Joan Rachlin
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Katherine Lynch/Otter AI

LYNCH: This is Katherine Lynch. Today is Saturday, May 6 2023, and I'm conducting this oral history interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. I am recording this interview via Zoom video with Miss Joan Rachlin. I'm on the campus of Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire and Ms. Rachlin is speaking to me from Longboat Key, Florida. Ms. Rachlin, thank you for speaking with me today.

RACHLIN: It's my pleasure. My name is Joan Rachlin (RACK-LIN)

LYNCH: Rachlin (Rack-lin)

RACHLIN: and please call me Joan.

LYNCH: Joan, thank you.

RACHLIN: because… from Dartmouth onward I've been a Ms., not a Mrs. But I've always been a Rachlin. So thanks.

LYNCH: A Rachlin. Great, awesome. Can you tell me where and when you were born, please.

RACHLIN: I was born in Newark, New Jersey on April 5th, 1949.

LYNCH: And did you grow up in Newark?

RACHLIN: No, when I was three and a half my family moved to South Florida, to Hollywood, Florida, which is between Miami and Fort Lauderdale. My father had severe hay fever in the days before reliable and safe antihistamines and he needed a different kind of climate from all the ragweed and other allergens, so we moved to Florida. And my mother was from Alabama, and she was aching to be closer to her family.

LYNCH: And what did your parents do for a living?

RACHLIN: My mother was a journalist. She had gone to Northwestern [Medill] School of Journalism, and worked for the Chicago Sun-Times for a while. And when we moved to Hollywood, she worked for the Hollywood Sun-Tattler and did a sort of volunteer efforts drafting material for newsletters. My father was a dentist and opened his dental office in Hallandale, Florida,

which is right next to Hollywood–immediately south of Hollywood. And he was the first dentist in Hallandale, Florida.

LYNCH: Gotcha. And what were your….Do you have any siblings? What was your family dynamic like?

RACHLIN: You know, I thought I had a terrific childhood [laughter]. It was wonderful in that we spent a lot of time on the beach and my parents were both lovers of nature and the outdoors. And my dad worked incredibly hard and would come home and, you know, eat dinner quickly after we had all eaten. And then he would go watch Walter Cronkite or some of the other old timers in the news, and the Kalb brothers: Bernard Kalb, Marvin Kalb. I remember the two of them and Walter Cronkite, but there were certainly others. And then he would fall asleep with the Miami Herald open on his chest. So, you know, time with him was mostly on his days off and weekends. But I loved–especially loved–his days off because he and I were a very good team.

My mom was, again, a writer and very creative and very high energy. And it turned out that they did not have a good marriage. And after my brother and I left home, they split up. I mean, there was never overt conflict, but my parents didn't really know each other when they got married. They had met when my father was stationed in Alabama at an army base before he was flown overseas. And he was overseas during World War II for four and a half years. He was the longest serving dentist in the European theater, and he was also in North Africa during World War II. So their relationship had been largely one of letter writing. And then when he returned to Newark [N.J.] where his family lived, my mom would come up–but always with chaperones, because that was the Southern way then. And they really didn't know each other well enough and certainly loved each other, but they were so different that it was kind of doomed to fail. But anyhow, it was a great childhood in so many respects. And I have happy memories, and then they split up and a whole new chapter started. So…

LYNCH: Do you think that you saw their relationship that way when you were younger, or just in reflection of your childhood?

RACHLIN: I think when I was a teenager, I started to be much more aware. You know, I knew they were different, but they–we all had fun together. And I think that was also the generation where you never argued in front of the kids. And I also think that it was never miserable, miserable. It was just, they were different people. My mother was very high spirited and high strung and almost a latter day Scarlett O'Hara type and my dad was steady and very gentle and very much intellectual and very politically involved–as was my mom but in different ways. And I think when I was a teenager and

became more aware and spent a lot more time with friends and their families, I came to understand that they were a good partnership when it came to child rearing and making, you know, everything run well enough, but that in terms of what I would call love, and respect, and commitment, and you know, cherishing someone, I didn't feel that as I became older.

LYNCH: Gotcha. And what was your brother's name?

RACHLIN: My brother's name is Alan [R.] Rachlin.

LYNCH: Alan Rachlin. And what is his age difference to you? And what was your relationship…

RACHLIN: He is two years younger than I.

LYNCH: Two years younger. And what was that relationship like to have a younger brother?

RACHLIN: We had fun together when we were very young. Our family loved Broadway music and Broadway musicals. And quite often after dinner, particularly on the weekends, when there was no homework, we'd put on long playing records of Broadway shows and my brother and I would act it out and the four of us would sing and, you know, we just seem–we did a lot of fun things. We'd go biking as a family, we'd go to lots of museums and festivals and horse shows and science fairs [laughter]. And I mean, it felt good. He was very different than I, temperamentally. But it was fine growing up… Yeah.

LYNCH: And so, did you two go to school together in Florida?

RACHLIN: We certainly went to the same elementary school and middle school, then called–there and then called–a junior high school. But a brand new school opened up when I was in high school. I think I was in 10th or 11th grade, and I did not want to transfer. But because my hus–my brother, excuse me, was younger, he transferred. It was called Nova [High School] and it was a very innovative and progressive and otherwise exciting high school. And there have been times when I regretted not going there. But I by then had friends, and was already two years into high school and just didn't want to leave despite my parents' wishes to the contrary. But he went to Nova for high school, and I did not. But until then, we went to the same public primary school and junior high school.

LYNCH: And can you tell me a little bit about how you were as a student in elementary school, and then through high school?

RACHLIN: I think in elementary school, I was a very serious student. I mean, serious to the extent that, you know, school aged kids can be serious. But I loved, loved, loved school. And I was friendly with the–with all love and respect–the nerdy kids. And I was nerdy. I just had some incredibly inspiring teachers who I think of to this day. And they formed who I was as a student for the most part. In junior high school and high school, I went off the rails a little, you know. I kind of got sucked into the [pause] the boy thing, and the beach thing, and the surfing thing, and the cheerleading thing, and I was also in the student council, I was editor of my high school newspaper, homecoming court. And sadly, I was not part of a clique-clique, but I knew I didn't want to be an outcast from a clique and I just kind of steered a course. But, all of that took me away–all of those things–took me away from being as devoted to my studies as I later wished I had been.

Having said that, I didn't do poorly in any subjects except chemistry. And I really disliked my chemistry teacher and he really disliked almost all of us. And it was pretty miserable. That's the only class I remember as being particularly unpleasant. Although, you know, I didn't love algebra and [trigonometry] and calculus, but I managed. Mostly because my father was a really phenomenal mathematician and would help with homework when needed. I wish I had had more fun in chemistry because it's a very cool science but, alas…

LYNCH: Yeah. And so what was your college process or college decision making process like? Did you always have that in mind throughout high school?

RACHLIN: It was.. it's… that part is very faded. All of my friends were going to either Florida State, University of Florida or the three schools down south: [H.] Sophie Newcomb [Memorial College], which was then the women's college associated with Tulane [University], Emory [University], or Duke [University] and I–my parents did not want me to go to school in Florida, and really didn't want me to go to school down south. But I applied, not to the Florida schools, but to Tulane, and Duke, and Emory, and got in. Where I really thought I wanted to go was University of Pennsylvania, because my dad had gone there for a long time and many family friends. And they were just starting to accept women as well. I mean, they had been accepting women, but it was still a lower percentage than men. And, I only got waiting listed. But my parents had very dear friends in Boston, and we used to visit Boston a lot. And my father said to me from as young as I can remember: you should go to college in Boston, and you should, you know, you would love it there, and we love it there, and it's in your nature. And I did not want to apply to Harvard [University] because, again, back then it was Radcliffe. And that was fine, I wouldn't have minded a women's school, but I had heard, even then, that Harvard was fiercely competitive and that you couldn't leave your notes in the library if you went

to the bathroom [laughter] because, I mean, there was stories circulating that were–and they weren't circulated about Penn, which was the only other Ivy League school to which I applied.

