Amanda Breen

Prof. McCaughey

Making Barnard History

March 23, 2015

Oral History Interview

**Interviewer:** Amanda Breen, Student

**Interviewee:** Linda Zappulla, Barnard College Class of 1971

**Interview Setting:** Interview conducted by telephone on March 18, 2015 at 7:00 PM.

**Q: Where were you living when you decided to apply to Barnard?**

A: I lived in Freeport, New York, which is a suburban town on Long Island. I went to Baldwin High School.

**Q: How did you find out about Barnard?**

A: I have no idea. I don’t recall how I found out about Barnard. It was one of two schools that I applied to, and it had the major that I thought I was interested in, and I did major in Latin American Studies. It was one of the few schools that had that topic as an existing major.

**Q: What was the other school you were interested in?**

A: State University of New York at Albany. I think at the time it was called Albany State College, or something like that.

**Q: Were there other factors that led you to apply to Barnard, or was the Latin American Studies major the sole determinant?**

A: The only thing that I recall is the major. You know, I liked New York City, so I guess the fact that it was in the city was a positive, but I don’t think that was really a determining factor.

**Q: Did you live on campus during your first year?**

A: Well, that’s a complicated answer. When I first went, I was a commuter because I lived within 50 miles of Barnard, and they didn’t have enough campus housing. So I got a dorm room, I’m thinking around January, so kind of mid year. But by then I was pretty involved with a student at Columbia and more or less was living at his apartment on Claremont Avenue.

**Q: What were your first few days at Barnard like? Did anything differ from your expectations?**

A: No. I think I enjoyed… You know, I was commuting, so I would take the Long Island Railroad and then a subway up to school, and I was enjoying classes, I was making friends. I was not terribly involved in the commuter—I think there was a room for commuters to hang out in—and I don’t recall that I ever got involved in that scene. But I just remember enjoying the college experience and finding the commute was OK.

**Q: What are some of your fondest memories from your time at Barnard?**

A: Well, I mean, that’s a big question. Well, I guess the first year, I had made some friends during orientation, and, you know, was able to stay connected to those girls, and we became friends that lasted both throughout the college experience, and some of them I’m still friends with now. So certainly that was important. I had this boyfriend. He was a member of the Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT) fraternity, and so we spent a lot of time there with his friends.

**Q: How did you decide on the Latin American Studies major?**

A: I probably need to answer the prior question a little more fully. I married the Columbia student that I met early in my freshman year in June, at the end of my freshman year, so that kind of changed my status at Barnard, and I then began to live off campus. I graduated from Barnard, but as a married student I was a little bit distanced from the campus activities.

**Q: Would you like to add anything else, or should I move on?**

A: I think we can move on.

**Q: How did you decide on the Latin American Studies major?**

A: I was interested in Spanish. I had taken Spanish from the time I was in sixth grade, and so I didn’t quite want to be a Spanish major. I liked history and government, and that seemed to be a major that combined the two. It also involved a lot of classes at Columbia, so I took probably two thirds of my classes at Barnard, and as I got deeper into my major, maybe a third of my classes at Columbia, so I enjoyed that. But it was just a combination of topics that I was interested in.

**Q: Were you involved in any extracurriculars either on campus or in the city, or were you primarily focused on academics?**

A: I would say I was focused on academics. I always had a summer job, but I did not have any part-time jobs during the school year. I think because I was married, I didn’t get involved in campus activities so much.

**Q: Were any of your friends involved in campus activities? Were there any clubs or organizations that were popular?**

A: I don’t recall.

**Q: Do you feel that Barnard offered you a unique college experience?**

A: I do.

**Q: Why do you feel that Barnard offered you a unique college experience?**

A: Well, some of it I realized in hindsight when I would go to reunions and I would attend lectures given by professors and I was always struck by the quality of the language that people used compared to the language that I was hearing every day in the business world. So there was a value in the communication capabilities of Barnard people, students as well as faculty, and just an acceptance of intellectual curiosity as part of the daily conversation. And I think the last thing would be something that I didn’t really recognize at the time, but the benefit of going to a women’s college meant you’re in a classroom with primarily women, many of my classes had men in them, but there was no effort to impress the boys. It was just about what you wanted to say and how you wanted to present yourself in class. And I think that’s one of the unsung benefits of a women’s college. I don’t know that I would go out of my way to choose a women’s college, and I didn’t choose Barnard because it was a women’s college, but I think I got that benefit from it.

**Q: You taught school for several years before getting an MBA at Harvard and pursuing a marketing career. What was that transition like? Was the MBA always your ultimate goal?**

A: No, I knew nothing about the MBA when I graduated from Barnard. I was suddenly struck by “What am I going to do after college?” And I was taking a teaching class, History of Education or something like that, and I was able to get a student teaching job at a local junior high school. And that became a class—I got credits for doing that student teaching. It was in a bilingual program at a junior high school nearby, and so I was using my Spanish, which was handy. But it wasn’t that I was planning a career in education—I just sort of fell into that. And then as I was teaching for three years, I thought, you know, I’m really more ambitious than being in the classroom. I didn’t find New York City public school administration appealing. So I was moving to Boston after those three years of teaching, and I got a job in business, and I had the opportunity to see a lot of resumes, and it seemed to me that the people with the most interesting resumes were the people who had an MBA. So I applied to Harvard for an MBA, and when I was accepted, I found that I was again in a room of like-minded people, which I really appreciated. They were smart, but they were ambitious. And they were not looking to become doctors or lawyers, they were just interested in business, and it became a great fit for me, but it was not something that I planned from my Barnard time frame.

**Q: When you were applying to business schools, was Harvard the only one you applied to?**

A: It was. I don’t know where I got the chutzpah to do that, but it was the only place I applied.

**Q: Were you still living in Massachusetts at that time?**

A: Yeah, I was living in Boston at the time.