

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA LEE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Dr. Barbara Lee, on July 28, 2020. The interviewers are Kate Rizzi and Dr. Paul Clemens. Thank you so much, Dr. Lee, for doing this oral history interview with us.

Barbara Lee: You're welcome. It's a pleasure.

KR: To begin, where and when were you born?

BL: I was born on April 9, 1949, in Newton, New Jersey.

KR: Let's start off today talking about your family history. What do you know about your family history, on your mother's side of the family?

BL: Well, I can go back to her parents. I don't know too much about her parents' parents, but her mother graduated from Smith College in 1909, which was unusual in those days, and her father was the vice president of the local bank in Newton, New Jersey. He went to Lehigh University, and they courted in a very old-fashioned sense of the word. They grew up, if not in the same town, I think the families knew each other when they were younger. My grandfather Louis Dalrymple courted my grandmother Phoebe Struble Dalrymple by sending her leather-bound copies of books. So, I have them all now, four shelves of crumbling, leather-bound books of Shakespeare and Dickens and Hawthorne and many more. Obviously, the way to my grandmother's heart was through books, and that's the same with me.

They married probably in around 1910 or 1911 and moved to a big house in Newton and had six children. My grandmother was the president of the local school board, which I think, again, was unusual for a woman in those days. She did not hold a paying job, but she was very active in the community. They had, let's see, two sons and four daughters. My grandfather Louis Dalrymple lost his job at the local bank during the "bank holiday" that President Roosevelt created, primarily, according to family lore, because my grandfather took pity on people who were losing their homes because they couldn't pay the mortgage to the bank and continued to let them owe the money on the mortgage and the bank didn't quite see it that way. So, he never really had a full-time job after that, and that was in 1933 probably, with six kids. [Editor's Note: President Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted a "bank holiday" from March 6 to March 13, 1933. The closure of banks came immediately after Roosevelt's inauguration and allowed Congress time to pass legislation to address the banking crisis occurring amidst the Great Depression.]

My mother was born in 1921, so she was twelve when all of this happened. She was number five of the six children. Both of my mother's parents had college educations. My mother did not. By the time she came along, there was no money, particularly for girls to go to college, and the two boys entered the service during World War II and the GI Bill paid for their schooling. But none of the four daughters had the opportunity to go to college. That's on my mother's side.

On my father's side, my father's father was born in England and was brought to the United States as a child because his father was what's called a silk weaver in the silk industry in Coventry, England. He came as a child, probably at five or six, and they settled in Paterson, New Jersey, which was a center of the silk industry in those days. I think it was around the 1870s-1880s; I'm

not sure exactly when. My father was seventeen years older than my mother; he was born in 1904. She was born in 1921. My father's mother was the librarian for the Paterson Public Library, again, unusual for those days for a woman to work outside the home, and my father remembers, as a very young child, being taken to work with her, sitting under her desk, and being given books to read or pretend to read when he was too little to read, while she performed her librarian duties.

My father came from a father who worked in a factory and a mother who--I don't think she had any education past high school, but she certainly had what these days would be a professional career. She died when my father was sixteen. He finished high school, and did not have the money to go to college. So, he read the law and went to what is now Rutgers Law School, although, in those days, it was a private law school, at night--which interestingly enough, I did night law school myself--and became a lawyer without a college education, which was possible in those days. It was more of an apprenticeship to a more senior lawyer. That's how my dad became a lawyer. He moved to Sussex County, New Jersey, and met my mother. She was actually his secretary for a while in his law firm. They got married, and my sister and I arrived after that.

KR: What brought your father to Sussex County?

BL: My father loved the ...

Paul Clemens: Can I jump in for a second?

BL: Sure.

PC: Okay. I am a little slow on this. I'm taking notes, too. Paterson, the silk industry, do you have family members who were in Paterson during the strikes or anything like that? Do you know what I'm talking about?

BL: My father was an only child and I think he had a cousin, but she didn't live anywhere nearby. So, I have absolutely no family on my father's side at all. He was the last of his family. He didn't really talk much about the silk industry. His father was injured, I think, during his factory years. My father took care of his father, for, I would say, four or five decades until he died.