And I also applied to Beaver [College], which is in Pennsylvania, because my mother's cousins had gone there and loved it. Again, I was naive and it wasn't–of course it wasn't like today with websites and virtual tours. And we traveled to all these places, but I applied to Boston University [BU], Boston College, Beaver, Newcomb (Tulane), Emory, Duke, and got in [pause] everywhere except Penn where I got waiting listed. And those were, at least I don't remember those being the days where people would kind of ask for another consideration on the waitlist. Again, this was more than fifty years ago. And if you've got waiting listed, you just thought, well, they'll call me if they have a spot and I never got a call. There were, again, no computers, no cell phones, it was very 20th century–mid 20th century.

So I decided to go to BU partly because my parents were encouraging me to not stay down south because of the culture. And because of their concerns about the culture down south, they had sent me to Phillips Exeter Academy for two summers after 10th and 11th grades to kind of get a taste of what that was like. And of course we took field trips almost every weekend into Boston to museums and theater. And, and of course, I had grown to love Boston because of visiting there during my childhood, visiting these family friends. So, I decided to go to BU. I mean, I knew it wasn't an elite school, but that never mattered to me. And I just loved the idea of having the whole city as your campus. So I ended up at BU, and I ended up in an honors program there for the top, whatever percent of entering freshmen. And I actually really loved it and had a great experience for almost, yeah, it was a year and a half–almost two years. I'm confused because I stayed at Dartmouth for two years and a semester–a quarter. But it was because I stayed an extra summer quarter.

LYNCH: So what was the transition, like from Florida to being in New England? Or do you feel like a New England girl at heart?

RACHLIN: I always did, I think because my father's whole family was up north in New Jersey and New York and Connecticut and Massachusetts and lots of family were in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. And, my mom's was in Selma, Alabama, which was its own story, but certainly nothing to be proud of. Only if you were working against segregation and Jim Crow, which our family was. But I was so close to my dad's family that I just always loved it up north, and you know, we spent lots of vacations there and I seem to feel very at home in Boston, and to this day, feel that way. I feel like it's my home. And Hanover is quickly overtaking that, but it was all just this love affair with New England.

So it was, you know, clearly it was exciting to go shopping for wool clothes and sweaters and ski jackets and boots. But it was a bit of an adjustment. Although again, we had spent lots of time in New York but it's different living in the Northeast, but I was excited about everything. Those were the years when there was enthusiasm and sometimes all when the first snows fell and it was just–everything was easy, because we were all in identity formation mode and independence mode and finding your way in this wide and wonderful and at times scary and complicated world mode.

So, it was an okay transition and, again, I was in this tiny program. And we all functioned like, in a little knot of whatever, that move from class to class together. It was an integrated curriculum, you have the same people in every class. It was very exciting. It was a very innovative method of pedagogy. So..

LYNCH: And where was BU on the co-education timeline, when you first arrived?

RACHLIN: It had been co-ed–I don't even know when it was not co-ed. I'm sure it wasn't co-ed at some point. But it wasn't like the ivys, or the women's colleges, or the men's colleges that weren't ivys. It just was very, very, very welcoming to women. And it was a more–the other thing I loved about BU, it was in the middle of a community. So if you were studying something, it was easy to get internships or rotations, externships, experiences mentoring or being mentored by, or shadowing really impressive professionals. So, the fact that it was in the city, the fact that it was very community oriented, and at that time very political, all appealed to me.

LYNCH: Right.

RACHLIN: And I got over my Penn [University of Pennsylvania] longing pretty quickly, because West Philly [West Philadelphia, PA] then was a horrible neighborhood. My dad, you know, loved that area–or not that area, he loved his school years. But when I went to visit, people would say: don't go off this block and don't go past 36th Street or don't cross the quad after eight o'clock. And I think that actually was a little alarming. Because it was–I mean, what does a bad neighborhood mean? It means there was a lot of racism and probably a lot of exclusivity that made people think that if anyone of color was on their hallowed college ground, it was a negative. But anyhow, it–Boston was great. And that general impression certainly got more nuanced as I spent time there. But it never changed in terms of the vitality and history and access to nature. And you know, when there's a city with 200 institutions of higher learning, and that's the main industry, if you will, you gotta know it's going to be a pretty thrilling place for young people.

LYNCH: Yeah. And so where was the Vietnam War at this point in time? And how did you see that developing in Boston?

RACHLIN: So, you know, the Vietnam War had been going on for a very long time. It was a slow simmering war. And when I was in eighth, maybe ninth grade, there was an essay contest in my town by the newspaper–the Hollywood Sun Tattler–on, you know, teens' opinions about the war.

And so if I was born in '49, and I believe this was eighth grade, it could have been ninth, but in any event. It was like '65, or '64, I entered. And I was one of, you know, three or four winners. I still have somewhere the newspaper with my essay, or at least excerpts from my essay, and a picture of me. And I actually–my opinion then, because who knows why, I was drinking the Kool Aid, I was listening to people much more knowledgeable and certainly smarter than I who said: this is really important because if Vietnam falls to communism then, you know, a lot of Southeast Asia will fall and then parts of Africa will fall. It was the so-called domino theory, where you know, the French had been in Vietnam for, if not centuries, then at least a century.

And it had been relatively quiet under French rule because there were no, again, there were no communications organs, or vehicles for people who were dispossessed–the, you know, the Vietnamese people. So when France left, there was this notion that either, you know, China and Russia moved in or we moved in. There was never a notion: oh, let Vietnam become a democracy, or a republic, or whatever form of government they chose. And we have to, you know, be the policemen for the world. And we have to make the world safe for democracy, which is a very geocentric and certainly disrespectful view of the world because not every political system works in every country. But, that's how I felt and so I wrote an essay saying that our presence in Vietnam, which was then not a full blown war, was justified because otherwise communism–now it's noteworthy that my father was a communist, and a proud communist, and a card carrying communist when he was in college in New York City. And he, just was someone who really believed that everybody should have a threshold level of housing, and health care, and education and, and, you know, food security. And he didn't believe in having such stark disparities in wealth, even, again, in the–he was born in 1917. So this would have been the early-to-mid 20s. No, sorry, the early-to-mid–it would have been let's see, 1727 in [inaudible]–the early to mid 30s, when he was in college, and so ironically, and I've never quite understood this, and guess never remember what my dad said about it.

He was a supporter of communism, but never made a big deal about it with us. He always told us, he believed in a fair society, and he always taught us that it was like a really good thing to pay taxes because taxes

are the government's way of redistributing wealth. And he told us that we should always feel lucky if we have enough money that we have to pay taxes. So, he always–as did my mom–had a very, you know, everybody should have a threshold level of financial security.

LYNCH: And do you think, do you think you adopted some of those, some of those ideologies?

RACHLIN: Oh I know I did. I know I did.

LYNCH: Yeah.

RACHLIN: And I, I still feel that way. I love paying taxes. My husband's from Canada, he loves paying taxes. We're the only people we know who, you know, feel like this is the price you pay for living in a society and helping people who are less fortunate. We believe that good fortune is mostly an accident of birth. And that, you know, we are put on this earth to help other people and taxes and redistribution of wealth and government service for those who can't afford health or housing or education or good food is a really important function of government. So, I do still feel that way.

LYNCH: And did you feel that way when you were in college, and when the war was happening, like when you were in Boston as well?

RACHLIN: Yes, I started to feel very differently about the war in my second year at BU, because then the anti-war movement was really heating up particularly on campuses because of the draft.

LYNCH: Right.

RACHLIN: And my best friend from Hollywood, Florida was a man named John Berlow, who was at Harvard. He was probably the most brilliant person I've ever known. And he kept calling me on the hall phone in our dorm and telling me to come to Harvard, to all of these demonstrations, because it was much more active even than BU.

And I would go to demonstrations at Boston University in the Student Union on Commonwealth Avenue. But they were mostly against having ROTC on campus, the R-O-T-C, which was the military trainees. And that was of course one of the impetuses at Dartmouth as well, early impetuses–I don't know if that's a word impetus. But that was one of the early motivations for mobilizing campus activists because ROTC was also at Dartmouth.

