taking a lot of staff time and not that relevant anymore. They ceased to be "doing" committees. They were more "thinking" committees. So there were all these people who were criticizing the committees. They thought they were too New York-centric. But there was a big constituency for the committees because it was a field team for the board and a lot of people on the board were on the committees and so it was a closed question. Anyway, Aryeh Neier actually cut out of the budget--no offense to me; he hardly knew me at the time--cut out of the budget all the committee staff lines. So the committees would have no staffing and the forces of support for the committee took that--I'm trying to remember the numbers involved, I don't think they were that important but let's suppose that the seven people staffing these committees made eighteen thousand dollars collectively. So somebody proposed to create one position to staff all the committees and that would have a salary of eleven thousand dollars. That motion prevailed. Everybody lost their jobs and I got the job of the one--I became the eleven thousand dollar person. I got the job that was created and I started full-time with the ACLU January 3rd, 1978 doing the work of seven people. Then when Ira Glasser became the Executive Director in October of that year, he was no fan of the committees either. He decided to appropriate half of my time to be an assistant to him. So I was supposed to do the committee job in half that time. Also, I did a bunch of projects for him, which was a tremendous opportunity because he was the new director of the ACLU. It was a kind of a research aide ... kind of thing. I didn't stay that long because by the next seven or eight months later I got the job at the New York Civil Liberties Union, but it was a great education. You may have questions about this. For me personally, the work with the committees--first on the Academic Freedom Committee--when I set foot in the Academic Freedom Committee, I was this long-haired, pimply freshman in college just out of a small town. I didn't know enough to be as intimidated as I should have been. The Dean of my college was a member of the committee. I hardly opened my mouth for a year, but eventually I did and I became the vice chair of the committee. I went with the flow. Then because ACLU people kind of knew me and liked me, they kept offering me jobs. So I staffed the various biannual conferences. I took minutes for committees and I was one of the minute takers for the national board from around 1974 for three or four years. So I had a ringside seat on all the kind of key issues in the ACLU in that period of time. I got to sit at the board meetings and listen to these debates. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a member of the board at that time and I got to know a lot of people. It really made a big impression on me because I probably learned more through the work of the ACLU at the board and staff and committees than I did in any other setting. It was a learning

opportunity for me and it quickly gave me a big grounding in a wide range of policy issues that really stood me good stead in my next ten years or so in my ACLU career anyway, and made it possible for me to advance in life without ever going back to school. It was an amazing education for me. Because I had the opportunity to meet so many people and interact with them through the committees, through the board, through the biannual conference, by the time I was twenty-four or twenty five, I probably knew as many people in the ACLU as anybody. That enabled me to be--that's why Dorothy Samuels when she went to the New York Civil Liberties Union wanted to hire my twenty-four year old self to be her deputy because I was a veteran of the ACLU at that point. I knew more than she did about where the bodies were buried and so on. Then when I was thirty, I was the director of the ACLU in Texas. Kevin Keenan, have you met him? He's now at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, but who was the director of the ACLU of San Diego for a while. [He] was also involved at a young age. There are other people who had been--a few other stories that are somewhat similar, but for me, I kind of feel like I was the--in the one sense I started at the top with a board appointment to a committee I had no right to be on really. But in another sense, I started in the mailroom taking minutes for meetings. Then eventually I was on the executive thing myself.

SI: Getting to some of the major issues you witnessed during this period, the first that springs to mind is the impeachment of Richard Nixon. Tell me that story from your perspective. You're based in New York. How are people viewing it here? I've heard this story from others in California and elsewhere.

GL: Well, my vantage point on the impeachment of Nixon and the ACLU was kind of as a foot soldier.

SI: That's something I want to get throughout the interview. You're giving me a lot of historical perspective, which is great, but I also want to know what was your perspective at the time.

GM: Right. Though I was on the Academic Freedom Committee, it was the New York Civil Liberties Union, the local affiliate that was first out of the box on impeachment and they had these great materials. They had a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, which I have a copy of someplace. But it was very stark; why it's necessary to impeach Nixon now and a bill of particulars and a coupon. You don't get much of this anymore in the internet age. But for causes in the '60s and '70s the full-page newspaper ad was a big deal. People would clip out the coupon and send in money--write an envelope, put a stamp on it and so on. They raised a lot of money from a newspaper ad. I went down to the NYCLU or something, got a bunch of these fliers and then I was motivated by the Saturday Night Massacre in October of '73, where the President wanted the prosecutor Archibald Cox fired because he was getting too close to the truth. Elliot Richardson, the attorney general refused to fire him and resigned. William Ruckelshaus, the Deputy Attorney General, refused on principle and resigned. The Solicitor General, who was next ranking justice department official, Robert Bork, stepped up and fired Cox. Those people all went on to play different historical roles, particularly Bork. Like a lot of people I heard that news on a Saturday night on the radio or whatever it was, and I was