PC: Wow.

BL: Yes, that's why he married so late. He said he didn't want to inflict his father on anybody. [laughter] Kate, you were asking why my father came to Sussex County. My father was a Boy Scout leader. I don't know how he found the time to do that when he was working full time and going to law school at night, but he did. The Boy Scout camps were in Sussex County up in the hills, Stokes State Forest, up in that area, and he just loved it. He just loved the woods and the outdoors and the fact that it wasn't Paterson, I think; it wasn't the city. When he had the opportunity to join a law firm up in Sussex County, that's what he did.

KR: You mentioned that your grandmother on your father's side died. Were you close with your other grandparents when you were growing up?

BL: The only grandparent who was alive after I was born was my mother's father. My father's parents had both died before he married, and my mother's mother died in 1946, so three years before I was born. My grandfather Louis was the one who lost his job in the '30s, and by the time I came along, he seemed very old to me. I'm not sure, I don't know exactly how old he was, but he lived with--my mother's two oldest sisters never married, and they made a home for him. So, I would see him on occasion, but I was, I think, five or six when he died. I remember him vaguely but not very much.

KR: You said you have a sister.

BL: I have a sister who's two years younger than I am. Her name is Nancy, and she lives in Brevard, North Carolina, which is near Asheville. She is a specialist in early childhood education. She has been a schoolteacher. She has been a trainer of preschool teachers. She ran a laboratory preschool at East Carolina University for about ten to fifteen years before she moved to the mountains. She's now retired and taking care, occasionally, of her two grandchildren and also working with local community leaders to improve preschool education in western North Carolina.

KR: Where did you grow up?

BL: Well, the first seven years, I lived in Newton, New Jersey, and went to school there. Then, my father wanted to live in the country. This country thing gets repeated. They bought a couple of acres of land in Andover Township, which was only four miles away. It was a long four miles for a little girl who didn't have transportation to go anywhere. So, they built a house, and I went to Andover Township Regional Elementary School. Then, Andover Township did not have a high school, so I was back in Newton for my four years of high school. Then, I left New Jersey and said, "I'm never coming back." [laughter]

KR: Describe what Newton and Andover Townships were like at the time that you were growing up.

BL: Well, Andover Township was very rural. It still is. A lot of people have built homes there because it's within a long commute but within commuting distance of New York City on Route 80. But when I was living there, I don't think Route 80 was finished then, and it was very rural. Most people worked locally. Newton was the county seat, still is, of Sussex County, which means it has a courthouse, and it used to have a hotel, which is now gone, a few stores and a hospital, and that's about it. Newton was a little tame for an eighteen year old.

KR: What experiences, events, relationships informed you when you were growing up?

BL: Well, mainly family. My mother's brother and his wife and four sons lived ten minutes away, and we spent a lot of time visiting with them. We grew up more like brothers and sisters than cousins, which was very nice. Her two oldest sisters lived about fifteen minutes in a

different direction, the ones who made the home for their father, and we saw them probably every couple of weeks. My mother would drive us over there, and we would spend time visiting. So, that's mostly what shaped my childhood. My mother went back to work when I was in the third grade. She was quite certain, and she turned out to be absolutely right, that my father would never make enough money as a lawyer to send us to college. She took a job in the Newton school system as the secretary to the superintendent. So, that meant that my sister and I bussed--we took a school bus. It was a rural area, so obviously we couldn't walk.

We were on our own a lot from the time school ended until the time my mother got home. I wouldn't call us isolated because, again, we had a lot of connections with family, and my parents would have friends over from time to time for dinner, that sort of thing. But it was not like living in a town. As I got older, I frankly kind of resented that isolation. I wanted to be with friends, and I wasn't allowed to. I had to go home. My sister and I were expected to go right home, do our homework and whatever chores we had to do, and wait for my mom to get home. She was usually home by a quarter of five. It was not a long, long time. We would get home at maybe 3:15, and she would get home at 4:45. So, it was not a long time, but that really has motivated some of the choices I've made about where to live as a result of those feelings of isolation.

