

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

University History Series
Department of History at Berkeley

Natalie Zemon Davis

HISTORIAN OF EARLY MODERN EUROPE, PROFESSOR AT BERKELEY,
1971-1978

Interviews conducted by
Ann Lage in 2003

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Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Natalie Zemon Davis, circa 2003
Photo courtesy of Natalie Zemon Davis

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PREFACE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT BERKELEY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

The Department of History at Berkeley oral history series grew out of Gene Brucker's 1995 Faculty Research Lecture on "History at Berkeley." In developing his lecture on the transformations in the UC Berkeley Department of History in the latter half of the twentieth century, Brucker, whose tenure as professor of history from 1954 to 1991 spanned most of this period, realized how much of the story was undocumented.

Discussion with Carroll Brentano, coordinator of the University History Project at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, history department faculty wife, and a former graduate student in history, reinforced his perception that a great deal of the history of the University and its academic culture was not preserved for future generations. The Department of History, where one might expect to find an abiding interest in preserving a historical record, had discarded years of departmental files, and only a fraction of history faculty members had placed their personal papers in the Bancroft Library.¹ Moreover, many of the most interesting aspects of the history—the life experiences, cultural context, and personal perceptions—were only infrequently committed to paper.² They existed for the most part in the memories of the participants.

Carroll Brentano knew of the longtime work of the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) in recording and preserving the memories of participants in the history of California and the West and the special interest of ROHO in University history. She and Gene Brucker then undertook to involve Ann Lage, a ROHO interviewer/editor who had conducted a number of oral histories in the University History Series and was herself a product of Berkeley's history department. In the course of a series of mutually enjoyable luncheon meetings, the project to document the history of the Department of History at Berkeley evolved.

In initial discussions about the parameters of the project, a crucial decision was made. Rather than conduct short oral histories focused on topics limited to departmental history, we determined to work with selected members of the department to conduct more lengthy biographical memoirs. We would record relevant personal background—family, education, career choices, marriage and children; discuss other institutional affiliations; explore the process of creating their historical works and changes in the discipline. A central topic for each would be, of course, the Department of History at Berkeley—its governance, the informal and formal relationships among colleagues, the connections with the broader campus, and curriculum and teaching.

¹ The Bancroft Library holds papers from history professors Walton Bean, Woodbridge Bingham, Herbert Bolton, Woodrow Borah, William J. Bouwsma, George Guttridge, George Hammond, John Hicks, David Keightley, Joseph Levenson, Martin Malia, Henry May, Thomas Metcalf, William Alfred Morris, Frederic Paxson, Herbert Priestley, Franz Schurmann, Engel Sluiter, Raymond Sontag, and Kenneth Stamp. Miscellaneous files of the Department, 1915-1929, are also held in Bancroft's University Archives.

² Two published memoirs recall the Berkeley history department: John D. Hicks, *My Life with History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) recalls his years as professor and dean, 1942-1957; Henry F. May reflects on his years as an undergraduate at Berkeley in the thirties in *Coming to Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Using the Brucker lecture as a point of departure, it was decided that the project would first document the group of professors who came to the department in the immediate postwar years, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. This group, most of them retired, was the one whose distinguished teaching and publications initially earned the department its high national rating. They made the crucial hiring and promotion decisions that cemented the department's strength and expanded the curriculum to meet new academic interests. At the same time, they participated in campus governing bodies dealing with central social, political, and cultural issues of their times: challenges to civil liberties and academic freedom, the response to tumultuous student protests over free speech, civil rights and the Vietnam War, and the demands for equality of opportunity for women and minorities. And they benefited from the postwar years of demographic and economic growth in California, accompanied for the most part through the 1980s with expanding budgets for higher education.

Carroll Brentano and Gene Brucker committed themselves to facilitate project funding and to enlist the interest of potential participants. Members of the department responded with interest, joined the periodic lunch confabs, offered advice in planning, and helped find funding. In the spring of 1996, Brentano and Professor Sheldon Rothblatt organized a symposium, titled "Play It Again, Sam." There, Gene Brucker restaged his Faculty Research Lecture. Professor Henry F. May responded with his perceptions of events, followed by comments from other history faculty, all videotaped for posterity and the Bancroft Library.³

Meanwhile, the oral history project got underway with interviews with Delmer Brown, professor of Japanese history, and Kenneth Stampp, American history, both of whom came to Berkeley in 1946. To date, we have completed a total of seventeen in-depth oral histories with this group, nine of which are now in print and on line. The interviewees represent a variety of subject fields and historical approaches. The series also includes one interview with a faculty wife. (View on line at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/univ_hist/history_department.html)

Diverse in their personal backgrounds and scholarly interests, the faculty who came to the department in the postwar years had one thing in common: all but one were men.⁴ In the 1970s and 1980s, as more women completed PhDs, women within the academy and the women's movement nationally worked to increase women in tenured faculty positions. The Department of History at Berkeley slowly began to add women to its faculty, beginning in 1971 with the appointment of Natalie Zemon Davis. By 1990, the department had two female full professors, five associate professors, and four assistant professors, of a total tenure-line faculty of sixty-two. During these years, women historians nationally were part of a broader critique of universalist assumptions about history and society that included significant contributions from Berkeley

³ The Brucker lecture and May response, with an afterword by David Hollinger, are published in *History at Berkeley: A Dialog in Three Parts* (Chapters in the History of the University of California, Number Seven), Carroll Brentano and Sheldon Rothblatt, editors [Center for Studies in Higher Education and Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998].

⁴ Adrienne Koch was a faculty member, 1958-1965.

faculty. Feminist scholars, in particular, were integral to the radical changes in subject matter studied, methodology, and modes of discourse in the profession.⁵ The new intellectual and programmatic directions associated with an increase in female faculty were accompanied by sometimes contentious battles at Berkeley as elsewhere over the evaluation of academic work, teaching priorities, and curriculum development.

The second phase of the project on the Department of History at Berkeley focuses on the women faculty who came to Berkeley in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2003, Natalie Davis was interviewed during a visit to the campus, and in 2008 we launched a three-year project to document seven more of Berkeley's women historians. As in earlier interviews, we explore the faculty member's contribution to her scholarly field, examining the development of her intellectual project and working methods, and probe experiences relevant to understanding the development of the discipline and the department. In addition, we discuss challenges facing women in the academy over the course of their professional careers.

The organizers of this project are grateful to the Department of History and to the many individual donors that have made these interviews possible. The considerable interest in the fruits of our project to date confirms our initial premise that departmental histories and personal memoirs are essential to the unraveling of some knotty puzzles: What kind of a place is this University of California, Berkeley, to which we have committed much of our lives? What is this academic culture in which we are enmeshed? And what is this enterprise History, in which we all engage? As one of the project instigators reflected, "Knowing what was is essential; and as historians we know the value of sources, even if they are ourselves."

Carroll Brentano, Coordinator
University History Project
Center for Studies in Higher Education

Gene Brucker
Shepard Professor of History Emeritus

Ann Lage, Project director
Regional Oral History Office
Berkeley, California

May 2009

⁵ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1994), 153. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: the "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 471.

May 2010

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT BERKELEY

- Bouwsma, Beverly Hancock. *Observer of Campus and Community Culture, Berkeley Department of History Faculty Wife, 1956-2001*. 2008, 136 pp.
- Bouwsma, William J. *Historian of European Culture in the Early Modern Era, University of California, Berkeley, 1956-1991*. 2008, 137 pp.
- Brown, Delmer M. *Professor of Japanese History, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1977*. 2000, 410 pp.
- Brentano, Robert. *Scholar and Teacher of Medieval History, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-2002*. 2005, 370 pp.
- Brucker, Gene. *Historian of Renaissance Florence, University of California, Berkeley, 1954-1991*. 2005, 211 pp.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Historian of Early Modern Europe, Professor at Berkeley, 1971-1978*. 2010, 78 pp.
- Herr, Richard. *Historian of Spain and France, University of California, Berkeley, 1960-1991*. 2009, 256 pp.
- Jordan, Winthrop D. *Historian of Slavery and Race Relations in America, Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, 1963-1982*. 2009, 194 pp.
- Keightley, David N. *Historian of Early China, University of California, Berkeley, 1969-1998*. 2003, 163 pp.
- May, Henry F. *Professor of American Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-1980*. 1999, 218 pp.
- Malia, Martin Edward. *Historian of Russian and European Intellectual History*. 2005, 229 pp.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. *Professor of Russian and European Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1957-1997*. 1998, 310 pp.
- Schorske, Carl E. *Intellectual Life, Civil Libertarian Issues, and the Student Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, 1960-1969*. 2000, 203 pp.
- Stampf, Kenneth M. *Historian of Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1983*. 1998, 310 pp.