So I would go to demonstrations in the George Sherman Student Union, anti-war demonstrations, but then I started going to Harvard. And those

were huge. And I'm not sure to this day why they were larger because BU was a much larger school. But they were, and maybe they were drawing from Tufts [University] or MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] or other schools in the area. But they probably also had a lot more formal organizers from a group called Students for a Democratic Society, also known as SDS. And John Berlow, my childhood friend who is really one of my heroes–unfortunately, he died about seven or eight years ago in Vietnam. He actually went back to Vietnam and started an organic food nonprofit that became the, you know, one of the most famous NGOs of the country. He wanted to give back to the country that our country had…fill in the blank, you know, devastated. So John was very involved in SDS. I kept going because I adored him, and we've been friends since we were four. And he was in the takeover of the administration building at BU. And he was in prison for 24 hours, and then he was expelled from Harvard in 1968, or '69, as a sophomore. And that was…

LYNCH: What did he do from there?

RACHLIN: He became a, you know, freelance activist. He did not immediately go back to college, and he did take courses along the way. He was a genius, but his real identity and his real purpose in life as he saw it was to fight unjust wars and to fight for the dispossessed. So he stayed involved in anti-war activities and we stayed friends. And when I graduated from law school, he came to work for me in a small law firm.

And then shortly after, he decided to move to Vietnam and he lived there for many, many years and started this food project. And sadly, he needed foot surgery–again, maybe 5, 6, 7 max years ago–and he died through this very unexpected, rare side effect of the surgery. It was, yeah, so a true heartbreak. But he was beloved in the areas of Vietnam in which he worked.

So I got very interested in anti-war activism and my politics started changing. And it was in part because once I really started to study the issues rather than just hear people say: Oh, communism, the big bad wolf when in fact I knew in my heart even then that it wasn't all bad, and that no one economic system works for every government or society or country. I really understood that we had no business there. That, again, we couldn't patrol the world and say: our way or the highway–and that was its own kind of arrogance, so…

LYNCH: And so did your friends at BU share that kind of, you know, love or want to get involved in the anti-war protest, or is it just you?

RACHLIN: Most did not. I had one friend–actually two friends–who would go with me to these protests, and they were both guys. And most of the women at BU

from my program were just, I don't know even the word: apathetic, disinterested, too busy studying. But I had a stripe of, not radicalism, but I had a stripe of fighting for the underdog from a very young age. Mostly because my mother came from Selma, Alabama. And also because my father had been in the, again, in the army for four and a half years and had been at Dachau [Germany]–one of the concentration camps–on the day of liberation.

And he taught us from, you know, probably ten or twelve–because they don't want to terrify us as younger children–that, you know, they taught us about the Holocaust. And they taught us about man's inhumanity to man. And they taught us about the murders. And they taught us that you always have to stand up for underdogs and you always have to speak out and you can never, you know, let anyone be threatened. And my dad used to say: if there's one person who is at risk, we're all at risk, because who knows, you know. And then there was that famous [Pastor Martin Niemöller] poem ["First They Came"]. You know, they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't protest because I wasn't a trade unionist, and they came for the gypsies, and I didn't protest because I wasn't a gypsy, and they came for the, homosexuals, and the Catholics, and then they, you know, on-and-on, and then they came for me, and there was no one left to protest.

So, I forgot the poem, but I think it's Niemöller. This wonderful minister–or philosopher, or both. But I was brought up from a very young age with stand up and be counted. My parents were lifelong Civil Liberties Union members, and when I was five–wait, hold on, I think it was five–they took me to my first protest, to protest the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were being put to death for supposedly passing Soviet secrets. It was likely true of him and likely not true of her, but it was clearly a punishment which did not fit a crime. It was the whole anti-communist paranoia and frenzy. We went to the Hollywood Public Library several nights and they carried placards about 'stop the execution'. And of course, they were executed. And it was really heartbreaking. And the irony of that story is that when I had children, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's son became a friend and his granddaughter became my children's babysitter for a period. Her name is Jenny [Jennifer Ethel] Meeropol. And she now runs their family foundation, which is to help children of people imprisoned, which clearly was the situation in which her father and uncle were when their parents were in prison–family friends took them in. So I have…

LYNCH: So it's been in your blood.

RACHLIN: It's been in my DNA. Yeah, absolutely.

LYNCH: Yeah, it seems so. And so, now, when you were at BU, how did you find out about the Ten College Exchange Program at Dartmouth? And what brought you here?

RACHLIN: So John Berlow was one of my best friends and he's the one who brought me to all the demonstrations at Harvard and came to mine at BU. Larry Fox ['71] was another very close friend from Hollywood, Florida. And we stayed in touch, and it was even letters and phone calls–rarely. But he, at one point, was in Boston when I was a freshman or first semester sophomore maybe, and he said Dartmouth is talking about letting women in and they're starting this exchange program and I really want you to come.

And this is where I get fuzzy because I don't remember what month–it must have been at the beginning of my sophomore year or the end of my freshman year–but he said: you're gonna love it, you love nature, you should come. And we had been close in Hollywood, Florida. So he said: come visit me and see what you think. And so I rode a bus, I think it was Greyhound or Peter Pan, to Lebanon [N.H.] to the–no to White River Junction [VT]–to the famous bus station that is still there, and spent the weekend. I think he was in [The] Tabard. It was the frat house on the corner of fraternity row, right across from the president's house and right opposite that Newman Catholic Center [Aquinas House]. It was a house with beautiful porches–like wraparound porches. But anyhow, I don't remember.

LYNCH: Yeah, I know what house you're talking about. I think they might have changed. Was it Alpha Chi [Alpha] maybe?

RACHLIN: It wasn't that then. But I know there have been some…

LYNCH: Yeah, anyway.

RACHLIN: Anyhow, so I spent the weekend there. And, of course, it was like Santa's grab bag, it was fun and he showed me all these cool things and we went hiking up [Mount] Moosilauke and it was really great. And there was something [laughter]–it's crazy how the lens of my life is often, there's often a through line to my father in particular, and he always loved mountains and lakes. He had been a waiter when living–growing up in New York, in the Catskill Mountains. He came from a very poor family. And he always used to say to us: oh, someday we'll all have a house near lakes and mountains, and someday we'll all hike in mountains–and I could hear my father sitting on my shoulder during that weekend, visiting Larry Fox ['71]. And, again, we had climbed Moosilauke, and we had walked around Occom Pond, and we had picked wild rhubarb, and seen the

Connecticut [River], and talked about going canoeing, but didn't. And I just thought I really like it here.

And I think there was something very, either subtle or subconscious. I don't know whether it was subtle enough to be subconscious. But I think I liked the idea of being among the people who would help bring co-education to Dartmouth. I think I was kind of a change agent in any arena in which you put me. I would find a way to hopefully be a constructive advocate for progress. Larry, and all of his frat friends and the people I had met soon after getting there, wanted women. Clearly, most of the alumni didn't–or many of the alumni and certainly many of the high net worth alumni–didn't want women. Some of the students didn't want women, but I think a lot of the students, by the time I got there, were happy to have the prospect of women and this little canary in the coal mine coterie, trying to see if it was breathable air in Hanover at the time.

LYNCH: So what was it like to join–because there were seven women who were on campus as a part of the theater program before…

RACHLIN: Yes, yes.

LYNCH: So what was it like to join them? Did you interact with them at first?