really outraged by it and the next day, there were fliers over campus. There was a meeting at the law school about what to do about it. I went and there were like, hundreds and hundreds of people. I was sitting in the audience and there were some people there who were trying to really relive the student uprising ... It was a lot of "Let's take to the streets," and so. My own reaction was that if you really wanted to get rid of Nixon, if he was going to be impeached, you had to convince Congress. If you were going to convince Congress, you had to have some kind of grassroots thing. So I got up at one point and made some oration about why I didn't like the drift of the conversation, what I think needed to be done and then I kind of--I don't think I stormed out of the room; I left the room. Then a few people followed me and said, "That made a lot of sense. Let's start our own little group." So we did and we got--this is charmingly antique. So we got a card table [laughter] and put it out in front of the main gate to Columbia. We got a World Almanac with the names of all the members of Congress. We bought a roll of stamps and a pad and envelopes and we stopped students. The idea was that people came from all over the country; it was a college. We said, "Here's a flyer about Nixon. We have all you need to sit down right now and write a letter to your congressman." So a lot of people did and we generated a lot of letters and local news covered it and all that. Coincidentally, because there's so much serendipity involved in all of this, an older graduate student who was in the room with me that night who followed me out and who did this impeachment thing with me, a guy named Albert Devereux had been a nursery school teacher at this place. It was through him that I got the job at the nursery school because he learned that I liked working with kids and I wanted some money and he introduced me to some of the teachers at the school and one thing led to another. So that serendipitous act led to my nursery school career and my meeting my first wife who was a teacher at the school. So I'm a big believer in chance or fate. I don't know. I wasn't in the governance at the ACLU at the time. I was just somebody who was pleased that they were filling the vacuum and providing materials and opportunities for people to work on Nixon's impeachment. I worked on it. I don't have any sense, certainly not from my own direct experience of how controversial or uncontroversial that was within the ACLU. I learned over years since that there were debates on the board about it. That was a period of time when the ACLU was grappling with kind of an old guard and a new guard. The new guard was represented by Aryeh Neier and Ira Glasser, who had been his deputy at the NYCLU. Aryeh Neier was you know, thirty-three when he took over the ACLU in 1970. He was twenty-six or twenty-seven when he was the director of the NYCLU. Aryeh and Ira and some others around them represented people who wanted the ACLU to be more closely allied with the social movements of the day; the anti-war movement, the Civil Rights Movement and so on--feminist movement-- wanted the ACLU to be more directly involved in representing clients rather than just filing amicus briefs. There were a number of things that I was not the direct participant in, but I've come to know a lot about because I know most of the people involved. In the late '60s and early '70s, battles that played out both in affiliates and in the national office about the direction of the ACLU. I would argue that that direction was essentially set when Aryeh Neier won election as executive director in 1970 by just a handful of votes, because the alternative Larry Speiser, who I think has since died, was a fine person, but would have been a much more static kind of choice. The ACLU threw its lot in with this kind of new breed. They had a lot of battles in subsequent years over that. Even though Anthony's has had his

battles in the last ten years over some things, the ACLU is a much more tranquil place than it was that period of time. It was a much more broad-based and substantial consensus about what it should be doing. Whereas the kind of battle for the direction of the ACLU, some would say for a return to the early days of the ACLU, which was a much more activist organization. More before I got there than afterwards, but it was still playing out in the four or five years after I became active in the ACLU. The impeachment thing was one of those chapters, which was, "Wow. The ACLU is going to be really out front, calling for the impeachment of the President." I think there were probably concerns that it might be seen as violating the ACLU's nonpartisanship. While the ACLU doesn't take roles in election, is an impeachment like that? There were grounds to impeach Nixon and the argument that ACLU made, I think successfully, was that the proper grounds were violations of constitutional rights that were laid out. The ACLU did a very good public education job, kind of bringing to wider attention the serious of abuses, not just in Watergate as such, but in also some of the-- COINTELPRO [Counter Intelligence Program] and all the other government spying things. That was my involvement. The impeachment, I was only involved in it for a month or two. Eventually by early '74 impeachment was beginning.