Donated Collection:

Borah, Woodrow W. *Woodrow W. Borah interview : oral history transcript*, by James W. Wilkie and Rebecca Horn, 1983. Transcript in Bancroft Library.

In process:

Fass, Paula, United States history, history of childhood

Halperin, Tulio, Latin American history

Levine, Lawrence, United States cultural history

Litwack, Leon, United States history, African American history

Wakeman, Frederic, Historian of China

INTERVIEW HISTORY—Natalie Zemon Davis

Natalie Davis, historian of early modern France, and member of the Department of History at Berkeley from 1971-1978, was interviewed while on a brief visit to Berkeley in 2003. With less than three hours for our interview, we determined to focus primarily on the Berkeley years, with some limited personal background crucial to understanding the historian who arrived here, first in 1968 as a visiting professor and then for a tenured appointment from 1971-1978. The focus, then, is her observations of the department and the campus during her years here, her involvement with women's issues, and her reflections on what the Berkeley experience meant to her intellectual life.

When Natalie Davis came to Berkeley she was the only woman in the department. Partly as a result of her efforts, three other women were hired in the next three years, and the slow growth toward greater gender equity in History had begun. She describes the department in those years as welcoming and warm, an "egalitarian brotherhood," which on at least one occasion failed to properly handle new problems involving women faculty. On the campus at large she was a key member of formal and informal groups of women faculty who met to support one another, foster the appointment and promotion of women, and promote women's studies. In her teaching, she pursued her interest in the study of women and gender, developing a course in *Society and the Sexes in Early Modern Europe* and incorporating women's roles and women's lives as subjects in her teaching of traditional history classes.

Several of Natalie Davis's historical projects grew out of the Berkeley experience. Two of her most important essays, "Rites of Violence" and "The Reasons of Misrule" are tied with the tumult of the antiwar protests she observed and took part in in 1968-1969. She found the sense of openness and intellectual discovery in Berkeley conducive to her interests in interdisciplinary approaches and in the incorporation of new topics, posing of new questions, and finding new ways of "doing history." Her study of *The Return of Martin Guerre*, in both film and book, she describes as a major legacy of her Berkeley years.

The interview was conducted on June 6, 2003. The morning session is audio only, and the afternoon session was video-recorded. Ms. Davis reviewed the transcript of the interview sessions, making only minor corrections. Interview tapes are available for listening or viewing in the Bancroft Library. The list of completed oral histories documenting the Department of History at Berkeley is included in this volume. Many of the interviews in this and other subject areas can be found online at <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/>. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The Regional Oral History Office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Richard Candida-Smith.

Ann Lage
Interviewer, Project Director

Berkeley, California
May 2009

Interview with Natalie Davis

Interviewed by: Ann Lage

Transcriber: Brendan Furey

[Interview #1: June 6, 2003 morning session]

[Begin Audio File Davis1 06-06-03]

01:00:00:00

Lage:

Okay, now we are actually recording and I'll put on the date. It is June 6, 2003, and I'm Ann Lage and I am very pleased to be interviewing Natalie Davis.

01:00:00:11

Davis:

I'm glad to be here with you, Ann.

01:00:00:17

Lage

Yes, visiting us from Toronto. We want to talk mainly about your Berkeley years.

01:00:00:21

Davis

Good.

01:00:00:22

Lage:

I know you've had many interviews, and they are wonderful; I really enjoyed reading to get the background. But they don't touch too much on Berkeley. I thought we should start—if this is possible—with kind of a speeded up personal history. Is that—

01:00:00:40

Davis:

That's fine, Ann.

01:00:00:42

Lage

To sort of set the context of what you brought here.

01:00:00:45

Davis

And given the fact that those of Berkeley years were so transformative for me, it's interesting that somehow they didn't get developed sufficiently in some of my early conversations. So it will be a great pleasure to do this now. I was born in Detroit, Michigan [November 8, 1928], of a family that immigrated to America from Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century—a Jewish family.

01:00:01:06

Lage:

Your parents had immigrated?

01:00:01:07

Davis:

Not my parents. My grandparents, and in one case, my great-grandparents. My mother was born in Burlington, Vermont, and my father in Detroit, Michigan. A family with not a very strong sense of history in that they were typical American immigrants or at least of that period in American history, quite committed to being fully American and not particularly interested in the Jewish past of their own parents or great-grandparents, grandparents as the case may be. Not interested in talking about that dimension, but rather thinking about being in America, being Jewish in America, but having a future in America.

01:00:01:49

Lage

But they were observant Jews?

01:00:01:55

Davis

Moderately. Not orthodox at all. My father was rather experimental in that way. No, but they were very Jewish-identified, and I was certainly brought up with this sense of a double identity of being an American but also being Jewish, middle-class family, comfortable family. I went to a girls' high school outside of Detroit, and in days when there were one or two Jews per class.

01:00:02:24

Lage:

As a quota system?

01:00:02:23

Davis:

The school is very different now. Then there was either a formal—or somehow there ended up being a quota. I learned a great deal, including a great deal about history. That was my first exposure to serious history classes, and I loved them—European history, ancient history, medieval history, American history. I just enjoyed that enormously. It was my first sense of the importance of the past in the way it can play upon and help you interpret American life. This is in the early forties now, during World War II. And my first sense of having a past of my own, one which had not been particularly, as I said, discussed, what had gone in the old country. My grandfather was still alive.

In terms of the ones who had lived there, when I was growing up my grandmother on my mother's side had already left the America in which she had lived and brought up her eight children, five of them born in Vermont, and had gone to Palestine. She was from a family, one of these typical Eastern European families, some of whose members stayed in Russia or Poland, as the case may be, some of whose members went early to Palestine, and some of whose members came here to America. And once all of her children had grown up and had become Americans, she left, partly because she didn't feel she could be Jewish enough, and had gone back to Palestine. So I scarcely knew her. I knew her when she came for a brief trip.

01:00:03:53

Lage

This is your mother's mother?

01:00:03:58

Davis

This is my mother's mother, who only spoke Yiddish, even though she had been a businesswoman in America all those years. She was mysterious entity. And on my father's side, my grandmother died—the one who was born herself in Elk Rapids, Michigan—when I was young enough so that we never talked about her past. I discovered it much later; I went and visited this interesting place, this little town, a timber town in Michigan where she had been born. My grandfather then, on my paternal side, was the only link with a family historical past in Eastern Europe, and he never talked about it, even to his daughter—my one aunt who is still alive—and she said that even to her he would maybe sometimes mention that there were pogroms, some mystery story about not wanting to serve in armies. So that past, that past in Russia on my mother's family side, that past in Poland, Lithuania, it was a very hazy, whispered-about past.

01:00:05:06

Lage:

Did it come up during the war or the Hitler years?

01:00:05:10

Davis:

Yes, it did it because my grandfather Zemon brought over some of his relatives from Bialystok. I remember them, actually. They brought a kind of European exoticism with them. Especially the woman, kind of attractive; she had been to lyceum, and talked about it with awe. It was one of my first exposures to a kind of European style. The other exposures came when my maternal aunt, Anna, who was in some sense the family memory—she also kept the family secrets—returned from an early 1930s trip—I was just a little girl—to Palestine, bringing the garments of the Middle East and some of the foods and the pistachio nuts, which it turns out that everybody eats in the Mediterranean. So I had these few connections, but mostly our life was very much rooted in Detroit, and the adventures were adventures of the spirit or adventures of reading or adventures in class. I still remember those two things that may be important for this: the really fascination of studying Athenian history, learning about movements for democracy. I didn't learn as much about slavery—which now would be quite important in my own explorations today—learning about the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the nineteenth century.

01:00:06:37

Lage

Did it have a certain romanticism for you?

01:00:06:39

Davis

Well, it was more exciting, is the word I am thinking of. I loved the patterns. I even loved the facts. I didn't mind memorizing things at all, you know the things your students will say, "Oh, I hated history in high school. I had to memorize." I loved the memorization. I didn't mind it a bit, but the excitement came from reading about the aspiration and these ideas and these hopes and seeing how different parts of history fit together.

01:00:07:09

Lage:

Did you tie it to what was going on in the world? Were you trying to understand—?

01:00:07:14

Davis:

I think that I tied it in the following sense, that already before high school, I had been so frightened by the news of the war. I remember the day—I was a little girl still—that the war in Spain broke out. I remember running crying into my house with the headlines, “Mother, there is a war, in Spain.” I remember that, and I remember being terrified by the news about Hitler and anti-Semitism, in that Hitler wanted to come and kill all the Jews, which is how I interpreted this at that time. All the way through grade school, and still a strong sense in high school—this knowledge of the power of anti-Semitism weighed upon me and affected me in my consciousness, in that I was aware that I was sustaining a moderate Jewish identity in neighborhoods and in a school where Jews were few, and in high school there were Christian prayers. This doesn’t happen anymore at Kingswood School, but there were the Christian prayers and there was chapel, and I would just cross my fingers throughout all that. In addition to that sustaining of an identity in an environment which had other primary values, there was always the danger of this powerful anti-Semitism.