KR: What sorts of activities or clubs or sports did you do when you were growing up?

BL: Well, my mother had us take piano lessons, so my sister and I both played the piano. We had to take turns practicing an hour a day. One would get up at 6:30 and practice from 6:30 to seven, and the other got to sleep an extra half hour. We alternated days, so everything was very fair. I was the first female percussionist in the Andover Elementary School band. They wanted somebody who could read music, and since I played the piano, which obviously is a percussion instrument, they asked if I would join the band, and I did and I loved it. It was a lot of fun, and I continued that through high school. So, I was the first female percussionist in the high school band. My sister was the second, and it was a pretty good band. We traveled to various places and played concerts in Canada and New England. We came to Washington, DC and played on the Capitol steps, and the kinds of things we played--the Memorial Day parade. I was not much bigger than the drum I played, but I managed okay.

I was also very active in high school in various clubs. I was on the yearbook staff. Again, because of my mother's job, it was more difficult for me to stay after school and do the activities. The clubs and things were after school. I was a candy-striper at the local hospital. So, I was pretty involved.

I was really fortunate. I was, I guess because my grades were good, encouraged to try for various awards in high school, a lot of which I got. I was New Jersey's Betty Crocker's Future Homemaker, and no one could understand how I got there because I'd never taken a class in home ec [economics]. [laughter] It was a multiple-choice test, and I was good at multiple-choice tests. So, I represented New Jersey. I did not win the national title, but we got a trip to Williamsburg, Virginia. I was a junior in high school. I had never flown before. General Mills paid for the flight and the hotel and everything. The home ec teacher, who I had not even met, was my chaperone. Jerry Stiller and Ann Meara were the talent at the last night banquet. I had never heard of them, but they were just starting out. I think this was 1966, I guess, probably '66,

when they were just starting out their comedy routine. Of course, they were very funny, and I loved them. So, I sort of followed their careers throughout afterward. I was the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen for New Jersey and on and on, the American Legion award for New Jersey, Jersey Girls State. All the sort of things that white middle-class high-achieving girls did in the '50s and '60s, I did, yes.

KR: I am curious, did you play sports or do Girl Scouts?

BL: I was a Girl Scout, starting with Brownies and all the way through Senior scouts. One of my friends, her mother, was the scout mistress. So, yes, I participated in that. We went camping. I had a whole sash full of merit badges, the whole bit, yes.

KR: At that point, there were not the Bronze and Silver and Gold Awards, correct?

BL: No. You asked about sports. No, I did not play any sports. The only sport that was open to girls in those days, I think, was track, and I wasn't very athletic. I did a lot of marching in the band, but other than that, I did not play a sport.

KR: You mentioned this trip to Williamsburg. How much travel did you do with your family?

BL: We took a few trips by car. We went to Boston, I remember, and did the Freedom Trail. We went to Salem to the Hawthorne memorial places, the witches' house and the House of Seven Gables, and that sort of thing. We did not do a lot of travel. We went to the Jersey Shore every summer for two weeks. My parents rented a house on the beach, and we stayed at the shore. My maiden aunts came down for one of those two weeks every year. That was our vacation. We didn't do a lot of travel. I never went to Europe, for example, until I was in college. [Editor's Note: Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was born in Salem, Massachusetts, set his 1851 novel *The House of Seven Gables* in the historic Turner-Ingersoll Mansion in Salem.]

KR: Would you vacation in the same town at the Jersey Shore every summer?

BL: Yes.

KR: What town did you go to?

BL: Brant Beach.

KR: I am sorry. Say that again.

BL: Brant Beach.

KR: What were political discussions like with your parents and your sister when you were growing up?