SI: Another one of these fights about the direction of the organization was whether to stick with more traditional civil liberties issues or to branch out into the idea of economic well-being as being a civil liberty. What do you remember about that debate from what you could see in the board meetings and elsewhere?

GM: Well, it was always kind of a subtext. I don't think this means much in the ACLU anymore, but in those days you might say it was kind of a right-left thing. Not that the right people were right-wingers in any broader society sense, but there was kind of a conservative ring in the ACLU. Some of this was--not exclusively, but it was, to some extent, geographical. The California affiliates were always kind of the more left affiliates if you will. Some of this stuff was proxies from very old battles over communist/anti-communist stuff, long after people were communists or anti-communists anymore. Some of those divisions echoed in subsequent fights. I would say the economic rights fight was probably the biggest fault line of that. There were institutional governance issues as well. But on policy matters, it was more the economic rights stuff. What was my vantage point about that? Since I staffed the biannual conferences in 1976 and 1979 and then eventually--what year would this have been? Twenty plus seventy-five. 1995, I chaired the ACLU 75th anniversary conference, but I was staffer for the '76 and '79 biennials, both of which were held for some strange reason at Mount Vernon College in Washington D.C. They would typically be at a biennial back in the days when there was a more democratic body. They've done what they can to neuter the biannual conference so it doesn't cause this kind of trouble but it was a creation of the ACLU's history in which the national board was New York-centric and the affiliates ... So the biennial was kind of a vox populi kind of device to force the board to take up issues. Even by the mid '70s, it had outlived that function because the national board itself was eighty-three people who came from every one of the states. So the idea that the biannual was a more accountable body was really open to question, but that had been its history. So people in the ACLU who wanted to force an issue would try to get a resolution to the biannual conference. So

as I recall, my memory of this is imperfect--I don't know if you saw the *Times* op-ed today--I don't know who it was--but about the faultiness of memory and how people can remember something wrongly.

SI: It's a big part of our work. [laughter]

GL: As I recall, every biennial for a number of biennials, the Southern California people and their allies would try to pass an economic rights resolution and to get the board ... which is that the ACLU declares that it's a civil right to have a house and a job and food. So, for some years they managed to pass those. The national board would beat them down. I can't remember the numerical vote requirements anymore. Then eventually they stopped passing them; they got defeated at the biennial. I say this as if I was against it. Actually, I didn't know what I thought at first, but I actually became one of the more vocal pro-economic rights people in the ACLU over time, greatly disappointing my mentor Alan Reitman, who was a staunch anti-economic rights person, as Roger Baldwin was, despite having been a Communist at one point. I honestly don't even know how the ACLU resolved that in recent years. They've gone some distance toward it. In any event, the debates are not as sharp as they were. But for a while, that was the big thing for people to fight over--the next frontier. If you step a little bit back from that, the way I would say this played out was--and this is a crude over statement of it--from a more First Amendment focused organization political civil rights--church/state, freedom of speech and assembly, and so on and some due process issues in the criminal justice system--to an organization that saw civil liberties in a much broader sense, not just for elites, but for the rights of kind of ordinary people. Neier's greatest contribution to that was both intellectually and organizationally, to set up a series of projects focused on the rights of women, of prisoners, of young people, of mental patients. People who had been--it's a little bit like the story of the country, which was white male slave owners. That's expanded so that the people who are considered citizens or people who have rights are much greater than they were. The ACLU went through a similar kind of process. So abortion rights, gay rights, all those kinds--the 1976 or 1979 biennial--I can't remember which, I sometimes tell people this story--ne of my jobs as staff person was to staff a caucus of people, self-interested people--that is to say people who wanted to meet together because they cared about it--about gay rights at a time thirty-five years ago or forty years ago almost, when the ACLU essentially didn't deal with gay rights. I don't know when the ACLU passed a policy saying that the criminalization of homosexuality is a violation of civil liberties. But I don't think it was until well into its history and decriminalization is a different thing than rights. I remember meeting with this group of people--some of them were gay but most of them were not--and talking about how to push the ACLU to take this on. A lot of people said, "My affiliate is utterly against this. They won't do this. They think it's going to dilute our mission." There were all kinds of arguments about that. I think the expansion of the ACLU's universe of concerns to a wide variety of other groups that had been the outside the ... Bill of Rights was fought over here and there. There was some resistance, but eventually prevailed. I think that was another one of the ... of argument. That, and the kind of techniques of advocacy, whether or not you confined yourself to--if you represented somebody directly, you controlled the case more. At the same as you might have to deal with a wider range of