I’ve never thought about the way my history studies may have played upon that until you asked me this question, but I suppose it would be in two ways: one, it gave me a sense of a past that I could link to, which was different from Hitler and the Nazi movement and the war. And secondly, it gave me some grounds for hope, and maybe that’s a theme that will come in if we talk about my own experiences as a historian and might fit into something about Berkeley and how I feel about that. But it gave me some hope to read about the aspirations, the efforts to create democratic constitutions in Athens, which, granted, were for only the elite, but still, and the efforts of the people of the Enlightenment to think about how the world might be different. I’m sure that that played into the terror of those years.

01:00:09:33

Lage

And maybe sort of an idealistic impulse?

01:00:09:36

Davis

I think so. So, those were years when I began to form a kind of political consciousness. I always interpreted it—when I’ve thought about that part of my life—that my being someone who is a little bit on the margins from these Christian, very upper-class girls who are my classmates, some of whom I loved and still am in touch with. But that sense of distance was one of these sparks that gave me a social conscience. I felt it at that school in that I was both very interested in student government and was quite active in that, student council, and so forth. But I was also starting to think a little bit about social injustice—not just the question of the war, but inequality and issues of racism.

01:00:10:43

Lage:

Were those things supported by your family or did this come out of your own—?

01:00:10:47

Davis:

Yes and no. I think my father always was interested in a kind of American liberalism. He subscribed, and I read avidly during my high school years, to the American periodical *P.M.* Would you know that?

01:00:11:01

Lage

I've heard of it; I can't say I knew it.

01:00:11:07

Davis

Well, you're too young, but it was really an interesting critical democratic newspaper. And Max Lerner, I used to read Max Lerner in the press, and I.F. Stone, who wrote for that. So my father brought that into the house. I don't remember having much discussion with him about these issues, but that newspaper was in the house. But it was also working my ideas out partly on my own.

01:00:11:29

Lage:

Did you feel from the students at the school a certain pushing away, or any overt anti-Semitism?

01:00:11:40

Davis:

Not particularly overt. I had good friends. As I had had already in grade school, where there was only one or two Jews per class, similarly in my grade school. I had close friends. One or two really very good friends. But it was always clear that there was a limit, and especially when it came to social dances and boyfriends, that there was a limit. It was not just put upon by them, it was something that I felt about myself that I had a whole other life, a kind of social life, which was in some ways less satisfying, with the Jewish bourgeoisie in Detroit. Less satisfying until I finally began to meet some of the Jewish lads, mostly boys in that case, who were more intellectual and smart and had a little bit of a spark of social criticism. But there was always this question, this tension about both belonging and not belonging and wanting to both be part of groups but also have some distance and some critical stance and not just accept the leading values.

In that high school there were only a couple of girls like me in my class. There was one other very, very learned lady, I should say one other girl and one other friend in the class who, alas, died fairly young, as a young mother, who was the other Democrat. This was a school where, when we were voting, all the girls in the school, practically, would vote Republican. This was a long time ago. So, I had a few friends, irrespective of religion.

01:00:13:30

Lage

Or politics.

01:00:13:31

Davis

Or politics and class. I was from a prosperous, comfortable family, but some of these women were from very wealthy families. The school is very different now, and I should add that I've learned along the way with a certain amount of delight and amazement of a few other people who were different, who went to this school. Some of whom, when they learn about me, they say, "You went to Kingswood? Or "You went to Cranbrook?" [laughs].

01:00:14:03

Lage:

Now, what are the two names?

01:00:14:01

Davis:

Well it's Kingswood School and Cranbrook. The girls' school was Kingswood in my day, and the boys' school was Cranbrook. It is now coed. But, the man who released the Pentagon papers, who is out here in California--?

01:00:14:13

Lage

Ellsberg.

01:00:14:14

Davis

Daniel Ellsberg, who was in fact, very close to my brother. They were both very close, classmates, and went on to Harvard together. Daniel Ellsberg—

01:00:14:23

Lage:

He went to Cranbrook?

01:00:14:26

Davis:

A little bit after I, because my brother was younger. And Edmund White who wrote the wonderful biography of—was it Cocteau? No, it was [thinking] well, a wonderful literary figure, and I am sorry that I'm not— [it was Jean Genet!] Also Martha Vicinus, the historian and feminist. They were just some of the—just to give you a few examples. So there were a few mavericks.

01:00:14:55

Lage

Well, they must have had teachers that excited people.

01:00:14:58

Davis

Oh yes, that was so important, and when I think back again of wanting to be a good teacher later at wherever I'd been, I had some marvelous women teachers and a few good men. Some men taught there. My experience—which really stood me in good stead later on when I was teaching in settings where I might be one of a few women or one woman or two women—my experience of seeing what it meant to have really good women teachers who were supportive, but not too

sentimentally supportive, began in high school and continued when I went to Smith, where again I had some men teachers and they were fine, but it was this additional dimension of having women teachers who took you seriously as a scholar and gave you sufficient support. They maybe weren't perfect role models, that's neither here nor there, but they gave you the kind of helpful, critical, constructive teaching that one needed. I really felt that helped me in those later years, first as a graduate student, but even more as a teacher, in settings where there were not many women around.

01:00:16:13

Lage:

Interesting. Let's go to Smith. How did you go to Smith?

01:00:16:17

Davis:

Well, I went to Smith—I guess my parents did notice that I was a very bookish girl, and I did well in school, and my cousin Joan Seidman Piker was there, and I think in these Jewish families they probably just wanted to go to a place where there was already somebody that they knew. She graduated just as I entered, so that was the reason. And I think Kingswood cared that its girls went to good places. I loved my years there, and I have sustained my relationship to Smith in many ways. I loved the history honors program. I took a lot of literature as well. My interest in history and literature already—and philosophy—but history and literature were the strong points. It had an excellent honors program, where you could do a senior thesis, and that was terrific. Later when I taught at Princeton, I was so glad that one of the things that we had there was a senior thesis for everyone. I always was very glad when I could, here at Berkeley, get students that wanted to do something at that level. It really gives you the chance to do an original project, something that—

01:00:17:37

Lage

At the undergraduate—

01:00:17:39

Davis

Oh yes. But any rate, at that point, I was doing European history, a little bit of American, but I was already interested in comparative history and in comparative literature. So I took literature courses in several departments—comparative literature, French in the original, but Russian in translation, of course English literature and German literature in translation, classics. So that was just wonderful. I enjoyed it. I already said that I enjoyed having some women teachers, and I did two other things. Again, rather like in a way what I did at Kingswood. On the one hand, I was active in student affairs, I was on student committees. And I did a lot of writing of Smith songs, one of which played in an amusing way in my Berkeley time. I will tell you about this song, and then I'll tell you how it came up in Berkeley.

In my junior year, not long before I met the man I married, I did what we called a rally day song. Every year at carnival time was what they called rally day, and I wrote a song called "You can't get a man with your brains" to the tune of "You can't get a man with a gun." It was a really a very funny song. I didn't see it in total contradiction to my complete commitment to being a scholarly woman. It had verses like, "you may have a cranium that understands uranium, at home

with a cyclotron, but a man after hours, wants anatomic powers. Oh, you can't get a man your brains." That was the science verse. Or "you may know the futility of marginal utility, that our enterprise is free, but that's all irrespective, 'cause love is a thing collective. Oh, you can't get a man with your brain," and so on.

01:00:19:41

Lage:

Now is this expressing a view that you may have had?

01:00:19:43

Davis:

Well, it was a joke. In some sense, it was, it was teasing. "You have Joyce in your carol, you write like James T. Farrell, you recite all of Shakespeare's plays, but you won't get a Romeo with a Smith diplom-eo, [starts singing] can't cram for a man as you can an exam. Oh, you can't get a man with your brains." It was partly satirical, making fun of us, and myself, because I was such a student, a burrowing student, and so oriented towards the dean's list and Sophia Smith, which was an honorary society. It was partly making fun of it. I don't know. I did have boyfriends. It wasn't that I had no boyfriends, but I don't know. It was an hilarious song.

01:00:20:32

Lage

Did it go over?

