Making Barnard History Mollie Galchus

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Ellen Futter

To find information about Ellen Futter, I looked through the *Barnard Bulletin*, used information from my interview with Dorothy Denburg, looked at the course blog, and looked at the websites of various organizations with which Futter is associated. From this preliminary research, I found that one of the most important changes Futter made to Barnard was making the college more selective, which was directly related to Columbia becoming coeducational.

While searching Ellen Futter’s name in the digital archives of the *Barnard Bulletin*, I found a feature article about her from 1992. The article reads, “In the past decade, Futter has had two children, secured Barnard’s independence and is now leading the most successful capital campaign in Barnard’s history,” briefly outlining Futter’s major accomplishments as president.[[1]](#footnote-1) The article continues, “For the first time, through the completion of Centennial, now Sulzberger Hall, Barnard has the capacity to be a fully residential college, relations with Columbia University are healthier than ever, and budget woes are fast becoming a chapter in Barnard’s history.” [[2]](#footnote-2) In addition to information about Futter specifically, I thought it was interesting that Sulzberger Hall was initially named Centennial hall. This article also focuses on personal information regarding Futter. She was the middle of three children, and grew up in Port Washington. Her brother, Jeffrey, is five years older, and her sister, Deborah is nine years younger. Futter participated in school government both in high school and college, and she became the third student ever to serve on the board of trustees at Barnard as a student representative. While at Columbia Law school, she became a trustee.

I found more information about Futter from the timeline of her life posted on the course blog. Here I learned that she was born in 1949 in New York City and raised in Port Washington. Her father graduated from Columbia College in 1939, and then from Columbia Law School in 1942. He was a corporate attorney and law professor, while Futter’s mother was a librarian in a school. Futter played tennis while in high school, and her brother graduated from Columbia College. Futter attended the University of Wisconsin from 1967 to 1969, and then transferred to Barnard as a junior in the fall of 1969 where she was at first not eligible for on-campus housing.

 From 1969 to 1971, Futter majored in English and was active in student government. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and graduated magna cum laude. In April 1971, Futter “followed Dorothy Urman as one of two elected but non-voting student representatives on the Board of Trustees.” [[3]](#footnote-3) She pushed to have student representatives given voting rights. Futter began Columbia Law School in September of 1971 and in February of 1972 was elected to a three-year term as voting alumna member of the Board of Trustees where she was re-elected in 1975. Futter married fellow law school student John Shutkin, and in 1974 graduated from law school in 1974. She then became an associate at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley and McCloy. In July of 1980 Futter became the acting president and took a one-year leave of absence from the law firm. The following May, Futter was elected the fifth president of Barnard. Her daughter, Anne Victoria, was born on September 20 of that year. The course blog read that on January 22, 1982 “Barnard trustees agreed with Columbia College’s decision to admit women in exchange for modification in Ad Hoc faculty tenure procedures.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Futter headed fundraising efforts, a curricular review which included freshman seminars and the Centennial Scholars. The course blog also mentioned the meeting of “trustee-mandated limits on faculty size and percentage of tenured.” [[5]](#footnote-5) Nineteen eighty three saw the creation of the BC-CU athletic consortium, and in 1986 Barnard used money from New York State to build a dormitory, originally called Centennial Hall. In May of 1993, Futter resigned to become the president of the American Museum of Natural History.

 From my interview with Dorothy Denburg, I learned about Futter’s responsibility for changing Barnard’s reputation into a more selective school. Futter was president of Barnard when Columbia College began accepting women, which in turn affected the admissions process at Barnard. “The most important thing is that for those first—for the whole middle part of the last century it was commuters who kept the college going,” Dorothy Denburg said. “But the college was part of the Seven Sisters and wanted to be perceived that way. The decision by Columbia to admit women meant that Barnard, or at least Ellen Futter, was smart enough to see that it meant that Barnard had to redefine itself to be much more selective to be a better and more equal partner to Columbia. So, with the opening of Sulzberger, you began to get more applicants from all over and became more selective.”[[6]](#footnote-6) The student population started to change as the college became increasingly difficult to get into, as there was now direction competition across the street from the coed Columbia.

Denburg’s final statement about Barnard in my interview with her praised Futter for her work in making Barnard the selective school it is today. “I think Barnard, over time, due to great leadership by Ellen Futter, and then by Judith [Shapiro], and now by Debora [Spar], but particularly some very important decisions that Ellen made that made it possible for the college to survive and then thrive after Columbia made the decision to admit women,” Denburg said. “The biggest change has been that Barnard has become as selective as it is, but the fact that it's more selective doesn't change what it has always been which is that it takes young women with a spark or even only the faintest idea of what they may become, and it makes it possible through them to become the best possible them. And I've loved being part of that.” [[7]](#footnote-7) Additionally, Denburg also mentioned that Futter set up the Committee on Race, Religion, and Ethnicity.

A *Bloomberg Business* webpage lists positions Futter has held since her time at Barnard, which is an extremely impressive resume. Futter was a member of the Advisory Board of Yale School of Management. She was Independent Director of JPMorgan Chase & Co. from 2001 to July 19, 2013 and of American International Group, Inc. from 1999 to July 21, 2008.[[8]](#footnote-8) She was Director of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company from 1990 to December 31, 2005 and Director at Consolidated Edison, Inc. since December 1997. Futter was Independent Director at CBS Corporation (Viacom, Inc.) from January 1, 2006 to April 2007. She was Director of CBS Inc. since 1992, and Director of NYC2012, Inc. [[9]](#footnote-9) From 1997 into 2000 Futter was Director of J.P. Morgan & Co. Inc. She was also Director of Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York, a subsidiary of JP Morgan & Co. Inc. She is a member of the National Institute for Social Sciences and the Academy of American Poets, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. [[10]](#footnote-10)

1. “Ten Years of Answers,” *Barnard Bulletin*, January 28, 1991, page 12. (author not included) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Robert McCaughey, “Ellen V. Futter – Biographical Outline,” *Making Barnard History*, May 14, 2014, <http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/ram31/deans-presidents/ellen-v-futter-biographical-outline/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Robert McCaughey, “Ellen V. Futter – Biographical Outline,” *Making Barnard History*, May 14, 2014, <http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/ram31/deans-presidents/ellen-v-futter-biographical-outline/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Dorothy Denburg, interview with Mollie Galchus, March 19, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Dorothy Denburg, interview with Mollie Galchus, March 19, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ellen V. Futter, *Bloomberg Business*, <http://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=546655&privcapId=4257100> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)