issues and the ... ones that you could do in an amicus brief. Those issues all got hammered out over the years, just before and just after I became involved. Sitting in the national board meetings I had a window on the repeal of the 1940 resolution and debate over that, the debate over the Rosenberg case, which was long gone by the time I got there. [Editor's Note: In the early 1950s, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were tried, convicted and executed for spying on behalf of the Soviet Union in relation to acquiring information regarding the atomic bomb.] When it had been revealed that the judge in the case had had ex-parte contact with the prosecution, the ACLU's own FBI files came to life in 1977. When the ACLU applied for, under the Freedom of Information Act, its own FBI files in the late spring or summer of 1977, they arrived and they took up a whole office this size or twice this size in the back of the ACLU--filing cabinets full of these files. Somebody had looked at them a little bit; enough to know that there was important stuff in there. Aryeh Neier was briefed on it and decided that somebody should be assigned this top secret mission--and not to tell anybody what he was doing--of reading every page of the FBI files over the course of summer and noting things that were problematic. Now, when we started to do that the concern was what the FBI did to us. But the biggest takeaway of that period was not so much what the FBI did to us, which was not surprising. They spied on the ACLU. They had minutes of meetings, and blah, blah, blah. There were all kinds of stuff that was wrong but not shocking if you know anything about how the FBI operated. But what we learned was that four officials at the ACLU had cooperated with the FBI. That was actually quite more consequential for the organization. So how we would deal with our own FBI files and how we would make public your own lapses, understanding that at least three of the four people involved were still living and had to have an opportunity to account for themselves. I was the person that Aryeh asked to spend the summer doing this, which I did. We didn't have post-it notes then--cataloging these and flagging stuff. Then once we developed the full story we gave it to the *New York Times* and then they published a front-page story on it. Then the ACLU set up a commission, headed by Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney General--I think I remember that right. It might have been headed by someone else, but Ramsey was on it. Ramsey Clark, he's like ninety now, but he's since gone way, way off on a kind of radical thing. He's not a credible figure anymore, but in those days, he was only recently the Attorney General. Then I staffed that committee, which was to basically deal with the policy questions arising from the files. I hardly had any dealings with Aryeh, but somehow he formed an impression that I was reliable. It was a good assignment to have.

SI: The cooperation with the FBI has been told. You can retell it, but for you, what was the most shocking thing to come out of it? Was it that or were there other things in there that stand out in your memory?

GL: Here I was getting kind of a first read of the results of government spying over many years. Some people would never get that. I have since become familiar in other contexts. I later went on to work for Human Rights Watch and lived through all these issues in post-Communist Europe, with the Stasi files and all that kind of stuff. But at this point in time, it was my first experience with it. I think the biggest takeaway for me is the self-serving nature of those files. You're reading mostly memos from field agents

or bureaucrats justifying their own existence. I think it's incontrovertible that to varying degrees four officials at the ACLU improperly fed information to the FBI, like minutes of meetings, things like that, and that is really indefensible. I guess, I learned it's very tricky--you should never rely on the one-sided account of the agent. So you get a memo. I had a conversation with Irving Ferman, or whatever, who was then the Washington director, and he said this or that. I guess I learned that those are not to be accepted at face value because that's the agent trying to make himself look good. It's not necessarily reliable witness. Where you have them dead to rights, where you have a memo from Irving Ferman, is a different story. This is kind of a minor point, but I guess it's about history, is that people's account of their own activities is not always objective. That was something I took away from it.

SI: You're staffing this committee that's dealing with the fall out from this. What stands out about that in terms of policy changes and maybe just the overall tenor of the meetings?