01:00:20:35

Davis

Oh it was a huge hit, for years and years and years they sang it. I'm sure it went into a temporary obloquy or temporary silence during the strength of the feminist years, although it's still known. It was reprinted in my fiftieth anniversary book. The thing is, it represented something about my way of dealing with the world that is both wanting to be in these student clubs and then participating somewhat critically and satirically. I've always loved to do that, but at the same time that verse about "you may know the futility of marginal utility, our enterprise is free," it was supposed to be very sarcastic. I was very active in left-wing political things so that I had this double thing of kind of participating, but I was very active. I helped form the—what did we call ourselves?—the Young Progressives. I was on the Marxist study discussion group, and very close to—. There was a small group of us. This was right after the war, where at first we came with this hope of rebuilding. Then the Cold War began, both at home and abroad. I was certainly caught up, in a very idealistic—not wholly bad—utopianism in which I wanted to be able to solve human psychological problems by social reconstruction, political reconstruction.

01:00:22

Lage:

Now, was there a core, a small group of people?

01:00:22:05

Davis:

There was a little group of us left-wingers. There was a Marxist kind of red variant. This was the beginning of the Cold War, so it wasn't very easy. And then there was a very nice social democratic group. We were all this tiny little group of people, some with different stripes.

01:00:22:20

Lage

You were the class of '49?

01:00:22:21

Davis

I was the class of '49, and there were professors—my dear friend Judy Mogil Blanc, who has now been a stalwart in the Israeli peace and justice movement, since she moved there in 1950s. She knew the professors, much better than I, but I think the professors were also kind of split in their range of political views, but that wasn't terribly important. I was much more oriented towards my classmates. That song, I mentioned it because it's going to come in when we talk about Berkeley. Anyway, I did get a man, partly with my brains but partly with my anatomic powers, at the end of my junior year. I married Chandler Davis, a mathematician with very broad interests, very young.

01:00:23:10

Lage:

And that must've been kind of a brave thing to do. You were only nineteen.

01:00:23:16

Davis:

I was only nineteen. He was in his twenties, had just had his twenty-second birthday two days before we eloped. I was at Harvard summer school to study the history of science, which I was already very interested in, philosophy of the history of science course, which we didn't have a Smith at this point, and met him at a Young Progressives meeting—or maybe it was a National Students Association [NSA]—I guess it was Young Progressives, though both of us were active in NSA.

01:00:23:47

Lage

Were you supporting Wallace?

01:00:23:51

Davis

Yes, that was the time of the Wallace campaign. Students for Wallace is what we were called, actually. And we met, went off to play ping-pong, and it was really nice to meet a left-wing person who liked to do the kinds of things that I do, like play ping-pong, a total, quote, "normal lad." And we were married. I think we had this idealistic hope, which we—after many ups and downs and, as he puts it, stubbornness or good luck—have sustained. That is, we wanted to have a marriage, an egalitarian marriage. That is, a marriage based not only on love and attraction, but on common belief and equality between men and women, and we were both going to have careers, and we were going to save the world, and do this and that. We didn't save the world, but we are still married fifty-five years later.

01:00:24:40

Lage:

You talked all about this before you were married, about the equality?

01:00:24:45

Davis:

Yes. I mean I think we just assumed—yes.

01:00:24:48

Lage

Because that wasn't the pattern, I mean, women were still very much in the mode of giving up their career.

01:00:24:56

Davis

Yes, they were. Moreover, though I mentioned that my Smith teachers were good role models, they weren't good role models in terms of marriage, family, and careers because my teachers that were close to me—there were a few married women teaching at Smith, but very few, and the ones that were didn't have children that anybody saw or didn't have children at all. There were a few very attractive European teachers who came with their husbands, wonderful emigrés, but I don't remember ever seeing any children of the teachers. My own teachers were wonderful women who lived with other women. They were living in women's female friendship, which I never thought about in terms of sexual identity. We just never thought about it that way. They were not optimistic about women marrying and having children and having a career, because they had taken other paths. That I didn't have. So in that sense, it was not only a step, a scandalous step in regard to my parents, who certainly didn't want me to marry a non-Jew, especially my mother, or to elope, et cetera, and even with my teachers. But my teachers did give me support when I went to Harvard graduate school, which is where Chandler was finishing up his mathematics degree.

01:00:26:18

Lage:

But you had another year at Smith?

01:00:26:25

Davis:

I had another year.

01:00:26:28

Lage

Somewhere I read that you could have been expelled for this or not allowed to come back?

01:00:26:29

Davis

At that point, you were not supposed to get married without getting permission. A few of my other classmates did, but they asked for it. I mean they had normal weddings and so on, and I show up without permission. And I went and explained to the lady who was called the warden.

01:00:26:48

Lage:

The warden?

01:00:26:54

Davis:

Mrs. Cooke. She wasn't called the dean; she was called the warden. She was disapproving, but the dean of my class, a wonderful art historian, Priscilla Van der Poel, was very supportive. So we got through that. Chan would come and visit, and we had our little life at Harvard. Then I started the graduate program at Harvard.

01:00:27:10

Lage

Now was it at Harvard, or was it at Radcliffe?

01:00:27:02

Davis

It was at Radcliffe, although all of the courses were at Harvard. I have a Radcliffe MA, which I am happy to say—though today it is now called a Harvard MA. I had no classes at Radcliffe, but just the way it was at Cambridge University all of those years until 19- what—'97, '98, when the women graduates of Cambridge were finally given Cambridge University degrees retrospectively. Similarly at Harvard, even when you are taking all of your classes as a graduate student at Harvard, everything was at Harvard, you got a Radcliffe degree. I'm happy to just call that a Radcliffe degree. But my teachers were in the Harvard history department. One of them, however, was also president of Radcliffe. It was particularly nice to work with him, because he was the first one who introduced to me to the archival sort of history. Up until then, I had been interested in the social dimension to history, but primarily working from printed texts, by which I mean Renaissance rare books, many of which we have at The Bancroft Library. Before his seminar I was doing more intellectual history with a social dimension. I did some very interesting papers of that kind at Harvard, but the teacher that first introduced me to the archival sort of social history happened to be in English—early modern—but he was also the president of Radcliffe.

01:00:28:47

Lage:

What was his name?

01:00:28:47

Davis:

Wilbur K. Jordan, and he really cared about women students. I don't mean that the others didn't, but they didn't particularly think about what it was like being a woman student. There was Myron Gilmore who had many women students in Renaissance Studies, but I just don't think—he had a very nice wife and they had all of these children—but he wasn't—he would be helpful in intellectual work, but Jordan was really deeply interested in my scholarly and his other students' endeavors, but he was attuned to what it meant to have a woman student. Later on, Jordan interviewed me when I had the two children, several years later after I left and had gone to Michigan, following my husband. He interviewed me because he was trying to see what was happening to his own graduate students who had gone and had children, what could help them finish their careers, and among the many things that helped was the formation of the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Studies. There were several things including its first director, this wonderful woman, Mary Bunting, who was very important, but there was also an input that came from W.K. Jordan, whose women students he was very concerned about.

01:00:30:12

Lage

And other professors, did you sense that they didn't take you seriously?

01:00:30:16

Davis

No, no, they thought I was a good student. They just didn't think about what it might be like to be a woman student. But there was no way I was going to be stopped. It was just particularly nice to have somebody like Jordan who really respected me a lot. I loved my work so much, I was so interested in it, and I had the sense that I would look at it in a somewhat different way because I was so politically engaged. Not that I was doing history with a direct political content, but somehow that getting the record straight in the past was a contribution, just as trying to help with the Cold War and the different things we were doing then. The Korean War was happening and so on. I was very engaged, and so that engagement was enough so that I didn't have to have every little professor caring. But it was nice that Jordan—

01:00:31:23

Lage:

Did.

01:00:31:23

Davis:

—nice to have that. But I didn't feel that everything hinged on my professors' support. I didn't pay attention.

01:00:31:31

Lage

It seemed like there was a lot going on in your life.

01:00:31:29

Davis

I just wanted to—my teachers, I wanted their intellectual help on things, the bibliography, and I did want them to be interested in what I was writing. But as I said, the little extra came in from W.K. Jordan. Now my first connection with California—not Berkeley, but California—came then because the job that my husband who, being a mathematician, got his PhD very early, and the first job he got was at UCLA. It was the year of the [loyalty] oath. There was no way that my husband was going to sign that oath. So he, having been accepted and I having become accepted as a transfer graduate student at UCLA, because it was LA not Berkeley, he then resigned, as many people did.

01:00:32:25

Lage

So he came before he knew about the signing of the oath?

01:00:32:25

Davis

He accepted it before he knew. Then he decided—many people opposed it, and people refused to come. Instead, he finally got a job at the University of Michigan. This is just a little side thing. He also got it offer at Tufts [University], which it would have allowed me to stay at Harvard, where I would have been the TA [teaching assistant] for Professor Jordan. I remember that I

thought that Michigan seemed so much better a job, which I think mathematically it was. Tufts is a fine place, but I don't know if it was as strong in math. So I said to Chan, "Oh, of course, go to Michigan, and I will just follow along." I was very much in the mode—I wouldn't have thought of staying at Harvard in a way that would have made it impossible for my husband to get the best possible job. In other words, it was just automatic. So I transferred to Michigan at a time when there were a few interesting people, but not the wonderful department that there is now or has been since. It was not a great department. But again, I had one very interesting teacher who expanded—when I think of sort of expanding in ways that I picked up later at Berkeley. I would say that my time at Harvard was an expansion in technique.