RACHLIN: Well, we didn't really because the rest–we were seventy. The first came as seven, and then we were seventy and we all lived in Cohen Hall. We were in this, you know, whatever nunnery or [laughter] cloistered area where they were really were concerned–the administration–about whether we'd be welcome, whether we'd be reviled, whether we'd be pelted with what–tomatoes, eggs–no one knew how they'd react to us. And so we had wonderful house parents, as you would in a dorm or a house at one of the many ivy league schools that have a house system or a college system. And that we were all together. And I think that the women–the seven women–had been there a semester or two–a quarter or two before we–and they had bonded, and they were always rehearsing. We knew them, I knew them, because I love theater and made a point of trying to talk to them. And sometimes I'd run into them in the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts], and they'd be rehearsing and I just always loved watching. You didn't watch the rehearsals, but you'd see them in the snack bar, you'd see them in the set design room or the rehearsal area. And I knew them but never close. They were their own wonderful, creative, cohort. But the rest of us, not all of us, but we all knew each other, we were only seventy. Or we knew–I'd say I knew twenty to twenty-five of the women very well, and the other ones I knew by sight and name. Because seventy isn't that big a number.

LYNCH: Right.

RACHLIN: It took a while. But, so the seven theater theater majors, one of whom is now a friend–just we've met through alumni activities. And we've talked about those days, but I wasn't in any way directly involved with the theater majors. They were the first cadre of pioneers.

LYNCH: Right. Did you feel like even though… Do you feel you were known on campus just by virtue of being a woman among so many men?

RACHLIN: You were certainly visible as a co-ed or exchange student–depending on who was doing the identifying. But I'd say the first year I was there, I don't think I knew more than thirty men. I think that a lot of men would avert their eyes. Some people would sneer [laughter] and say something under their breath. Most people would, you know, smile, but there wasn't this rush to welcome *me*, at least. I think, again, I wasn't a party animal kind of person and I didn't drink, and so I sort of took longer, I think to find my little cohort. I hung out with Larry Fox ['71] and his friends for a while and then I started to get involved politically and found more of my own community. But I wouldn't say it was overly welcoming, but I never had any explicitly negative experience. Again, some people would just lower their eyes or some people would give a slight glare or slight mumble.

[Interruption]

But, you know, it's like everywhere you find your people and then you don't really–I didn't ever feel, I didn't ever take personally the fact that some students, perhaps a few faculty and staff, and a lot of alums, did not want women at Dartmouth. And in fact, the spring of my senior year, I went on two or three visits to alumni gatherings as an emissary of the college to try to talk to alums about co-education. I was asked by one of the deans to do that. And it was enlightening to have to face this–in those days, with those groups–primarily hostile reactions and to try to parry them, so.

LYNCH: Did you feel any pressure academically to do well? Like with co-education potentially riding on your back?

RACHLIN: Yeah, I mean, huge pressure. You really felt like, you know, you were the–you were among the criteria on which the decision would be made. Because I think that they really–they, who's they?–the decision makers, the alums who gave the–maybe some of the men, they all felt like women were inferior intellectually, women were good for staying barefoot, pregnant, and chained to a stove. They felt that women would somehow destroy the Dartmouth men in the woods, friends forever, foxhole friends. I mean one man when I spoke on behalf of the Alumni–to the alumni group on behalf of the college said: Dartmouth is like the Marines, you have these relationships that last your whole life. And there's not much you can

say to that, they just felt women would destroy it. And the only thing I could say is: I understand you feel that way, but not everybody wants college to be like the Marines, you know, some people might. And there are certainly enough military academies or other choices for people that do.

But I felt a huge amount of pressure. And you know, at BU I had been a serious and conscientious student. But at Dartmouth, [laughter] I really, really ramped it up, because I didn't want to ever look back and feel like: oh my God, I didn't do my homework and someone embarrassed me, and that made people in the class, or the professor, or both, feel that women really didn't belong at Dartmouth. So I really tried. And who knows, I'm not a 'call-on me, call on me!' kind of person so I was never super outspoken but nor was I mute. I was somewhere in the middle, and I had something to contribute. I did feel that unless I had something to say that hadn't previously been raised, I was not going to open my mouth even if I thought I had a better way–perhaps a better way–of explaining or phrasing or framing it. I just thought if I had something original that hasn't come up yet I'll….

But it's interesting, because a lot of the guys in the classes would shout out. And many of the women would raise their hands because, again, it's more of a girl thing, you know, decorum and I don't know. And then the men–or the young men–felt comfortable just shouting out, and I never felt comfortable. To this day, I don't really feel comfortable shouting out in groups, no matter the topic or setting.

LYNCH: So in your first fall term the draft lottery happened on December 1st of '69. So do you remember any details of that day specifically? What the feelings and energy was on campus.

RACHLIN: I remember a lot of fear among the men, and a lot of anxiety. And I remember, a lot of the men talked about getting drunk that night, you know, so that–somehow to dull the news. If it was bad news, if you had a low number and to celebrate if it was good news, if you had a high number. And I remember, there were all these listen parties or watch parties. And it was a weeknight, I don't remember what night of the week. And I chose not to go to any of the gatherings–I don't want to call them parties. Partly because I didn't drink, partly because I had homework, and partly because I was so emotional about the draft by then, having been an activist or at least an advocate–anti-draft advocate, activist, call it what you will–for over two years, or almost two years. So I stayed at Cohen Hall.

And because it was December, the windows must have been open, because you would hear literal screams of either joy or profanity as

people–you could hear it, you know. And again, Cohen Hall isn't *that* close to other dorms, but you could hear it because that's how loud the screaming was. And then I got curious and sad and wondering who was low and who was high and I thought about walking over to frat row and to Webster Ave. And I decided not to and I think at some point, I went to sleep and then the next day at Thayer [Dining Hall], and then classes, and on the quad, and wherever you went everyone would be asking: what's your number?

But that night, I think emotionally I just didn't have it in me to go to the gatherings and a lot of women were still in Cohen [Hall]. It wasn't like it emptied out to head to Webster Ave or any other dorm. But it was just traumatic because everybody, by then, knew that going held a high chance that you wouldn't be returning?

LYNCH: And what was the dynamic between men and women after that day? Did they feel like you almost weren't a part of that experience? How was that?

RACHLIN: Clearly the men had a lot more common cause, you know. But I think the real dynamics were the people who had low numbers–from what I saw and heard, the people who were almost certain to be drafted unless they could find a legal way out, or unless they were willing to move to Canada or elsewhere outside the country. I think they were the ones who probably bonded with each other, or went deeper into themselves or into small friendship groups. Because luckily, most of the students–the men with whom I was friendly–were high numbers, or at least middle of the pack numbers. But I did know two or three people who had low numbers. I remember that being one of the first times where I thought: wow, I don't know what to say. My instinct always was to just say: I'm here if you need me–but that sounded so trite under circumstances like that. It's different from someone getting a bad diagnosis, or losing a family member. But some would say: this was my number, and I'd say: let's hope this war ends before it comes to that. That was sort of my stock response. And people got high numbers, and I'd say: congratulations.

But, you know, it was just horrible because I know that people–I don't know anyone who wanted to be drafted because if you wanted to be drafted, you would have gone into ROTC, or you would have been happy and no one I knew had a low number was happy. Not anyone was even close to sane after they got a low number. They were all really off the rails for a while figuring out what to do.

LYNCH: So did you feel that that accelerated the anti war protests at Dartmouth? Did it give you some kind of new energy?

RACHLIN: You know, I think there had been things percolating as early as '68. But this is where I get fuzzy. But I know that weekend I came to visit Larry Fox ['71], there was already the anti-ROTC stuff going on. And there was a teach-in, I think in '68, and I think I was there that week because I remember–or weekend–because I remember sheet banners being hung around the campus. That was before Kinkos where you could go in and for $60 get a real banner. And so I think I went to a teach-in in Mass [Massachusetts] Hall and maybe one at the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts] on the Vietnam War and there were a couple of professors and maybe Jonathan Mirsky.

And that's the part that's fuzzy, because that was my introduction and we also went climbing up Mount Moosilauke, and we walked around Occom Pond, and we did a couple other things. But I remember a session–whether it was the actual teach-in–or just a meeting of the more antiwar students. But I remember there being activity and '68 when I went to visit, and I'm not sure whether that was a one off or whether that was when they called off classes.