GL: I don't remember that much about it, honestly. I'm sure I have my own files on it and I'd have to go back and refresh my memory. But as I think I remember, Aryeh got a first look at the files. I, under the supervision of a guy named Jack Novik, who's since died, who was a staff lawyer at the ACLU--because I was twenty-three years old--read all the files and would, I guess, report as I went along with what I was finding. I guess they thought me smart enough, which I hope I was, to have the sense to know what was important and what wasn't. By the way, these files contained a lot of crap--newspaper clippings, stuff that has no significance or value, but you had to read through it to get the good stuff. Once I had done this and shared the findings and we decided what was most significant to release, both about what the FBI did to us and what we'd cooperated, Aryeh or somebody wrote up a report who gave it to Tom Goldstein or somebody at the *Times* and it was published in the summer of '77. I was on vacation by that time on Long Beach Island in New Jersey. I remember biking down to the grocery store, probably got the *Times* a day late, and seeing this article on the front page. It was the result of all the stuff I'd done. As I remember it, we did that and then we set up this committee. So I'm sitting here asking myself, "Well, why did we set up the committee?" because it couldn't have been about how to handle the files. I think Aryeh decided, I think rightly, that before we released anything in the paper, the people who had worked for us or been a board member in one case, who we thought the file had exposed as having done some things they shouldn't be proud of--not illegal--they should be given the opportunity to know that we're going to do this and to add to the record, which I don't even remember whether they did or not. I think in general to the extent they did, they said something along the lines of what I said earlier which was, "You don't understand the pressure we were under. It was relatively minor stuff. It saved the ACLU." Whatever they said. But I don't remember what the commission did, whether the policies were aimed at the ACLU internally in the future or whether they were aimed at a public set of issues around this. I honestly don't remember--thirty-seven years ago.

SI: I wanted to ask in general, at the time, your view of the change in the organization if there was any when Aryeh Neier was replaced by Ira Glasser, or when that transition took place.

GL: Well, one of the great tensions or fault lines of the ACLU, one of the great stories in the ACLU--it's more of an insider story but over the last four years or so--is that relationship. Have you interviewed either of these people or has the project interviewed? You must have.

SI: I don't like to discuss the people the people we've interviewed.

GL: I'm sorry. It's fine. ... The only reason I say that is because you would understand what I was talking about if you had met them. Aryeh is a German Jewish refugee, very intellectual, very articulate but reserved and scary to a lot of people, very formidable kind of figure, not one for glad-handing or small talk or whatever. Ira, who grew up in Queens or Brooklyn I guess eventually, was a math teacher, is a kind of earthy, voluble, also articulate and talkative, but very more people oriented person, ferociously competitive, basketball, anything you could play a sport at. Aryeh never is out of a suit, including on the weekends. Ira wouldn't put on a tie unless he absolutely had to. So Aryeh became the Young Turk kind of executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union in 1965. Aryeh went to work for the ACLU in 1963 or so and he was twenty-seven--young anyway--and then was the national field director of the ACLU and then got hired as the deputy to this guy named George Rundquist, who'd been the long time director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. Rundquist in hiring Aryeh said, "I'm going to retire in a couple of years. I want you to succeed me." He managed to make that happen, knowing that Aryeh would just take the place to a new direction. So Aryeh was the thirty-ish Director of the NYCLU. He hired Ira as his deputy. I can't remember how they knew one another or if they knew one another. I think they worked together on a magazine called *Current* magazine. They were a year apart in age. They're both seventy-seven, seventy-six today. By all accounts--because I didn't know either of them at the time--very effective partnership and friendship, like opposites attract kind of thing. They were each other's kids' godparents and so on. When Aryeh was elected [Executive Director] of the ACLU in 1970, Ira then succeeded him. They were the director of the largest affiliate and the national office, which were at least at one point in the same building. I guess they still are, but at one point they weren't. That partnership went fine for four or five years in their respective positions. Aryeh partly because he attracted enemies because he--you know how people say [President Barack] Obama would be better off if he had drinks with John Boehner or he was more of a people person, which I think is mostly bullshit, Aryeh is like that to the hundredth degree. [Editor's Note: John Boehner served as the 61st Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.] He couldn't be bothered really with the human relationships part of it. So therefore, if you're a very imperious, brilliant person, but you rub people the wrong way eventually you accumulate enemies. You have enemies both because of your manner, but you also have enemies because you represent some change to the established order. It began to be in the mid-70's after Aryeh was Director for four or five years, a series of skirmishes in the ACLU over various issues. Some of them were significant and some of them were proxies for