01:00:33:50

Lage

Is this Harvard or Michigan?

01:00:33:51

Davis

No, I am going back now. At Harvard I got an expansion of technique, which is the move from the social history of intellectuals to archival history. It was an important move—it was very important. I got into a whole new way of documenting social history. But Michigan was an expansion in real perspective. When I got to Ann Arbor, I got interested in being interdisciplinary. The teacher I had, who is not a famous historian, was very interested in social psychology. In my Renaissance class, he had us begin by reading a textbook by a very good social psychologist at Michigan. So before we started reading Castiglione's *Courtier*, a famous Renaissance text, we read Ted Newcomb's book on social psychology. That was extremely interesting. That would be unheard of at Harvard.

01:00:34:39

Lage:

What was his name?

01:00:34:42

Davis:

His name was Throop, Palmer Throop. He had written very little. He had written a book on the Crusades and the crusading polemic. It was quite interesting, but never a great historian—not celebrated as Jordan and Gilmore, not with that kind of reputation. But he was a very imaginative—I love that interdisciplinary perspective. I was really ready for it. Many of my good friends there were people in the field of social psychology—like some of the people here at Berkeley, there are connections. That is where I first met Sue Ervin-Tripp. Sue Ervin was studying psychology and linguistics at Michigan when I was a graduate student there. She was a friend of one of my best friends. So that was an opening, intellectually, of a kind that anticipates what happened to me when I came to Berkeley. So I put together a doctoral dissertation pretty much on my own, because the man in Reformation studies was past his—we don't need to go into him—he was past his prime. He had done some careful work on certain things in Dutch Reformation history.

This will maybe get us too far off the track, but Palmer Throop is someone I feel special about now, because he also was the first person that got me working on women's history. In the same class, he wanted me to do a study—not of Castiglione's *Courtier*, which I wasn't that—but of a

very interesting late medieval woman intellectual and writer, very important, Christine de Pizan, who lived and died in the early fifteenth century—whose work I now use, have used in every women's history class I've taught. I wrote a very interesting paper on her that I later published—much later published—some versions of it while I was here, actually.

01:00:36:48

Lage

Was she someone who wasn't known?

01:00:36:49

Davis

She was not then known in the canon. She may have been known to a few specialists in medieval literature. She was not important as a figure in medieval literary studies, and she was certainly not known to historians, and he wanted me to write about her. So I did do my paper for the course, which as I say I later drew from and published, but he wanted me to do my doctoral dissertation on her, and I did not want to do this. At the time I remember thinking he wants me to do a woman's topic. I'm not going to do a woman's topic. I had a kind of artisanal—you might call it working class—an artisanal topic that fit with my more Karl Marx, Max Weber social history type approach. I'm grateful to him for that.

01:00:37:35

Lage:

Do you think he was kind of shunting you to a woman's topic, or was he opening something up? How would you—?

01:00:37:46

Davis:

Well, I don't know. That's a good question. I know that he was an admirer of Sylvia Thrupp. I know that he felt that I should know about other women scholars because he would say, "Oh, you should know Sylvia Thrupp," a marvelous economic historian, who ought to have been a president of the American Historical Association [AHA]. She was a wonderful medievalist, very imaginative. He would often talk about her to me. So, I think there was a sense—the thing about him that I don't want to elaborate on because of the lack of time, but he was gay. What we now call gay. He was also married and had a family. He was a very troubled man. He was very troubled man. In retrospect, I can see why. He did not conduct himself well as a gay man. He was not responsible in regard to his male students, and that was bad. He had a lot of psychological problems, which I now understand more about.

01:00:38:41

Lage

This was known on the campus?

01:00:38:43

Davis

It was a known in secret among the graduates, whispered among the graduate students, because he had not behaved properly towards some of the male graduate students, and also he was not—people talked about him because he would get thesis chapters and he wouldn't hand them back, and so on. In retrospect, I think two things: one, now that you ask me, that his concern about gender identity, in regard to this business of being homosexual, must have played creatively in

his interest and his openness to social roles, the social psychology text. It must have played somewhat in his thinking, “Well, Natalie, she's a good student, she's serious, she needs role models. So I will mention Sylvia Thrupp to her, I will mention Christine de Pizan.” So it might have been a categorization thing; it also might have been, you know, “put her off in her little corner,” but it might have also have grown out of his own torment, which led him to understand the woman’s situation.

The other thing in retrospect is that—though we don't have to have a lot of detail on it—that that was the time that my husband was called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities [HUAC], which of course led to a huge amount of protest. But you know, the gay people were having their troubles too, just as they had had at Smith. But we were not aware of that. The gay men. And there were gay people who were—I don't know if Palmer Throop had any trouble.

01:00:39:59

Lage:

You mean trouble in the academy, with discrimination?

01:00:39:58

Davis:

Yes, they were having difficulties. It only a story that has been told a little bit. I know in regard to some of the people at Smith it has been told, and there was some interlinking because at Smith, for instance, one of the gay people who got into trouble was also, alas, he had been a Communist and then he became an informer. It was a very sad life. An interesting man, very tormented man. That story has been told. So when I think now back on it, Palmer Throop undoubtedly on top of everything else was probably having political difficulties which—. At any rate, that was an interesting time, and then at Michigan I was finally able to do really some work in history of science as a minor. Now they have distinguished people, but that point, I had to rustle together people to teach me. So it was growing in terms of methodology and in terms of topic in a very exciting way. And I had wonderful colleagues. Sue, I got to know Sue Ervin, now Sue Ervin-Tripp, and other wonderful people, whom I dearly loved and learned from. Then it exploded in this case of my husband's.

01:00:41:18

Lage

And you also had been involved in—am I understanding correctly—writing the thing that he was actually punished for?

01:00:41:21

Davis

Yes, my husband, who had been so active in politics as a graduate student, as an undergraduate. He was in the navy for time, but when he got back to graduate school at Michigan, he was part of the ASP, the Council for Arts, Sciences, and Professions. We had this progressive faculty organization, which was really reduced because it was during the Cold War. I wrote—and Libby Douvan, my wonderful, now late friend—she died not long ago—who eventually had a professorial chair at Michigan in psychology—she helped me in the final stages. But I did all of

the research and mostly wrote this pamphlet called *Operation Mind*. The point being, HUAC is coming to Michigan. Are they really in their inquiries looking at people who were going to overthrow the government by force and violence? Let's look at the questions that they ask. They were not asking questions about storing guns, all of the stuff that we see today, when I think about it, I think about the way we were treated in those days. They asked them about peace movements; they asked them about anti-Cold War; they asked them about labor things. There was no inquiry that had to do with organizing *anything* that would overthrow the government by force and violence. So this was what our pamphlet was about, called *Operation Mind*—that being the point, that they were not really operation force and violence, but operation mind—published without our names on it by the Council for the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, of which my husband was the treasurer. So when a bill was paid to the printing firm—this was before you could do desktop—he signed the check, and that was the particular thing that got—. When his hearing finally occurred—

01:00:43:33

Lage:

Before HUAC?

01:00:43:37

Davis:

Before HUAC. It took a while for this to go through, because they knew the university was negotiating.

01:00:43:43

Lage

Was the university supportive or not?

01:00:43:41

Davis

No. Here's what happened. Yes and no. The administration was not supportive to us. Harlan Hatcher, who believed in his story to the end of his very long life, went and saw the committee and maybe the FBI as well, but they were all part of the same thing. He struck a deal, which was to save certain people.

01:00:44:10

Lage:

This was the president [of the University of Michigan]?

01:00:44:08

Davis:

The president. To get the exact details right, we would have to check back with my husband about how many people were—but he struck a deal, that X people who were not active in politics anymore, and maybe had even met secretly with the committee and told their story, would not be subpoenaed, and Y group would be subpoenaed. Now Y group, in fact none of them were Communists. My husband had left the party some time before, thinking that it was ineffective. But he was still a very strong independent left winger and certainly not about to give names or break ranks of solidarity with people. The others were people like that. They were older, they were more senior professors who had been much more active as Communists, very distinguished, both scientists. Then there was one man—. They finally focused on four

professors publicly, and the others were all private and they all cooperated to some extent with the committee. We knew about them and they never got into any difficulties. One of the four went into private session because he had multiple sclerosis, so there were three final people, two of whom used the Fifth Amendment. Both of them had been very active actual Communist organizers. One had been in Spain, and had been a leader of the American volunteers.

01:00:45:39

Lage

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade?