But I would say that after the draft, that's when they started organizing the marches in Washington [D.C.], and I went to two that spring. One in DC, and one in Cambridge, [Massachusetts]. And the DC one I went with a busload of Dartmouth students, and we spent the night in the basement at my good friend David Aylward's ['71] house, his family lived in Washington. And it was just wonderful to be in Washington protesting the war with Dartmouth friends.

And we were near pepper sprayers, but we were not pepper sprayees–we didn't get pepper sprayed. But you know, that certainly accelerated it for all of us. And then the march in Cambridge, I remember there were like four cars going down. And after that at Dartmouth, during the rest of my junior and senior years, I would say that I would go to meetings, and I remember meetings and Mass [Massachusetts] Hall–it was a lounge in Mass Hall. But that's about all I remember. And I remember being good friends with a young man from Montgomery, Alabama, who was very involved in the meetings. But then I got really involved with the Tucker Foundation. I was just deciding that I needed to take all of my social justice instincts and energy and put it to a more concrete cause. So I got very involved with the Tucker Foundation.

LYNCH: Let's back just for a second, to the Seven Days in May, after the Kent State shooting. Do you remember that specific event, and what the impact was on Dartmouth's campus?

RACHLIN: I remember sobbing when I heard there had been a shooting on the Kent State campus. And then that iconic photo of this woman, leaning over a

body of a student who had been shot–that's still iconic–that I will never get out of my brain–the Rorschach of my brain; the celluloid of my brain. I just will never forget that photo and it was on every newspaper, and every TV screen, and it was inconceivable to me that someone murdered students. And I remember the campus being pretty business as usual after that. And I remember walking across the quad thinking: why is everyone kind of going about their business? Don't they know this happened? And I was kind of shocked. But then in the next couple of days, there were fliers around about Kent State and there must have been a meeting, but I don't remember going. And I don't remember it as this pivot point where immediately things became more radicalized. And I think it's because–in all honesty–I don't think the Dartmouth students or student body ever worried about the Hanover police, or even the New Hampshire state police–and certainly not the campus security guards–ever becoming violent. And it was in part because the protests at Dartmouth, other than the Parkhurst [Hall] takeover, which was just its own unique event–I don't think it ever became threatening to law enforcement–the level and type of protesting that was going on. I think it was, you know, I got the feeling that when we meet, we talk about what we can do. It wasn't a vis-a-vis Dartmouth. Once they had made the decision to expel ROTC, it was really what else can we do? And it was about working on elections, and at that point we were all very involved in Eugene McCarthy's campaign, and he came to campus and I went and met him. He spoke and then he went to the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts] and there was reception, and I went with a bunch of friends. So I think at that point, my memory was, it's not like: how can we force John [G.] Kemeny's hand or Carol Brewster's hand; it was like: how can we get a different government? How can we get rid of Nixon? How can we get rid of certain senators who were…. So at least in my mind, there was never this, you know: get Harvard or Columbia [University]–again, there were very active SDS protests at Columbia and it was very threatening to a lot of the administrators. But it never felt that way at Dartmouth. It didn't feel like us versus the college, other than the Parkers takeover. It felt like us versus the government. And those were two very different and distinct entities.

LYNCH: So do you feel like that was received well by Kemeny and the rest of the Dartmouth administration–that anti-war sentiment?

RACHLIN: Kemeny was such a rational, such a kind, such a strategic individual. And having come out of Nazi Germany, I always believed that he was anti-war. He was anti-anything that would have degraded a people–particularly something that approached genocide, which is what starting to happen in Vietnam. Not genocide writ large, but they were certainly wiping up huge numbers of Vietnamese, even with the chemical weapons.

And Kemeny was so supportive of co-education. Without Kemeny, there would not have been co-education at that point in time. And likely not anytime soon thereafter. Who knows? James [O.] Friedman was terrific and would have certainly been a change agent. But, I don't remember Kemeny being that politicized. I really do think Kemeny…

[interruption 55:11-55:18]

I think that Kemeny really supported anti-war efforts. But I think that Kemeny was supremely interested in 'calm on campus' and just making sure that the protesters were educated and that was the reason for the teach-in. And that was the reason for editorials in the daily Dartmouth, and that was the reason that trying to educate people and to respect all opinions, and to make sure that former ROTC students or anyone who was pro involvement in Vietnam–that those individuals were not treated as pariahs or otherwise threatened, however non-physically or non-violently. So Kemeny was just, in my mind, a wonderful human being. And someone who had seen horrors that none of us should ever have to see or experience or live with, and that he was never going to be a supporter of unjust wars.

But do I remember editorials? Do I remember Kemeny's speeches? Do I remember Kemeny being our fearless leader? No. I think college presidents in general just wanted calm on campus and education, so that people were informed about what they were protesting for or against.

LYNCH: So who led those protests? And who do you remember being the vocal person in that group? Was it other women? Or was it mostly led by men?

RACHLIN: No, it was mostly the men. I remember a woman named Diane [R.] Amsterdam ['71] who had gone to Vassar [College], who was very involved. And a woman named–I can see with long blonde hair–Darrell, whose last name I know but can't remember. And the three of us were the only women that I remember that were regularly involved in anti-war activities. And I'm just not sure, again, three out of seventy, it's not impressive but nor is that surprising when you think about the general population. I mean, the anti-war movement got huge in the early 70s but it really didn't swell until some of the later bombings and atrocities, you know–My Lai and things like that. So I don't remember many women being involved. I remember my buddy David Aylward ['71], my friend David Hanchett ['71], my friend Stephen Paige ['71], Larry Fox ['71], Tony [Anthony] Sandberg ['72], Tommy [Thomas] Wool ['72]. But I don't recall one sort of figurehead or leader. I mean, a lot of those meetings were lots of people, lots of people and little knots sort of shifting around and taking–it was a leader rich movement. There wasn't one person that I could identify.

LYNCH: And tell me a little bit about your experience with the Tucker Center and how… That after your senior year at Dartmouth? Or junior year?

RACHLIN: No. I went for the first time in the spring of my junior year at Dartmouth. And again, it was [laughter] a guy or two or three: Larry Fox ['71], Tony [Anthony] Sandberg ['72], my friend Mike [Michael] Sack ['72]. They were all going down to Jersey City [N.J.], which was a real hotbed of anti-war activity because the Black Panthers were there–and not just anti-war activity in New York and Jersey City, but it was anti-racism activity–and they were all going. Dartmouth had a house there and they were all working in either non profit governmental posts, or they were teaching in Jersey City. And I decided not to go abroad in my junior year because two of my grandmother's were sick. And my parents were kind of concerned about my leaving the country–it was a bigger deal then. So I decided to go to Jersey City because these dear friends of mine were going and so I worked for the Vital Cities program as part of the city government, but I also taught in the Catholic school that was across the street from the house that Dartmouth owned. But I didn't live in the house because I was the first woman who ever went on the Tucker Foundation program in Jersey City. There was a program in Watts [Los Angeles, CA], and Richmond [VA], and Jersey City and maybe a fourth one that was national. But, I loved it, I absolutely loved working in Jersey City. And, you know, there were black kids, and brown kids, and Latina–LatinX kids. And it just felt like, finally I'm doing something other than screaming and holding up signs. And it was also wonderful because the nuns in which–I lived in the convent–they were fantastic, and the priests. It just was a very educational time in terms of seeing how other people live. I mean, I'm Jewish, I lived in a convent. I was a girl, and I was the only woman who had ever participated in Jersey City, and we'd go to Fillmore East in New York City and hear all these phenomenal, really iconic bands. I mean, everything was new and wonderful. So I had a great experience there and then I became–when I came back that summer to Dartmouth, I became a tutor and mentor at ABC: A Better Chance. And then I did decide, my last semester–my last quarter–at Dartmouth to go back to Jersey City, and I was, not a supervisor, but I was like a mentor to the new Dartmouth interns.

LYNCH: So your senior year back at Dartmouth, what was the political environment like then? And how did your involvement change after the Tucker Center?