everything else. So in 1977, the ACLU had an annual board election, as it tended to do, as it always did, and that was conducted by mail ballot of all fifteen hundred members of the affiliate boards. That's the way these elections happened. That was administered by Alan Reitman, who was then my boss, the Associate Director. In that election--and these were always highly contested, so there'd be twenty people running for ten seats and there was a complicated weighted voting system. I don't remember what it was. One of the people running for election or reelection of the board was Frances Fox-Piven, who's still alive in her eighties, who was a kind of a left wing academic, as it happens probably the principle advocate in the larger world ... the ACLU for poverty as a civil liberties issue. So Fran Piven lost by a handful of votes the tenth slot in the election to a guy named Donald Hackel, who was a conservative board member from Vermont. I happened to be--I feel like the Woody Allen titular character Zelig here. I was like a teller in that election. So my wife actually and a friend of my wife's, we all made ten dollars or whatever it was to come in and count the ballots in this election. So I had a minor role in that, only significant because later when there was interrogation about irregularities in the election we all had to interviewed about the process. In any event, Jeremiah Gutman, who was a board member from New York and friendly with Ira--Jeremiah Gutman somehow got wind and made public to other board members on the executive committee that he believed that Alan Reitman was feeding information about how the vote was going to the--like a movie--to the precincts, if you will, the ACLU affiliates that he knew to be conservative strongholds. It was said that Donald Hackel, the guy from Vermont, called up Alan and was told that the vote in Vermont or some other conservative affiliate was light and that they ought to step up, turn out. [laughter] I don't know. I can't even remember what Alan's defense to that was. In any event, when the results were announced--and this all came to light after. So the results were announced. Piven lost, Hackel won and then there began to be these challenges to the integrity of the election, that one candidate had gotten information not available to others. I'm going to put it that way. So there was a whole rigmarole about it, executive committee board discussions. I remember that there was an effort among the staff to circulate a letter calling for a new election because we were involved in electoral integrity work and if we couldn't have fair elections in our own house--I was asked to sign that, which I didn't, because actually on the merits I didn't agree that the election was irregular. Alan Reitman's job was kind of on the line at the moment. The big agitator for a new election was the New York Civil Liberties Union and Ira was the head of the New York Civil Liberties Union. Donald Shack, who was the chair of the board of the New York Civil Liberties Union, was also a big agitator for the new election. Then this whole controversy was leaked to the *New York Times*, Aryeh believed and believes by the NYCLU and then it became a public matter--"ACLU has disputed elections." It's all there in the archives someplace. So the board had to deal with it. Aryeh conducted an investigation, concluded that while the elections procedures needed to be tightened and clarified, that nothing wrong had been done or no known rule had been violated, therefore the election should not be recalled. The board backed that view. That was that. In the scheme of things, a relatively minor moment in the ACLU, except that it was the--I don't know whether it was the beginning of the breach or the final breach, but that was the very significant breach between Aryeh and Ira. So from that moment on, to this day, they never really talked. Aryeh has no use for Ira, and Ira is full of complaints about Aryeh. I can go into detail about that, because

I've been close to both men over the years. So to your question, I think while the election of Aryeh in '70 was quite close--it could have gone the other way--it was never in serious doubt that Ira would be the new director. The guy who ran against him was a guy named Marvin Schachter, who was a board member from Southern California, left-winger, who was a business guy, would have been unimaginable as the head of the ACLU, I think. Then there was a third candidate who might have dropped out, another board member named Monroe Freedman, who was an academic, and a very distinguished guy, but probably also not cut out to run the ACLU. I remember being at the meeting of October of '78 when Ira was introduced to the staff by Aryeh. That was a little awkward. They didn't have a very good transition because they were at odds with one another and remained at odds with one another. Now, as a practical matter, Ira had helped Aryeh build the transformation of the ACLU into what I've described--mental patients, students, all that kind of stuff. I don't think Ira in the scheme of history built much of a--I don't say this as a criticism, but I don't think he substantially changed the direction of the ACLU in a substantive way. He was more organizational. He was a very amazing communicator and a public intellectual and led the ACLU brilliantly, but I would identify Aryeh more with a kind of a--maybe Aryeh and Ira together at the NYCLU with the rethinking of what the ACLU should be about---I don't think that Ira did that much. What he did do though was pay a lot of attention to the soundness of the management of the place and overhauled that. Because he was coming in at the low point financially, he really excavated the finances, got the ACLU on a sound financial footing, brought a much more sophisticated fundraising approach, began to change--and Anthony Romero has built on this in recent years--the formulas for raising money in the ACLU or sharing money, so that the affiliates got much more of a fair share and you really built up the affiliates substantially. That was done through a series of committees called Financial Structures on which I served. So I was also involved in that, which was contentious in the ACLU because really what we're doing ultimately, was a kind of a Robin Hood thing--we were taking money from big affiliates and giving it to the affiliates that couldn't sustain a manageable operation from their own members. So you're never going to have enough members in Mississippi to provide a base for what's needed in Mississippi. So the ACLU historically always had a mismatch between where the money raised and came from and where the money was needed. What Aryeh did was organizationally expand the ACLU to fifty states, which was significant but without much funding to make that meaningful. Whereas what Ira did was change the funding formulas and raise more money so that by the end of his tenure you had serious ACLU operations in every state. Anthony has built upon that more significantly. So ... would say, if you look at the ACLU nationally today, you would say it's by far the most robust national organization at the local level of any of its counterparts from that period of time. If you look at Common Cause or the Urban League or the NAACP, they've got some strong affiliates and some almost non-existent ones. There's no place in the ACLU world that doesn't have a significance presence at the local level and that's the result of leadership and creative leadership or innovative leadership about the way money is allocated.