BL: That the only people who should be elected were Republicans. I am not a Republican. It was one of the ways I can rebel, I guess. I remember my mother being very upset when John

Kennedy was elected. Now, I was eleven, I guess, then, and it wasn't because he was Catholic. It was because he was Democrat because her whole childhood had been infused with--I think hatred is too strong a word--but being very upset with President Roosevelt because of what happened to her father, who they blamed for the loss of his job. I don't know whether that is fair or not. Well, all of the six siblings are gone now, but, certainly, her two brothers were very, very conservative Republicans. I think she became less so as she got older. I don't think she would've been comfortable with being a Republican right now. My father had been a Democrat, but he hoisted the white flag early in the marriage and decided that it was better off for him to be a Republican. Plus, the town we were in was a very Republican area, and he probably figured he'd do better business wise if he registered as a Republican and supported Republican causes. He wasn't particularly political, and we did not have political discussions that I recall. At the dinner table, my mother would mainly complain about her job. We would talk about what happened in school. My father couldn't talk a lot about his clients because he was a lawyer. We had interesting discussions but certainly not very passionate ones.

KR: What type of law did your father practice?

BL: Well, small-town lawyers practice most all kinds of law. He did mainly wills, estates, real estate. I used to ask him if he went to court, and he said, "Not if I can help it." He occasionally was appointed pro bono to defend somebody who had gotten in trouble, and he did not like doing that. He would've made a wonderful college professor, actually. He liked to write. He liked to think. He liked to talk about ideas. He had wanted to be an English teacher, but his father said that he would never make any money doing that, so he should be a lawyer. So, he became a lawyer to please his father, but I think his heart wasn't really in it. He was astonished when I decided to become one. I don't think he had ever met a woman lawyer, actually. [laughter]

KR: When you were coming of age in the '50s and in the '60s, what messages were being sent to you as a young woman about what you could do in your life?

BL: My mother's greatest wish for me was to be a teacher, so that I could be home in the summertime with my children. That was her goal for me, and that was what I initially planned to do when I went to college. I started out as a French major because I loved my high school French teacher so much and I wanted to be like her. She actually had been my mother's high school French teacher, too--talk about growing up in the town your mother grew up in. I couldn't get away with anything because everybody knew my mother, either in school because she worked there or in the town because she grew up there. Then, partway through college, I decided to switch to English rather than French, but I still was planning on being a high school teacher. I actually did student teaching, so that I could become licensed in Vermont, which is where I went to college. I went to college in Vermont because Burlington, Vermont was the biggest town I'd seen, and I thought it was bright lights, big city. I loved it, but I'm sorry, I digress.

When I was in my last year of college, my fall semester of my senior year, one of my English professors said, "Have you thought about going to graduate school?" I said, "No, I'm going to be a high school English teacher." She said, "Well, you're a good student, and I think you'd ought to think about it." I thought about it. Then, I did my student teaching, and it was not very much

fun. Students didn't pay any attention to me and jumped out of the windows. It was on the first floor, so they were okay. But I just did not enjoy the experience of teaching high school kids. I said, "Okay, I'll apply to graduate school." So, I did and wound up at Ohio State University in the PhD program for English, but I was not very happy there. That was 1971. The Vietnam War was going on. I was not political at all, but it bothered me that I was spending a lot of time thinking about Milton, John Milton, instead of what was happening to people my age over in Vietnam. The faculty that I came in contact with, they weren't mean, but they were quite dismissive of students and each other. I didn't link it to my gender. I think they treated each other that way too, the men. They just weren't very nice, and I just decided that if this is what being a college professor is like, I'm not interested, and so I finished with a master's degree.

KR: Just to go back, the professor at the University of Vermont who encouraged you to go to graduate school was a woman professor?

BL: Yes.

KR: What was her name for the record?

BL: I'm trying to remember, her first name was Virginia. If I think long enough, I may be able to remember the last name. I can't right now. But she was a linguistics professor, and I just loved her course. She was super. She also told me about a fellowship I could apply for, which I did, and I got. I also was a TA [teaching assistant] at Ohio State, so that paid my tuition and a very small stipend. It works that way even now. But the fellowship I got enabled me to live a little bit more comfortably. I was married at the time to a fellow student. He was my first husband. I'm now on my second. He was finishing up his PhD in plant and soil science at the University of Vermont. The reason I wound up at Ohio State is there was a job waiting for him in Columbus, so we moved to Columbus when I finished my bachelor's degree and he started working as a golf course architect in Columbus, Ohio.