RACHLIN: So, I was much less involved my senior year, in part because I had a fairly serious boyfriend, in part because I had made very close friends with people through the Jersey City program and my mentor was this phenomenal political science professor named Mike [Michael] Fay ['71], who's still a friend today. And I spent a lot of time with him and with his

wife, Sally. And my focus had really shifted from, again, from anti-war protests to doing work in communities–community organizing work, anti poverty work, anti racism work. And I think at that point between my relationship, my jersey civil center little clique–who were not for the most part anti war activists, they were people who were anti war, but they weren't involved in the movement–I don't remember much about my going to meetings the way I did in my junior year against the war.

LYNCH: Can you tell me a little bit about that relationship that you had your senior year?

RACHLIN: Sure. It was the man that I met in one of my urban studies classes and he was my year–we were both 71s. And he was from Tacoma, Washington. His name was Mike [Michael] Kearl ['71]. And he was one of the really most impressive computer science students on the campus. He was very close friends with John Kemeny and we spent a lot of time at night in Kiewit [Computer Center]. I don't know if Kiewit–Kiewit's still there.

LYNCH: I think I've heard of that, yes, yeah.

RACHLIN: A big computer lab. And that was way before there were personal computers, so you had to go and work on monitors, and you had to use punch cards, and then there were mainframe computers. So, I lived a lot of life under the green fluorescent lights at Kiewit and he was just a very wonderful human being and also such as a scholar. He went to Stanford [University] to get a PhD in social sciences and computers, and I actually went with him for two years after Dartmouth. And sadly he passed away of a sudden heart attack. He was a professor. And just very heartbreaking. My two boyfriend's from Dartmouth both died.

LYNCH: I'm sorry.

RACHLIN: Yeah.

LYNCH Wow.

RACHLIN: But luckily most of my other friends are okay–but just very sad.

LYNCH: So after your senior year now, what were you lining up to do post Dartmouth? What did you have your sights set on?

[Interruption 1:04:50-1:05:10]

RACHLIN: Oh, my husband wants me to tell you about Meryl Streep and the chicken soup. Would you like to hear that story?

LYNCH: I would love to.

RACHLIN: Okay. So Meryl Streep came to Dartmouth to participate in the theater program–she wasn't one of the seven, she went to Vassar and came on the exchange program. And of course, she lived in Cohen Hall, like the rest of us, and she was not in my suite, but she was the next suite over–after the hallway. And one night, I ran into her in the bathroom and [she said:] "how are you?" And I said: "I don't feel that great. I have–my stomach's really upset." [She said:] "I'm going to dinner, do you want me to bring you anything?" And I said: "Oh, you don't have to." And an hour later she comes back and she brought me chicken soup.

LYNCH: Oh, that's so sweet [laughter].

RACHLIN: It was. And so then my husband and I, and several friends–we lived in Brookline, [Massachusetts]–and we went–she was being honored by our local theater, which was called the Brookline–no sorry, the Coolidge Corners Cinema, and they were honoring Meryl Streep. So we have seats with my husband's name on them, because of a donation, and we were sitting in those seats. And the seats on the left of us were like in the [aside] sixth or seventh row. But the seats right opposite the aisle had reserved signs. And so, one of our friends said: "maybe that's where Meryl Streep will sit" and I said: "Oh, that's ridiculous. She's the honoree, she'll be in front." And there were all these people there to honor her like Kevin Kline and Robert Uhlmann ['71] and Susan Orlean and honey, who else was there so many people were there, Chris?

Oh, I can't remember but like seven or eight people paid tribute to her. So sure enough, the lights go down and in walks Meryl Streep and her entourage sitting right opposite the aisle from us. And then, my husband and some friends said: "you should go over, you should go over" and I said: "no she'll never remember me, that's ridiculous."

[interdiction by husband 1:07:12-1:07:15]

Oh, my husband said: "You've been telling us the story about chicken soup for 30 years, you should go over, say hello." So I went over during the intermission. And I said: "I'm sure you don't remember me. My name is…" and she said– [talking to husband] Honey, what did she say?

[interdiction by husband 1:07:33-1:07:36]

She said: "Joan Rachlin, we were canaries in the mine together!" So that's my one degree of separation from Meryl Streep. And it was–I mean she's a wonderful person, and she's an activist. So, it was really thrilling to meet her and she remembered me thirty years later. And then the next day I

went back to the theater–it was a whole weekend honoring her. There was a panel discussion with her and it was all pretty thrilling–heady stuff.

So, now I'm gonna go into another room but my husband wanted to make sure you knew that I had a two minute exchange with Meryl Streep, so.

LYNCH: Very cool. Very cool.

RACHLIN: Yeah. And by the way, long before that happened, my husband and I were watching this show on TV called the Holocaust. And all of a sudden, I said to my husband: "I went to college with that woman! Her name is Meryl." And that was her first breakout role. And then came Kramer vs Kramer and lo and behold, she's Meryl Streep and I'm kinda nothing but happy [laughter]. So that's the story about Meryl.

LYNCH: [Laughter] That's awesome.

[Interruption 1:08:54 - 1:10:20]

LYNCH: I think we were just wrapping up your time at Dartmouth and what you were pivoting to after.

RACHLIN: Yes. So I spent the summer after Dartmouth–

By the way, I remember our graduation speaker was Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who was a famous Russian…

LYNCH: Yes, Yeah

RACHLIN: Yeah, protester

LYNCH: I just read one of his works, actually.

RACHLIN: Oh, which one?

LYNCH: I think it's in my…. that's so funny, is it? I have it right here. [Holds up: A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich].

RACHLIN: I can't see it… Oh, oh yes! That's a really famous one.

LYNCH: Yeah, I just…. So funny.

RACHLIN: Oh wow! Well he was our speaker with a translator, and I remember Mike and I–he lived in Vermont. He had been exiled or he had been a political refugee. What's it called? He had been a political…..

LYNCH: Yeah, I know what you mean. But he was at Dartmouth, at the time?

RACHLIN: Yes.

LYNCH: Yeah, wow.

RACHLIN: He was in Vermont, and so Mike and I–my boyfriend and I–went to find his house in Vermont after he spoke. And it was really–we found it but of course, you know, walls and guards and all that. So.

LYNCH: Right. Right. That's… wow. So what did you talk about during that speech?

RACHLIN: You know, it was a translator. And of course, I wasn't graduating–women were not allowed to get degrees.

LYNCH: Oh right.

RACHLIN: Because we were exchange students. We could petition and get retroactive degrees, or we could petition or ask for a certificate of graduation if we wanted to go to grad school. But, the charter hadn't yet been amended because coeducation hadn't yet been voted on. Or maybe by then it had been, but we couldn't get degrees because we weren't grandfathered, even though I had done many more credits at Dartmouth than at BU. But anyhow, he talked about the importance of freedom and justice and, basically repression because that's the system that he had spent writing about and talking about, and fighting against–the Russian system of basically squelching and silencing anyone whose views were at odds with those of the communist governments, or the government at the time–always communist, but some of them were with lighter touches, and some were much heavier handed. So to say that I remember–it wasn't anything that was relevant. I remember it being very stern. Like there were–you know, now, graduation speakers often tell jokes, or a little light heartedness in the beginning before they launch into the wisdom. And, of course, the language barrier was the first problem, but I remember him looking just, stern. And I remember at one point–this I'll never forget–he was kind of shaking his fist and I remember he looked, to me, like Rasputin. So, you know, that image of Rasputin that kind of gets indelibly imprinted in people's minds. So.

LYNCH: Right. So what were you transitioning to after college?