SI: Let me pause for a second.

[Tape Paused]

GL: Another five or ten minutes.

SI: In the last portion of this session, one of the things we want to do is also talk with people who knew Roger Baldwin. You knew him from the last seven years or so of his life. What are your impressions of working with him and your relationship with him?

GL: I loved Roger Baldwin. Roger Baldwin was the oldest man that I've ever known. It's not just about age. I only knew him in the very last years of his life. He died in 1981--yes, '81, because he was ninety-seven--on my birthday. He was ninety-seven. Until he was ninety-six or so, he lived in a house in the city. He went around on the subway by himself. In his nineties he would come back at one point from horseback riding in the Black Forest or something like that. His hair never turned white. He was extremely vigorous and what I loved about him was that he took an interest in me and I can't have been the only one, and was always interested in you. He didn't ghettoize himself by age. He was always interested in younger people. It wasn't like I was Roger's closest friend, but I knew him. When like he got older, every once in a while I would accompany him some place--he wasn't frail, but he was ninety-five or six years old--and go up on the subway with him, take him to some event or so on. In the last year of his life he got a little more frail. Then he went out to live with his--either he had a house in New Jersey or one of his children did. He spent the last of his life living near the Ramapo River in New Jersey. A couple of us would go out periodically and spend an afternoon with him. The last time I ever saw Roger, I think, was right after the 1980 election--or maybe it was the day of the 1980 election. A bunch of us went out to see him. He had been in and out of the hospital. I don't remember what he died of, but he was ninety-seven. He got the Presidential Medal of Freedom in the last couple months of his life. The ceremony was held in some college in New Jersey because he couldn't get to Washington. Walter Cronkite presented it to him. I'm sorry, what--?

SI: Your impressions of him ...

GL: I was just trying to remember, insignificant fact about who presented him. I actually think it was Bill Vanden Heuvel, who was his longtime lawyer and friend. Actually, it's funny. I'm having a hard figuring out how to describe him. I've learned a lot about Roger since. I'm trying to separate out my apprehension of Roger as a person from biographies I've read and so on. My views of Roger in some ways have changed--not as a person but as a historical figure a little negatively based on things I've read and understood over the years. I knew him as a kind of a--I would say harmless old man, but somebody who was really immensely engaged in things. His interests shifted after he left the ACLU to internationally, so that was mostly ... but he kept a close eye on what was going on in the ACLU. When I got the NYCLU job, he sent me--he would type out these postcards on some old--not Smith Corona--Royal typewriter. I have some of them. My ex-wife had a lot of my old files in her basement. I came across them a couple years ago, and the whole file of stuff I had from Roger. But I remember him taking an interest in me and my wife and I guess my daughter was born before he died. I guess I felt like while he was like an historic figure in world terms, but also particularly in ACLU terms.

He is the George Washington of the ACLU, or at least as history has been written. He has emerged as the principle founder. Yet, while I'm sure he had some ego, he was mostly very interested in whoever he was talking to. He had that quality, that some people have, good politicians have, of making it seem more about you than about them. To me, he seemed to have almost no ego or grandiosity such as would attend, you know, like this eminent figure. His politics, [in] ACLU terms were by his later life, fairly conservative. He was very against anything about economic rights and he was concerned and opposed to any efforts to undo or reverse what had been done in the '40s ... some of the effort to repeal the '40 resolution or the posthumous--that's something I forgot to mention about the posthumous reinstatement of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, which I was also not a party to but observer to. Roger was quite against any of that, but he took his losses pretty well. He wasn't embittered by the ACLU or anything like that. He didn't come to many meetings. I would see him in other settings. He had become this figure by the end of his life that you would kind of trot him out, like people do now--Harry Belafonte--but they're similar figures actually. Harry Belafonte's practically ninety and he's still an icon for people. We'd have a fundraising event and it would be to celebrate Roger's birthday or something like that. So he lent himself pretty well to that. I wrote something about Roger when he died and published it in the New York Civil Liberties Union newsletter. It probably has other recollections in it. That's about as much as I can come up with right now.