KR: Let's talk about your high school time. You mentioned this French teacher who was influential to you. What were your academic interests at that point of time in middle school and in high school?

BL: Well, I've always loved to read. I loved the French language, the beauty of it. I was fascinated by the thought of Mont-Saint-Michel. She [the French teacher] had a big poster of Mont-Saint-Michel up on the wall in her classroom. I vowed that I'd visit it someday, and I finally got to a few years ago. I don't know, it just seemed elegant and pleasant. I guess the students in the class were there because they wanted to be there. It wasn't like English that they had to take. So, I just loved it. I loved Latin. I think I'm reasonably good at languages maybe, so it came easily to me. I guess that's what I'm trying to say. English and French were my favorite. I did not like math, although my math teacher told me I was a very good math student. I never believed her, but I did fine. It was harder for me than the English and French were.

KR: What did you enjoy reading when you were young?

BL: Everything I could get my hands on. I read a lot of teenage romance things that I'd be embarrassed to admit to now. I read everything I could find. There used to be used book sales at the local firehouse. People would donate mostly paperbacks, and they were five cents or ten cents apiece. I would fill up a couple of big shopping bags full. I'd save my allowance, buy my five cent and ten-cent paperback books. So, [I read] Pearl Buck, for example. I was an omnivore. I never cared that much for science fiction or that sort of thing, but I loved fiction. I loved biographies, so anything I could get my hands on.

KR: What historical events stick out in your mind from when you were growing up?

BL: Well, I think anybody my age remembers the day that Kennedy was assassinated. I was a freshman in high school, and the announcement came over the public address system--I was in band class, actually--about the assassination. That certainly sticks in my mind. The incidents of the Vietnam War, the My Lai Massacre, and the bombing in Cambodia. In fact, in 1970, in the Kent State shootings, UVM sent us all home a day or two after the Kent State shootings and said, "Don't come back. Whatever grade you have in the classes that you've taken, you will get for the semester. No finals, nothing." So, those are the things that immediately spring to mind. [Editor's Note: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated while traveling by motorcade through Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963. The My Lai Massacre refers to the massacre of unarmed Vietnamese civilians by American soldiers under the command of Lieutenant William Calley in the hamlet of My Lai on March 16, 1968. On May 4, 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on anti-war protesters and bystanders at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine.]

KR: The Rutgers faculty did the same thing and voted to make finals optional, classes pass/fail in the Spring of 1970. You mentioned wanting to get out of New Jersey when you were in high school. What was your college application process like?

BL: [laughter] Well, I came from a small high school, and I think the guidance counselors did the best they could. The guidance counselor who helped me had sort of an odd list--maybe I shouldn't call it odd. Remember, this was before women were admitted to the Ivy League. So, my choices were a women's college or a coed private school or a public university. I did not want to go to Rutgers because it was too close to home. I really wanted to get away, and I think I needed to. I applied to American University here in DC, because my guidance counselor said it was a good school. I applied to Gettysburg, Middlebury, the University of Vermont. I know I was accepted at all of those places. I don't think I applied to more than four. In those days, you just didn't apply to fifteen to twenty like kids do now. I was accepted at Middlebury, and given the fact that I was a French major, it would've made a lot of sense to go there, but Middlebury was the size of my high school. Remember, I was trying to get into a bigger, wider world than the town of Middlebury, which is beautiful but isolated. I would not have been making a major change in my life. So, I visited the University of Vermont. I just loved it. It's a beautiful setting. The people were friendly. One of my mother's relatives worked there, so I had somebody I could go see if I had a problem. She worked in the library. I chose UVM, and that was a very good place for me, I think.

KR: Before we go on to discuss your time at Vermont, Paul, do you have any questions?

PC: No, not really, I am just following the flow. I had questions, but they anticipated things you asked, so we are fine.

KR: Describe what the University of Vermont was like when you were there.