RACHLIN: So I decided to follow my boyfriend to Stanford [University]–to Palo Alto [CA]. And we had very dear cousins on my mom's side who lived in Palo Alto–actually in Los Altos Hills [CA]. And so my boyfriend and I lived with them for a month and then found an apartment. And I decided to become

an unclassified graduate student at Stanford because I didn't know what I wanted to do. I thought I wanted to go into psychology and so I took a couple of classes at Stanford as an unclassified graduate student. But Stanford back in ‘71, when we started, was very much about behavioral psychology. It was a lot of rats, running rats, and a lot of social science methodology, and that was not what I wanted. I was much more interested in sort of the therapy aspects and just understood on some level that I had to do all of this in order to become a psychologist, but I just wasn't happy with that line of courses. Although, through that line of courses I luckily met Jane Goodall who’s become a hero of mine. And I ended up babysitting her son because I ended up getting–I had a part time teaching job at Hanover Nursery School to help pay my college expenses. And then I got a job at Stanford, at the Bing Nursery School, which is the Stanford nursery school to help… And Jane Goodall's son was a student there, so I became his babysitter.

Anyhow, so I took two courses, one on psychology and one on human biology. And then I just worked as a preschool teacher and started to think about what I wanted to do next. And what I decided to do was to go to law school, because I always had this ‘change the world’, you know, streak, and by then I believe that you will do it within the system. I never believed that you did it outside of the system, I believe that you can protest and still work within a system. I always believed that any form of protest should be more designed to change the system from within and to be constructive, not to just wave signs for the sake of waiving signs. I do think protests have an important role to play for what's now called optics, and for mobilizing people and for meeting like minded individuals. But I decided to become a lawyer. So after two years–my boyfriend was going to be there for like six years–and I really missed Boston, I really missed Hanover, and I decided to go back to Boston.

And I had to earn money to go to law school and get scholarships. So I went to Suffolk [University], which was a four year program, so you could work part time and I loved it. And then I went to Harvard and got a degree in public health because I was still very much interested in psychology and law, and adolescence and law, and increasingly in women's health and law. That's where I landed–a career that included criminal law, juvenile delinquency law or juvenile law, and women's health law. And then I eventually landed in a nonprofit organization that I was the first executive director [of] that was involved in the interface between medical ethics, law and regulation, and research and clinical medicine. So it was a really good place for me to land.

LYNCH: How do you feel that your law degree gave you a voice or more like solidified position to take those stances that you had been taking throughout life?

RACHLIN: Well, I think a law degree–I always say that you can do anything, almost practice medicine, you know. It's a way of thinking that really refines your critical thinking skills, it teaches you how to become a reliable and knowledgeable researcher–law is so much about knowing where to find things, you can't know it all, so you have to know where to find what you need. And law is also a tremendous discipline because clarity and learning how to interpret things and really understanding the nuance of rulemaking and legislation. And certainly reading legal cases is a very,again, disciplined and particularized skill, and it's a really great generalizable skill in life. You can go into the corporate world, the nonprofit world, the educational world, the advocacy world. So it's a terrific degree. There are many other wonderful degrees, and many people have profound impacts in the world without any formal education. So, it just was a good fit for me. And I did feel–and I still feel that–you know, people say: "Oh, you're a lawyer" And now I volunteer with environmental groups since I retired, and somehow they think that it's useful that I'm a lawyer when in fact, you know, there's very little that I can contribute that other non legally trained volunteers are able to contribute. But there is a certain–for lack of a better word–respect, for higher education and post college degrees, I think in almost any field. You know, people think that if you've–and I find that really sad because again, some of the wisest and smartest and most inspiring people I know don't have college degrees, no less graduate degrees. So I try really hard not to–myself be–not to be impressed by someone's sheepskins on their walls, so…

My dad used to say I was a reverse snob, you know, whatever impresses most people depresses me, he used to say, whatever depresses other people impresses me. [Laughter]. I'm a little bit, you know, it's that old everybody should be treated–

And I became a real fan of a man named John [H.] Knowles, who was a philosopher at Harvard, who believed that if you're creating a justice system, you should create a justice system where you are the lowest person on the rung of society. So if you are a cleaning lady with six kids, and you're alone and living in a basement apartment with two rooms, and you have no health insurance, you want to create a justice system for that woman and her family and not for, you know, billionaires or millionaires or even upper middle class people. So I kind of always have had that orientation.

LYNCH: Right. And how do you feel that your activism is–how are you fulfilling that part of your life now, now that you're retired?

RACHLIN: Well, I retired early actually, to get involved in the environmental movement, because I think it is the most important issue of our time. And

for me it's–and for many people–it's truly existential. You know, the planet will survive, it's been around for billions of years, but I don't think that most species will–including the human species–if we don't really modify our behavior and get serious about mitigation and adaptation. So I retired because I love nature so much [laughter] that there's nothing else I want to do now, other than try to help people understand. Because as they say in the movement, the five things about climate emergency–they don't call it climate change, actually, now they call it the climate crisis–but you know, it's bad, it's real, it's us, scientists agree, and there's hope. And those are the five points, but they also say that if you're not worried, you're not paying attention. And most people just don't think they can do anything to make a difference. But everybody can make a difference. As they say, you know, if a billion people stopped eating meat two days a week, or if a billion people changed all their light bulbs to LEDs, or if a billion people–or even a half a billion people–bought electric vehicles, or turned down their air conditioners–turned up their conditioners in summer and turn down their heat in the winter… I mean, all of those relatively small steps can make a very significant difference in the warming temperature of the Earth.

So I love working in the environmental field. And I consider it a privilege to be among those trying to protect and preserve the Earth. And I love living in New Hampshire, right near Dartmouth. And you know, here in Florida we have little bunnies and little Canada geese, and ducks, and lots of birds. In New Hampshire where I live, there are hundreds of bears and there's this current debate because a lot of the residents want them trapped and removed. And others, with whom I work in our community, say: look, they were here first, we have to learn how to live with them. And that's, you know, black bears in New Hampshire haven't killed anyone, ever. You know, they will charge you if you threaten their cubs, but that just hasn't happened.

So we're just saying lock up your food, cover your composters, vent your composters, don't let your dogs out when they're roaming around. When you see them, you know, bears are more scared of us than we are of them. And I work very hard on a lot of other climate related issues. I work on educating people about HVAC [Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning] systems, and mini splits, and tankless water heaters. I work a lot on composting, educating people about composting, and about the importance of not burying kitchen waste because of methane, which is a more serious greenhouse gas than CO2. So, I love being an environmental activist.

I'm trying to get my class–the class of '71–to do more with environmental issues and I tried very hard to get Dartmouth to be more recycling oriented at alumni reunion events. I'm shocked at how little consciousness they have around… and I've been on many campuses and Dartmouth is one of

the least green campuses I've ever visited. And that makes me sad because it's in such a beautiful place, you'd think there'd be more reverence for nature. But, for reasons I still don't understand, there's no sensibility at Dartmouth it seems. I know there's an organic garden and farm, and I know that some people are working. But, you go to some campuses and every building that's new is LEED certified, and there's composting everywhere. And, anyhow, is there composting in the dining halls now?

LYNCH: You know, that's something that I don't know, but I don't think so. Yeah, not that's made aware to students. Yeah, even real recycling, they don't have that in every dorm.

RACHLIN: Right! No, I was at a reunion in June, and I went to talk to someone, and it's not a value, [laughter] and I understand why. But, you know, again, you do what you can and you just hope that someday, before it's too late, people will wake up. As Greta [Thunberg] says: the earth is our home, and our home is on fire. Do you know who Greta is?

LYNCH: Greta? Yeah I do, I do.

RACHLIN: Everyone does.

LYNCH: What is your connection now to the class of ‘71 and the women that you were on campus with–men and women.

RACHLIN: So I was part of a film, I don't know if you've seen it, called “Early Daughters [of Dartmouth]”.

LYNCH: Yes, I have.

RACHLIN: And so I was–they asked me to be interviewed in that film. And of course, they interview for two hours and it's like 20 seconds or something [laughter]

LYNCH: Yeah.