01:00:45:38

Davis

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and the other—. Both were really wonderful scholars and scientists. Chan [Chandler Davis] used the First Amendment, having agreed with me completely that he would bring a test case.

01:00:45:55

Lage:

Based on freedom of association? Freedom of speech?

01:00:45:51

Davis:

The First Amendment argument is that the committee could not be a justified committee, because there was no question that they were asking that would legitimately serve the needs of the House [of Representatives]. But what they were doing was impinging upon the freedom of expression, which was a good point. Now, I guess Harlan Hatcher was supportive of the people who in a sense he had seen to it would never be called publicly, but he wasn't supportive of the three men who were called, and he kept striking committees and striking committees who would say that all three of them should be fired. And finally a committee said that only Chan should be fired, because Chan refused—Chandler, my husband—refused to answer the same questions that were being asked by the House committee before the faculty committees. He said, "I will talk about my politics to you in my living room and so forth. I will not—I have not been doing anything illegitimate in my classroom, but I will not do it [talk to you about my politics under public coercion]." It was a very tough line for him to take. It was very hard, because even some of his friends thought, "Why not answer?" But he was very unwilling to do that, and the president fired him, whereas the other two both said, "We're not Communists anymore, blah blah blah." The president still ended up firing one, rather he kept one and fired two, namely Chan and one of the two who had cooperated with the local university committees. Chan was a very good sport about it. He said, "You know, keeping the one, Clem Markert, was one of the only examples in all of America where a person was kept after having publicly used the Fifth Amendment, as opposed to things being done behind closed doors and so on." [Hatcher had wanted to fire all three, but there was so much protest, he backed off.]

01:00:47:57

Lage

So he was one who did testify and took the Fifth?

01:00:48:00

Davis

He testified and he took the Fifth. He was not therefore prosecuted by the government, as Chandler was. Chan's prosecution was solicited by Chan taking the First. Chan knew he would be prosecuted.

01:00:48:15

Lage:

And he was actually held in contempt of Congress?

01:00:48:12

Davis:

He was prosecuted, but in terms of the campus, Chan was fired, as was one of the Fifth Amendment persons who had said to the committee, "I'm not a Communist"—said to the local campus committee. So the president was not supportive in that sense. Nick [Mark Nickerson] went off immediately to Canada. He left immediately because he didn't have to worry about being prosecuted, and became the dean of his medical school and so forth at Manitoba. Chan stayed; Chan was fired, and Clem, the one who was kept on, stayed briefly, and then got his tenure there, and then immediately left for John Hopkins and had a distinguished career there and at Yale. So Chan, as I say, was a pretty good sport; he said, "Well, at least we got one through."

01:00:48:55

Lage

A very good sport.

01:00:48:58

Davis

One person—because there was so much campus support, and there was a lot of campus support for Chan and Nick too. Those cases helped found the questioning in the fifties that later led to the early days of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] before they got violent and so on. That grew out of Michigan. A lot of things happened in Michigan.

01:00:49:19

Lage:

That's right, so a lot of the outrage remained?

01:00:49:21

Davis:

Some of the questioning, yes, did simmer below the surface.

01:00:49:27

Lage

Similar to the loyalty oath here. It simmered and came out—

01:00:49:30

Davis

Exactly the same kind of story, very much the same kind of story. Now that I think of it, Grace Paley—do I have the right name?

01:00:49:40

Lage:

The author?

01:00:49:38

Davis:

The novelist. No, I may not have the right name. Who wrote the book called—? Well, never mind. There was a novel that was written by woman from Detroit who was at Michigan right after these cases, and I am not remembering the name [Marge Piercy]. But in which you could see the simmering that you are also reflecting on here. So anyway, my only real suffering—it was a challenge because we had, by then we had two children and we had the third child afterward. The uncertainty—those are challenging years. The children were just wonderful, and the thing that was awful for me as a historian was that my passport was removed. I had been to France once for six months of archival research for this thesis, which I had loved, and I had not finished the archival research.

So, the silver lining was—we moved to New York where my husband finally got a job. He was completely blacklisted. Every time a math department would try to hire him, the administration would be contacted by the FBI, and that was that. He got a job for a couple of years doing research in advertising. It was generally mathematical research. He even published some things. We lived in New York and I—with the young children, it would have been hard to get abroad anyway—but that was where I returned to very heavy work in rare books like what we have in the Bancroft, so that was really was a great enrichment for my thesis. It was okay. I did an okay thesis without getting back to the archives for a second run. My book was on, partly on, the people in the printing industry of the Reformation. So that worked out okay.

01:00:51:46

Lage:

Again looking at it from below?

01:00:51:49

Davis:

Yes. That was not being done. Reformation studies tended to be—some interesting things were happening, especially with the psychoanalytic approach of Erik Erikson. He wrote *Young Man Luther* and there were some nice studies of Luther, some pretty interesting studies. There already had been on the books, going back to the old days in Germany, not only Max Weber, but some very interesting studies, sociological studies of Protestant theology and forms of the sect. But nobody was really doing serious social history of the Reformation, as opposed to reflecting on the sociology of doctrine. That just wasn't being done. Max Weber had done a little bit on the nineteenth century sect. So I went into the archives and tried to look at who was Protestant and to look at the connection between social movements and religious movements, and ended up with a very non-Marxist view, different from Weber and different from Marx, although quite inspired by their ways of questioning things, but still deeply interested in, not in reducing religion to social conflict, but in seeing religion and ideas as a whole world of their own, with their own social conflicts in that, rather than saying in some sense that the Reformation was a revolt of the poor against the rich, which it clearly wasn't. There were a lot of rich people who supported it. But looking at it as a social conflict between laity and clergy, and as a conflict where the

teachings of the Reformation had a very important impact on consciousness. So I really did enjoy doing that.

01:00:53:45

Lage

And you are seeing the complexities, which seems to be the hallmark of your work.

01:00:53:45

Davis

Yes, it wasn't that it was just chaotic, and that there was no pattern, but that the patterns were multiple, and I tried to identify those. I would write some of the things a little bit differently now from the way I wrote them then, but I was happy to build upon that. Then I embarked upon trying to get a career and a sort of following my husband about. So I had this initial pattern that women often got into those days, where I accepted a job at Douglass College, Rutgers, which had wonderful—it was a woman's college associated with Rutgers and had some wonderful women historians in it. But then Chan didn't get the second year of his fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Study, because they found out, somebody in Washington found out—it was before his case had been resolved—that he was a HUAC person, victim. So the fellowship wasn't re-granted for the second year, and so that was too bad. So then he got a job—the math world wasn't going to let him disappear—so he became an editor of *Mathematical Reviews*, which was located at Brown University, so I told Douglass I couldn't come and I began to teach, first part-time, then full-time, at Brown. After he served his time, because he lost his case; it went to the Supreme Court and he lost by one vote. It is more complicated than that.

01:00:55:23

Lage:

This is a story in itself.

01:00:55:24

Davis:

Yes. Three cases—his was the first case, but two other people, friends of ours actually, followed his example and took the First Amendment, as the Hollywood Ten had years before and had lost. This was a new effort to do what the Hollywood Ten had done. All three cases got up to the Supreme Court, but the other two got there first, so they both lost by a single vote, and Chan was denied *certiorari* on the basis of those by a single vote. So all three men, in fact, were in the same fancy prison, federal prison, at the same time, Danbury [Correctional Institute]. Not long after, I should say, one of the HUAC members, the former head of HUAC [J. Parnell Thomas] had been a prisoner there, not for something honorable like political freedom but for corruption or bribery or something. He left before they got there. So after serving his time, Chan finally got a university job.

01:00:56:22

Lage

What year was that?

01:00:56:25

Davis

He was in prison in 1960. He served his time. There were several years in between—he finally appeared in '54, so it took six years for that to go through courts. So then we moved. At that

point he was invited to come to Canada, because he was continuing to produce as a mathematician, but he just couldn't get a regular job in the states. So he got to Canada. He was invited by a wonderful mathematician, Donald Coxeter, who said, "Oh you're willing to come to Canada?" So he got to Toronto. He got into the country despite this record of—not a felony, but a serious misdemeanor on his record. He finally got admitted, and we moved there, and it took me a while. It took me a while to get the proper teaching job.

01:00:57:18

Lage:

With tenure-track?

01:00:57:19

Davis:

I couldn't get anything that was really going to work quite right. In the history department they wouldn't offer me anything that was anything more than maybe just a little course, so I taught—and I don't regret it—I taught for several years in the political economy department. This is an interesting—they don't have that any more, alas, at Toronto, but it was a carryover from the old great days, where politics and economics were in the same department. Some very interesting scholarship and vision that came out of that. It wasn't exactly a Marxist thing. It was the kind of a post-Marxist department, but just the political economy approach where you could have the same people together doing that. The economic history wing was there, and I taught there and that meant somewhat putting a new emphasis on my work.