BL: Well, it was a kind of place where you could walk across the campus and always see at least one person that you knew, which was nice. I don't remember what the enrollment was like when I was there. I'm guessing about five thousand perhaps, very, very white. There was a sort of a cap on out-of-state students because it is a state university. Unfortunately, for my parents, it was the most expensive out-of-state tuition in the country for a public institution, but that's what my mother went to work for, she said. I won't say she paid it uncomplainingly, but she paid it and it was a good place for me. There was not a lot going on in terms of social unrest or political unrest, despite the fact that the Vietnam War was going on. There was a big fraternity culture, big sorority culture there. I joined a sorority, mainly because they did a lot of singing and I like to sing. [laughter] So, we sang a lot. My classes were challenging but not terribly difficult. I made a lot of friends. I was very happy there.

KR: Just to go back to your college application process, was there any discussion of Douglass College? Was that ever discussed in your family?

BL: Not seriously. I had been part of New Jersey Girls State, so I had actually seen Douglass College and stayed in one of the dorms during that few days, but I really wanted to get away from home. I felt constricted. Particularly my mother was very strict and controlling. I didn't plan on doing anything crazy and still haven't in all these years, [laughter] but I just needed to get away and I knew that. So, I never seriously considered Douglass, no.

KR: What sorority did you join?

BL: Alpha Chi Omega.

KR: What types of activities would you do with your sorority?

BL: Well, we had a lot of meetings. I'm sure that we did service things for people in the town. I don't recall what they were at the moment. As I said, we did a lot of singing. I lived there my sophomore year and my junior year; I lived there for two years in the house. I got married at the end of my junior year, so I obviously was not going to live in a sorority house after I was married. I mainly remember studying, to tell you the truth. [laughter]

KR: Your freshman year was '67 and '68.

BL: Yes.

KR: What do you remember about the historical events of '68? That would have been spring of your freshman year.

BL: Well, there were no TVs in the dorms. By then, I had joined a sorority, and I went there and watched the space issues and the coverage of the assassinations, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, in absolute horror. So, I remember that all very clearly, yes.

KR: What did you do in the summertime when you were in college?

BL: I managed to get my parents to let me stay in Burlington and work as a summer desk clerk in one of the dorms. My excuse was that I wanted to take summer courses, and that would pay for the tuition of the summer course. I would probably finish in three-and-a-half years instead of four, which would save them money, and that would keep me out of Newton because there was just nothing to do in the summer in Newton. There were very few jobs. I had a summer job when I was in high school with the local horse show, the assistant to the secretary of the horse show, but I knew that that was not going to happen after I went away to school. So, I worked in Burlington each summer.

KR: I am curious if you happened to learn to ski.

BL: [laughter] I tried, but I was a miserable failure. I've never been very athletic. I did try with the guy I was dating who I ended up marrying. He took me several times and then just gave up. The last ski trip I remember is that I put my skis over my shoulder and walked down the mountain. That was the end of my skiing career. [laughter] I'm much better as an ice skater, however. I took ice skating for phys ed [physical education] and I actually got an "A" in ice skating and learned how to skate backward. I'm not really good at skating forwards, but I can skate backward pretty well. [laughter]

KR: What type of travel did you do when you were in college?

BL: Not much of anything, really. I had an opportunity to study abroad my junior year, but I had changed my major to English by then and would not have been able to graduate on time if I had done the junior year abroad. As it turned out, I'm not sure this would've happened to me, but it was mostly young women who went on this study abroad program and they all came back pregnant. So, it's probably just as well that I didn't. I don't think I ever told my parents that. [laughter]

KR: What are some memorable classes or memorable professors from your time at Vermont?

BL: Well, in addition to Virginia, whose last name I can't remember at the moment, a professor named Ralph Orth, O-R-T-H, I took a class with him on Black literature. Now, from a girl from an all-white town in northwestern New Jersey, I had not encountered African American literature at all. He was white, but he was obviously interested in it. I took a class with him and decided to do a senior honors thesis on James Baldwin and really learned a lot from that, opened my eyes in ways that I had not thought about and really, really enjoyed it. I think that was probably that and the linguistics class I had with the other professor were probably my two favorite ones.