RACHLIN: But I was involved in that film. And I was one of the people who proofed the script, and helped raise money, and tried to get some screenings. And other than that, I helped a little to try to get our group of exchange students into the Dartmouth database, because for a long time, we were forgotten, as was pointed out in the film–we were just lost to follow up as they say in medicine. So I didn't really care. I had a full life, I had a busy life. I thought, well, if Dartmouth doesn't want my money, then that's their loss. Because the people that you're friends with, you stay in touch with. But you know, I love the place. And luckily, because our home is so close

to Dartmouth, I'd run into friends and I audited a class one summer–I think I audited two classes. I just love being around there. I love going to Dan and Whit's, I love still going to the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts] for productions, and Spalding [Auditorium] and Warner [Bently Theater] and I just have deep connections, but until they welcomed us back, and until both men and women went to the trouble of tracking our class–for our class of women exchange students down–we were basically, you know, a missing puzzle piece–a forgotten part of the history. And the film really did a lot vis-a-vis, making individuals aware of the fact that we had even been there. I think some people thought, well, the first class showed up, and then everything was fine. But there was a lot of ground lying to be done. And like you said earlier, part of it was in the classroom, you know, were we good enough, partly was making sure that the donors weren't gonna completely–and to the detriment of the endowment–completely abandon the school. And there was a lot of debating–John Kemeny had to really go to the mat and Marissa Navarro was phenomenal in being his best foot soldier for the cause of co-education. She's now retired, she lives in Cambridge and I think teaches at Harvard, just as an adjunct. But we were forgotten and I wasn't in any way offended by that. I just thought, well, we were a blip on their screen, we were a stepping stone. You know, we were the canaries in the mine like Meryl [Streep] said. Would it work on many different levels? But a lot of people were really upset because it meant, to them, that we didn't matter, or that we weren't valued or, you know, fill in the blank any kind of more personalized interpretation–but I didn't feel that way. I just thought I still have a very rich life in the Upper Valley, and now we live there six months a year.

LYNCH: So do you feel like part of that maybe like overlooking those first women was because of the Vietnam War? Do you think that overshadowed your presence on campus, maybe?

RACHLIN: It's hard to know, and I wouldn't really venture an opinion. I've really chalked it up to a combination of, you know, that being the first generation of technology where we were in a different database than the quote unquote, regular students. And in part a failure of the alumni office employees to recognize that there was not only donations to be gained by reaching out to us and welcoming us into the family, but there was also storytelling to be shared. So I think there were multiple factors. But I do think that somewhere along the line, it got communicated to the women that we were used–not used–but we were a means to an end. We were the trial balloon that they floated to see if it would be shot down or whether it would be welcomed back to Earth. And people would say: well, the place didn't implode, and it was fine, and the women were respected, and the men were calmer, and the women contributed. And, I don't know, but I wouldn't say that it felt–well that it was because of the war that we weren't

integrated sooner. I really think it was a failure of an awareness of the fact that we could have been valuable assets.

I mean, I had said when they first decided to become co-ed, I said: well, we should all mentor these women. And again, I was one of only two women who got to stay for over two years. Most women stayed one year. And so I could see how–you know, when someone complained to me early on: well they're not even emailing; they're not even sending me brochures or flyers, there was no email then. I said: well, you know, to them, it probably feels like a study abroad program. And you might have done a study abroad program through Smith [College], or Columbia [University], Wesleyan [University], or BU, and they're not continuing to contact you. So I think that on one level, there's a relatively benign explanation. They thought: well, they were here and they were flashes in the pan, and they went home to their home institutions, and thanks for your dollars and your involvement for that year. But the women didn't see it like that. So, anyhow, I don’t think they were related.

LYNCH: I just have a few questions that I–we kind of maybe jumped over. But, what was–because your younger brother, what was his involvement like in the war with the–or potentially up for, to be drafted?

RACHLIN: So my brother, two years younger than I, went to Penn [laughter], the family tradition. And he actually went there eight years, because he got an undergraduate degree, a law degree, an MBA, and a master's in philosophy [laughter]. And he was very involved with SDS on the Penn campus his freshman year, which would have been–if I entered in ‘67, he entered in ‘69. And then, my brother became–I have to be very delicate, I don't know if this is going to become part of a publicly accessible repository or not.

LYNCH: It will be, yes.

RACHLIN: But my brother–this is factual–took a class, he was interested in philosophy, on Ayn Rand. And my brother became what's called an Objectivist, and an Ayn Rand devotee, and he became conservative. But his first year at Penn, he was extremely active in the movement, and I'm pretty sure he was a member of SDS. But that ended quickly and his life and career have taken, you know–have followed a path very different from my own.

LYNCH: Gotcha. And what was your–what was your relationship with your father during that time? Because you said that he was a world war two veteran, correct?

RACHLIN: Yep. My father because he was a veteran of a just war, World War II. And because he had seen the incredible–just the atrocities at Dachau. I mean, my father was there on the day of liberation and the German guards of Dachau had stripped off their uniforms and thrown everything on the ground and they would take the striped uniforms off the dead prisoners who had been murdered to try to escape. And the way the GIs and other liberators knew they were guards, is it the murder victims–I mean that the imprisoned victims were emaciated and they were bones, and the guards were well fed. And that's the only way they knew who to arrest and who was truly a prisoner.

And so my father became–not, you know, hit the streets, joined a mass movement anti-war activist, but he was always, always against war. He might have been among the people who influenced me early on about communism, but I don't ever remember my dad saying that. I don't know where I got that domino theory drilled in so that I wrote that essay that I told you about early on. But my dad never believed in any war that wasn't a just war. And, you know, that included Iraq and Afghanistan and any other war that came along, including Vietnam, Korea. He just became anti-war, because war is the worst possible way to solve conflicts. You know, sometimes diplomacy fails, but war is brutal because it can't discriminate between people who are truly evil doers, and innocent civilians. It's the destruction we see daily in the Ukraine. It’s heartbreaking, the death and destruction. So my dad and I were always so close and my dad used to tease me as I got older, like, when are you going to be finished, you know, with your causes. And he used to joke and say: if you're not a socialist before you're 40, you don't have any heart. And if you're still a socialist after you're 40, you don't have any brains. But he joked. But, I was a very big activist in the women's health field and in the pro choice field, and I was a big activist in gay rights. I have many friends who are gay, and non-binary, and transgendered. And I'm just someone who was taught early on to stand up for people who are voiceless or who need to have wing women and wing men, and need someone to cross them to safety. This famous Wallace Stegner book about crossing people to safety. And I've just always been taught that you have to stand up and be counted, and if you see something, say something, and don't ever not speak out, because there's too much at risk. I mean, you don't speak up if someone's going to put a gun in your face and pull the trigger, but very few situations are like that. Mostly, you just call people out in a respectful way for being racist, or sexist, or homophobic, or, you know, any other -isms. So I'm kind of a cheeky girl, [laughter], that way.

LYNCH: I like that. Well, I think that really wraps up and kind of just filled in my last couple of notes that I had, and questions I wanted to ask. But thank you so much for taking the time for doing this Ms. Rachlin.

RACHLIN: My pleasure. And let me just also tell you that my husband and I did go to Vietnam, and did go to the war museums in Ho Chi Minh City, which is also where most of the devastation took place. And it was just completely reinforcing of everything I thought about the horrors of war. I mean, what we did to the South Vietnamese people. I mean, everyone knows about the major atrocities in Agent Orange. But when you go there, you just really understand that we destroyed a very gentle, productive, lovely, lovely culture and community–communities–because of our arrogance. And so that trip was just a reminder that you're usually sorry about the things you don't do, not about the things you do. So that trip made me grateful that I hadn't sat idly by. I mean there's not much we can do anymore about things like Ukraine, except give money. But there's certainly things we can do about other things–legislation and elections. I just really was very sad last week, I heard that college–not college students–public school students' scores on history and civics plummeted in the last six years. And that makes me feel there won't be as much participation in the democratic process or in critical thinking about issues that matter. So, I'm grateful that you will not be among them and that you'll be someone who, I hope and I suspect, uses her voice for the good. So thank you, Katherine.

LYNCH: Thank you so much. Thank you for taking the time.

RACHLIN: My pleasure. Nice to meet you. Take care.

LYNCH: Nice to meet you as well.

RACHLIN: Be well, bye.