01:00:58:28

Lage

Were you still teaching sixteenth century?

01:00:58:33

Davis

Yes, but also beyond. I was teaching economic history. I taught lecture courses, and we had a graduate program. I was able therefore to reinforce the part of my work on the Reformation that had to do with economic history. I published one of my most important papers ever, called "A Trade Union in Sixteenth Century France" [1966], just taking what I had discovered from these Protestant printing workers. I had discovered the first detailed documents of what the French would call a *compagnonnage*. It was an early trade union. But it's loaded with all of this ritual, you know like the Masons, if you think of the Masons. So I just had all of this early detail, wonderful detail on the baptism ceremony when you became what they called—they had a special name, a *griffarin*—and on all of the ritual and how they would take oaths. All of the economic agitation—strikes, job demands—were first done through a kind of ritual.

01:00:59:44

Lage:

Was the ritual religious? When you say baptism—?

01:00:59:45

Davis:

Well, the church thought it was sacrilegious. It was parodic—but they took it very seriously—of the baptism. And you took a new name, you took a name as a *griffarin*, as a member of this group, and they had these special passwords, and then they had these banquets, and they did all

this illegal, totally illegal, clandestine stuff. My early publications—I had done some things even before I got to Toronto. I published things while I was a graduate student, partly based on the work in the rare books libraries in New York when my husband was working in New York. In Toronto, I did my first work on welfare reform, where I looked to see whether Protestantism had to be the cause of welfare reform the way some of the theories had it. What was the intellectual component—or ideological was the old term—of sixteenth century welfare reform? So those grew out of that. And now for the first time I was lecturing on women—I hadn't taught much on them before. I taught at Brown, but I didn't do much on women, I don't think. The first time I really brought women in, that I can remember, as central characters was in that economic history course for undergraduates. I had a whole section on women's work. I was able to bring in labor, things that were being done so much in the regular economic history courses.

01:01:01:14

Lage

And do you remember what made you go in that direction?

01:01:01:15

Davis

Well, I was teaching economic history, and I had all the stuff that I was always interested in, but it just hadn't fit with what I was doing so much before. I did a little bit on women in my doctoral dissertation. But no, it was the first time I had really done something on women in an undergraduate lecture course. I even had a unit on women and poverty. So I don't regret those years in political economy, but it wasn't going to lead to anything. The field of economic history was becoming very cliometric at that time. The vanguard students, the graduate students, wanted something very, very mathematical, and there was no way that I could—even though married to a mathematician and interested in the history of science—could do that. The students that I was getting in my graduate courses in economic history were coming from the history department. Maybe I would have gotten tenure in that economic history program. I might have, but I needed a regular history job. I was getting discouraged about that, and at an American Historical Association meeting, I saw Bill Bouwsma from Berkeley. By now, you see, I had published some of these interesting things, so Bill knew about that.

01:01:02:49

Lage:

Did you know Bill?

01:01:02:50

Davis:

Yes, I knew Bill because we would always go to meetings, and I knew his work, and he knew of me. He was older than I. I was very much an admirer of his, and he said—now, let's see, had I given my paper on strikes? I might have already given really a major paper at the AHA from my doctoral dissertation, which had received a great deal of attention, then started to publish. Yes, I had. Really, people had loved that paper. I had publications, and I was just publishing this piece on welfare reform, and I had published a piece on the trade union, yes.

01:01:03:28

Lage

You must have.

01:01:03:31

Davis

Yes I had. It appeared in '66. Bill saw me and it was December of '67, and he said, "Well, I am on leave next year." I must have said something along the lines of: "Well, I am really trying to get a regular job in history." My husband by then was thinking, you know, "Maybe we just won't stay here. You shouldn't stay." Bill said, "Well, I'm on leave next year. Won't you come and take my courses while I am away?" I said, "Yes." I only came for the half-year.

01:01:03:56

Lage:

This was '68?

01:01:03:56

Davis:

Yes. I only came for the half-year. I'll tell you more about that half-year, but in terms of Toronto, they then offered me a job in the history department, when they heard that Berkeley—

01:01:04:10

Lage

Oh! It never hurts to have the competition. [laughter]

01:01:04:15

Davis

So I had a job to go back to—not in political economy, which I had loved, but which was not a future. Then I came here in '68. That was an extraordinary time to come.

01:01:04:20

Lage:

Yes.

01:01:04:24

Davis:

In the wake of the Free Speech Movement and the Vietnam war. It was a time of great turbulence. Let's see, I'm just trying to remember.

01:01:04:34

Lage

You came for one semester.

01:01:04:35

Davis

I came for one semester and lived down on—was it Dana? I can't remember the name of the street, but it was down on the—

01:01:04:41

Lage:

The south side?

01:01:04:44

Davis:

It was on the south side [Stuart Street], not too far from where we later bought a house on Hillegass, but this earlier one was on the west side of Telegraph Avenue. We just rented. My son came, until my husband could finish his teaching and bring the girls, my son came with me and went to Berkeley High.

01:01:04:57

Lage

How old was he?

01:01:05:03

Davis

It was '68. He must have been about fourteen or whatever. He was born in '53.

01:01:05:09

Lage:

Well, that was quite a year probably to go to Berkeley High.

01:01:05:08

Davis:

Yes, it was. My God. I must say we were all very engaged. Half of the time I would meet my graduate students on these marches down to the induction center where we had demonstrations.

01:01:05:28

Lage

Did you get involved in that?

01:01:05:30

Davis

Yes, yes, I did. I was on several marches, and saw some of the—yes, I was on a lot of those things. I had remembered so much going out early one morning when an important person refused induction, Joan Baez's husband or something. He burned his draft card, as I recall. I remember his saying something that was so much like some of my Reformation people had said; he looked at this building and he said, "These are just stones. This is just a building and here we are." It was really early in the morning. It was the time of year when it was still dark. It was like February or something. I remember thinking that was one of the great quotes of the early Protestant preachers at Lyon, who had come and looked at this huge cathedral, Saint John's Cathedral, *La Cathédrale Saint-Jean* at Lyon, and said, "What are these? These are but stones, and we are the voice of the scripture." I remember that.

01:01:06:41

Lage:

I wonder if he knew that he was echoing that?

01:01:06:40

Davis:

No, I don't think he did. It's just that it was the kind of thing you say when you are in front of a great powerful building. So I was very much involved in that, and the turmoil of that. I found it a very important and very moving experience. All of this had a great deal of impact on my work as

well. I had been very both involved in, but troubled by, some of the, what I thought of as extravagant excesses of the antiwar movement at Toronto, which my husband was very much involved in. I also became involved in the reconstruction of the university at Toronto.

01:01:07:27

Lage

So there was a lot going on there?

01:01:07:29

Davis

Yes, already. I can't remember when the day-care sit-in was in Toronto. That was later, after my first visit to Berkeley and before I came back here. I was very interested in and bothered by—I didn't like the violence on either side. I didn't like that. It bothered me terribly. I testified in one of the cases in Oakland when I felt somebody was unjustly arrested. But he wasn't unjustly arrested for violent action. We were on a peaceful procession, and he resisted arrest, and I don't blame him. As I said before, when the people came up, they looked like hoodlums.

01:01:08:17

Lage:

The police?

01:01:08:18

Davis:

Well, they weren't in police uniform. They were plain-clothed men, and they looked like toughs. I was terrified when I saw it. I thought that they were people from the other side, you know, pro-war people, who opposed—

01:01:08:29

Lage

Civilians.

01:01:08:30

Davis

Yes, who were coming and attacking this guy. At the trial they said, "We were wearing black." Well, wearing black? I was terrified when I saw it. I thought, "Oh my God, we are being attacked." A lot of the reflection that came out later in my—two of the most important essays that I wrote in those years were tied up with both political events at Toronto and political events at Berkeley. They were the ones on Carnival, which I actually wrote just before I got here.

01:01:09:09

Lage:

Before you got here in '71—

01:01:09:11

Davis:

My first piece on Carnival, "The Reasons of Misrule," actually grew out of, it seems to me, the same kind of thing at Toronto. Then the "Rites of Violence," which I wrote in my first year when I returned to Berkeley was very much tied up with thinking about both the world turned upside down by that political style and some of the issues of violence that came up.

01:01:09:37

Lage

I think it is very interesting how the current times influenced what you looked at and how you looked at—

01:01:09:48

Davis

It poses questions to you. The historian is not supposed to project the present onto the past. You do that inevitably to some extent, no matter how hard you try. You are certainly not supposed to try to do it. I like to think of it as posing questions that you then reflect upon and see how they might work out in a very, very different context. They suggest things to look at, but not answers. There can not be any answers. To me, I'm happy to get my questions from anywhere, from the scholarly issues, but I'm at least as interested in new ideas that I get as I live today, but as I repeat, they have to be answered by the evidence from the past and a variety of techniques they may not be related to what is going on.