KR: You mentioned this a little bit before, but what was the campus climate like in terms of activism?

BL: There was very little. By my senior year, there was more activism around race. The University of Vermont had a winter carnival that they called "Kake Walk," and it was basically based on a minstrel show, *Walking for the Cake*. The fraternities would compete with each other. They'd have pairs of boys, dressed in satin, brightly-colored top hats and tuxedo type things, doing an exaggerated, almost like a Rockette kick and synchronized. Whoever won, won a cake. They were in blackface, although by the time I got there, they used dark green, rather than black, but it was obviously an attempt to make it look like a minstrel show with the exaggerated lips and the white around their eyes.

The last Kake Walk was my freshman year, and there was a lot of anger among the students about abolishing Kake Walk because it was a tradition that they loved. The guy I was dating, who I ended up marrying, from Columbus, Ohio, made friends with one of the only Black students. He was a graduate student at UVM, and they had long conversations about racism. My former husband began to understand how hurtful this celebration was. So, he had some sort of administrative role, I can't remember what, and he was also involved as a graduate student in one of the fraternities, who were very much engaged in this Kake Walk competition. But he started lobbying the administration against Kake Walk, and eventually, that following year, that was it, no more Kake Walk. So, it polarized the campus in some ways.

I think that there was a fairly active drug scene at UVM. I did not participate. The worst thing I ever did was drink too many whiskey sours and throw up once at a fraternity party. I never used marijuana and still haven't. I'm probably the only one of my generation who hasn't, but the students were not terribly politically active, not even about the war. They just didn't want anybody taking away their winter weekend.

KR: How did your parents react when you got in Phi Beta Kappa in your junior year?

BL: Oh, they were thrilled. They've always been really proud of my grades. I got it my very first semester [of junior year]. As a freshman, I got a 4.0 the first semester, and my father just couldn't stop talking about that. He was so proud of me. The next semester, I did not because I didn't do as well in gym. I got a "C" in gym. So, fortunately, it was only one credit, but a "C" is a "C", and you don't get a 4.0 if you get a "C", so the 4.0 didn't last, but they were thrilled. My grandmother had been Phi Beta Kappa at Smith, so it was kind of a nice family tradition. Obviously, my mother never had a chance to go to college, so she was very pleased as well.

KR: Well, that is a wonderful legacy to carry on. What were the discussions in your circle of friends about the Vietnam War? I am asking you this considering that the person you married would have been of age during that time.

BL: Not only of age, he had been in ROTC and he was in the Army Reserve. He never had to go to Vietnam. He was in the Chemical Corps, but he did everything he could to get out of it and he finally did. He became a Green Beret but always as a Reservist. He never saw active duty, at least not in a war zone. We got divorced after six years, so I don't know what he did after that, but I'm quite certain he was not regular Army. He was Army Reserve. Again, most of his friends--I spent most of my time with him and his friends--they were not politically active. They

had their own business. They started a ski shop. They started a lawn service, and they were always very busy with that. They weren't particularly political, always talking about the best recipe for homemade beer.

KR: I am curious if you remember watching the first draft lottery in December 1969.

BL: I don't recall watching it, no. I didn't really have any male friends that I was close to that were of an age to worry about that. My cousin, my oldest male cousin--well, he's not the oldest male cousin, but he's my age--was in college at the time, so he had a deferment. So, I didn't have any sort of skin in that game, but, obviously, I was worried just generally about people my age and others having to go and risk losing their lives. It was a horrible time. I never was in favor of the war, but I was not the type to take it out on the street.

KR: Is your cutoff time today at two o'clock?

BL: Yes.

KR: Paul, do you want to jump in with anything?

PC: Yes. One of the things you mentioned just in passing actually rings a bell for when I came to Rutgers, was female students going off on study abroad and coming back pregnant. We're within a couple of years of each other, so we went to college at the same time. Did the college have gynecological services? Was there teaching about this? It changed drastically in the four years I was in college, from you just could not go to a health center and get any advice to a completely different situation by the end of four years. Do you have a sense that there was, if not a women's movement, at least there were things changing about women's health on campus while you were there?