SI: I was curious since you were either party to or observer to some of these things like the reinstatement of Flynn, the repeal of the 1940 Resolution and the revelations about the board members with the FBI, did any of that reflect badly on Roger Baldwin? Did his reputation suffer at all ...?

GL: Not the FBI stuff, no. I mean, Roger himself--

SI: That it happened on his watch, so to speak.

GL: When the ACLU started J. Edgar Hoover wasn't even the FBI Director. [laughter] ... People forget that until the '50s or the '40s, a lot of people saw Hoover as relatively progressive, kind of a straight-shooting crime fighter and actually relatively sensitive to civil liberties. So it's a bit of an anachronism sometimes ... there came a time when it was impossible to maintain those illusions about Hoover, but that was not true in the '20s and the '30s. Roger would have seen Hoover as a relative ally in the government. But no, he wasn't touched by those revelations at all. He was very much on the side of taking steps. Again, it's hard for people to think about this period of time because we had no Communists to speak of in the United States anymore. It's hard for people to imagine a time when the left had vigorous, strong factions. There were Trotskyites and Shachtmanites and Socialists and Communists and ... Socialists were strongly anti-communist. People who would be way to the left of any contemporary movement that has any mainstream validity. The idea that ACLU would have on its board Communists and Socialists and whatever, or that these people would have a role in American public intellectual life and even to some extent political life--it's just a bygone era. A lot of people in the early days in the ACLU [strongly] identified [with] one faction or another

and had all kinds of reasons personally to distrust the other faction. A lot of people thought Communists were very manipulative, they were secretive and they packed meetings and they waited until everybody else had left to pass their resolution. I'm not defending any of the actions that were taken. I'm just saying that the lived experience of a lot of these people was very stressful. You also had people like Baldwin who had flirted with the Soviet Union and Communism and then had gone to the other side. Those people were all staunchly anti-Communist, because they had come from the other side. All that to say, is that to some extent, the moves against Communists in the ACLU--however many there were--were driven by real politics in the larger world. That is to say that ACLU is under scrutiny. We're going to have the full force of the government upon us if we don't clean our own house and da, da, da, da. What would it mean to be put on the Attorney General's subversive list and we might disappear as an organization and all those calculations. They were driven to that by some extent, but they were also driven, I think, by people's own direct experiences with one another, in the way they operated in organizations. I can't sort it all out. It probably is different for different people. Roger became, by the '40s, '30s--the Nazi-Soviet Pact was a big turning point for a lot of people. [Editor's Note: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, which pledged non-aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union.] Staunchly anti-Communist. So yes, he's identified--if you go back and look at the book that Corliss Lamont published *The Trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn by the American Civil Liberties Union*, it's like a play. Roger was a clear actor in that and was on the side of ejecting Flynn. So did his reputation suffer? It suffered to some extent with me. Also other things I've learned--I wrote a review. A couple years ago, there was a book about the ACLU that I reviewed for *Democracy Journal* and it was really fascinating because it showed that at a time when the California affiliates were doing their best to fight the Japanese internment, Roger and others in the ACLU were kind of playing footsie with the Justice Department about it. So, yes, I loved Roger as a person. I think he's an amazing figure. He was wise. He was a great man. Some of this is the virtue of hindsight, but yes, I think he was on the wrong side of a couple of significant issues in the ACLU's history. I want to say finally that I've said a number of times in the last dozen years or so, but while I think the ACLU at a few points in the past, particularly around the Japanese-American internment and around the Red Scare stuff in the '50s, did not hold itself to the highest standards of principle. In the test of the last dozen or so years after 9/11, I think the ACLU--and not just the ACLU, a lot of other civil liberties groups--I wouldn't say that. I think that in a moment when it was tricky to do so and there was a lot of pressure in the other direction, I don't think the ACLU--I think it kind of either learned its lessons or it's much better led. So it's not invariably the case that when the pressure gets tough people fold. Sometimes they do and luckily for the ACLU, those have been over time corrected. No organization is going to get to be one hundred years old without having a period or two where it's not at its best self. I appreciate your coming to talk to me. If you want to do this more for other things I've been involved in--the board and the staff--I'm happy to do it. My life is a little easier than it was for the last six months. Probably not until after Christmas, but I'm happy to do it again.

SI: Thank you very much.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 9/29/2015
Reviewed by Gara LaMarche 9/29/2015
Reviewed by Molly Graham 4/1/2016