BL: That's a very good question. I don't recall a lot of conversation about that from the student health area and any gynecological work that I sought out I did privately because my mother's cousin worked there. So, I just was not ever sure what information would be passed along. But certainly between my freshman year and my senior year, things changed dramatically. There's no question about it. I don't think our student health services were very good there, frankly. It was a tiny little building with about two rooms in it. I don't think there was even a doctor there. I think there may have been a nurse there. My roommate had, not meningitis, but what's the kissing disease?

KR: Mono.

PC: Mononucleosis.

BL: Yes, thanks, mononucleosis, and she wound up in the infirmary. That's about all they ever did was help people with mononucleosis. [laughter] It wasn't much of a health service at all.

PC: The other question, dating from this period and my memory of it and a little bit of the stuff I did about Rutgers, this was also a time of transition for the fraternity system at many colleges.

Many of the complaints about fraternities date from roughly this era on. In the "old days," at least on paper, they were supposed to be the best kids on campus, have very high academic standards, have polite dances, and by the time I got out of the University of Maryland, they were also noted for doing drugs, rape, and a lot of other terrible things. Much of that transition occurs during this period. Do you have any sense, because you were in a sorority, of what was going on in the fraternities at that time? Were they places that you were warned away from or just part of the culture of student life and an accepted piece of it?

BL: I was most active in my sorority the first two years that I was there. After that, I was engaged to a much older student, a graduate student, and he was involved in a fraternity but only as an advisor, not as an undergrad. The women in my sorority dated fraternity guys, who were the smartest, the best, from very good families, northeastern New Jersey a lot of them, well off. They all become doctors or lawyers or that sort of thing. The fraternity house next door to my sorority house, we called "The Pigs" because all they did was drink, and I think they actually burned their house down at some point or we thought they might have because there was so much alcohol soaked into the wood of the floors.

I don't recall a lot of talk about sexual assault, although it could've been covered up and not discussed. That was before Title IX. So, Title IX was 1972, and I had already graduated from college. I think Title IX didn't make a difference right away, but certainly, hopefully, it raised the consciousness of people that were concerned about this. [Editor's Note: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in educational programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.]

But, no, I think the fraternity system, when I was there, with the exception of "The Pigs" next door, were the good places for good students, good students who cared about doing well. Certainly, they partied, but I don't remember any real issues with fraternity parties at all. Then, I think the University of Vermont was about fifteen years behind the times. It was certainly not as socially conscious or politically conscious as other schools in the '60s and early '70s were. They just weren't. At least, if they were, that wasn't part of my world and I didn't know about it.

PC: Just one other question, you said that you were not active in the antiwar movement. You were against the war, but not active in it and had the sense that in Vermont, antiwar protests weren't of enormous significance relative to some other college campuses. What about the death of former students? Is that something you heard about when you were on campus?

BL: Not really, no. It's interesting to compare UVM with Ohio State because I left UVM in '71 and started Ohio State two or three weeks later, and there was much more of an active antiwar movement at Ohio State than there was in Vermont. Of course, Ohio State is a whole lot bigger than Vermont, but I remember seeing students actively protesting at Ohio State and I never saw anything like that at Vermont. I think it came later. They're probably doing it now. [laughter]

KR: Should we wrap up for today?

BL: Is that okay?

KR: Yes, sure. We can continue tomorrow at three PM.

BL: Okay.

KR: You have to go, correct? You have another meeting right now.

BL: Yes.

KR: Well, thank you so much for doing this oral history interview with us. It has been really enjoyable.

BL: Well, thank you. It's fun for me too. [laughter] You've made me think about things I haven't thought about for fifty years.

KR: Good. Well, we will see you tomorrow. We will talk tomorrow at three o'clock.

BL: Sounds good.

KR: Okay.

BL: Bye-bye.

KR: Goodbye.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

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