Berkeley in '68—first of all, there were all of these wonderful colleagues, but it was an extraordinarily exciting place to be. I was trying to remember if I met Svet then, or whether I met her when I returned—Svetlana Alpers. At first, I may have mostly met the people in the history department. I mean, that was such a short time. I mostly stayed close to people like Gene Brucker and Bill Bouwsma, my very close colleagues. I think that was before Randy [Starn] came. Let's see, Randy wasn't there yet, right?

01:01:11:09

Lage:

I don't know if he was there at that time. [Starn came in 1966.]

01:01:11:17

Davis

I think that was a time of staying quite close to the department.

01:01:11:32

Lage:

What do you remember about the turmoil? It seems to me that there were also the Third World issues coming to the fore in '68 also, and kind of merging with the war [issues].

01:01:11:45

Davis:

I mostly remember the war and then the student movement here.

01:01:11:54

Lage

It may have been more in '69 that the—

01:01:11:58

Davis

In 1968 I was teaching a graduate course with Mark Phillips and a few others as students. Mark has remained my friend. He then left the US, rather than serve. He went up to Toronto, and then has had a distinguished, a wonderful career in Canada and in the world, in the scholarly world, in writing.

01:01:12:20

Lage:

He was a student of yours?

01:01:12:20

Davis:

He was in my graduate seminar. I gave a graduate seminar. I don't remember what angle we took that year. Did we do peasants? I think we did. Is that when I brought in the [Emmanuel] Le Roy Ladurie? I think so. I think we may have done peasants and society, that year. I just can't remember, but it was lots of fun. I think the wonderful French scholar Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie had just published the *Peasants of Languedoc* [1974]. I may be wrong. This may be putting things that happened later.

01:01:12:44

Lage

It's hard to sort this all out.

01:01:12:51

Davis

The years were close. I don't remember about the Third World issues, but it was mostly student reconstruction and the war. Remember that was when—what did [President Lyndon] Johnson do?

01:01:13:12

Lage

Well, it was also the year of the election campaign.

01:01:13:13

Davis

Well, oh dear. How can I get all this confused? I'll have to call up my husband and ask him. He decided to do something about the war. We won in regard to Johnson. We won a victory, because I remember—

01:01:13:28

Lage:

He decided not to run for president. That might have been what you are thinking of.

01:01:13:31

Davis:

He decided not to run, but also it was a victory in regard to the war, and I remember we all brought flowers, Mark brought flowers, because we had been so—that whole seminar, and especially Mark, among my students. I loved the undergraduate course as well. It was really—

01:01:13:51

Lage

I'm going to stop you for one minute, because we are just about to—

[Begin Audio File Davis 2 06-06-03]

02:00:00:00

Davis:

My main memory from that time was the exhilaration of openness and of a life which was both very engaged in a scholarly way—the pleasure working with Bill Bouwsma and Gene Brucker, meeting Bob Brentano—and of this political *engagement* of that time. I can't sort out from my return [in 1971] what I was doing, what I wrote during those—it was only a few months, it was four to six months. Then I went back to Toronto, where I was in the history department. I did have a regular job. I don't know whether it was associate or full professor, and began to teach historians, and Mark Phillips, who, as I said, left rather than be in the draft.

02:00:01:08

Lage:

Did he more or less follow you?

02:00:01:14

Davis

Yes, you could say that, although he didn't do his dissertation with me because he was doing Italian history. I helped him, but he did his dissertation with others, but I was always very much a supportive person. I had some very nice students. Now at Toronto, there were not many women in the history department. There were no women in the political economy department, and I had already been active, before I even came to Berkeley, in organizing with some women graduate students. I was then a young faculty member, as I said, at Toronto. We took a special group of women with children, who were trying to get their PhDs, in all departments. We did a study of what their experience was like, in hopes of getting the university to improve some things like having a day-care center and a few other flexible things. Our study was not taken seriously by the administration. It was an interesting thing to do, and I'm very glad we did it, and it is a sort of special document that people—

02:00:02:19

Lage:

It's one of the early attempts to do that.

02:00:02:23

Davis:

It was '66, '67. I don't remember whether during my few months here in '68, I did anything in that, but I was certainly continuing to be very interested in that issue. By the time I'd joined the Toronto history department—it was a big department—Jill Ker Conway was in it, and there was a woman who was a lecturer, a very fine woman, Vi Coleman, doing the medieval. There were a couple of woman lecturers. There was a woman who had left and teaches Russian history at Kansas, so there had been very few of us. It was not terribly welcoming, but it was getting a little bit better.

02:00:03:17

Lage

You mean the attitude of the men?

02:00:03:18

Davis

The attitude was not great. It was not great across the board toward women at the University of Toronto at that time, whereas in economic history, I hadn't paid much attention, because I was kind of marginal anyway. I was sort of in this group of four of us who were doing economic history in this huge political economy department. Here, I was now in my own department. This was a time in which the excitement of '68 was still continuing with the remaking of the university, students wanting representation. I was active in those different things. But the main thing, apart from political action, was beginning to work on women's history.

02:00:03:58

Lage:

In a more conscious way?

02:00:03:59

Davis:

In very conscious way, not just in an occasional paper or a little bit in a course or anything on the side in an economic history course. Jill Ker Conway had done her pioneering PhD on women PhDs in America, at Harvard, before she'd come to Toronto, and we became good friends. We were essentially, I think, the only two tenured women in that department. It was a big department. We became friends and talked about doing a course together. It was so much fun to plan it. Those were such exciting years in the history of women. The field was wide open. Nobody was yet giving any courses. "What would you use for sources," we asked each other. Oh, it was so much fun to try to find all of that. We put together a course, which we could only give for one year, because it turns out that by the time we gave it, Berkeley had invited me to come permanently as a regular post, and I had accepted. But we did give it. It was the famous first year. We had these wonderful TAs who then went on and became—one heads women's studies at the University of British Columbia. One is one of the cochairs of women's studies at York University in Toronto. These wonderful young scholars who were our TAs. Also, just as here, at every place I've been, there was also a women's movement on the side that had its own course, as opposed to our somewhat more scholarly course. In all of the places I've been that happened. There were these two different centers. That was just a wonderful thing.

02:00:05:49

Lage

Aside from women, what did you focus on? Was it a time period?

02:00:05:52

Davis

Well, yes, I did the early modern period. I did women in early modern Europe, and Jill, she took it up in America in the modern period. The comparisons were very interesting. I actually left for the second part, because I came here to teach. We at least got it off the ground. Yes, we got it off the ground. The bibliography that I had for part one, which I brought here, and was elaborated here and developed here, was circulated—as many other people's were, but mine was quite important for early modern—all over America. We did everything by mimeograph in those days. We would mail these things around.

02:00:06:28

Lage:

No email. [laughs]

02:00:06:28

Davis:

No email and no computers. It was all mimeograph and typing. This would be circulating, my syllabus, her syllabus. It was circulated around so that people could see what was available if you wanted to get started doing research or for teaching. I particularly focused on primary sources, which I had first got from the Toronto collections and then here, as we elaborated on it.

So I started teaching that right away when I got back [to Berkeley] as well as Reformation—let's see, I didn't do Ren [Renaissance] because of the fact that we had excellent people doing Ren. What did I teach here? I think I just did Reformation. Reformation history, or did I teach early modern France? I can't even remember. But I especially remember my Reformation course and my history of women, "Society and the Sexes in Early Modern Europe."

02:00:07:24

Lage

Right, so that really isn't women?

02:00:07:27

Davis

No, I always try give a comparative perspective. From the beginning I always felt that this was a comparative course, and that you were looking at men too. I mean, everything was done comparatively.

02:00:07:36

Lage:

So you were looking at gender and the importance of gender?

02:00:07:36

Davis:

Yes, before the word gender was used, I was doing it as a gender approach. That is, we always did men and women. The scholarly issues that always come up when you deal with a thematic subject already came up then. That is, whether you looked at women more relationally in terms of men, whether you looked at women more in terms of their own sociability and special "female" characteristics. Any time you do a course that has something in it like peasants, something that is relational—in fact, even when you are doing a course on the nation, when you say nation, you think, "Well, this is France, but now we think about what is special about France? We've got to compare it to England." Any time you take a topic, it's going to have some kind of relational issue to it, which is often ignored, but with "Society and the Sexes," it was always faced, even though there was more reading on women, the marked sex. It was always done knowing that if we're going to talk about women, we have to see what's the case with men. Are they really doing this with men or is this special to women? All across the board. As I say, that became one of the central interesting intellectual questions and still is, in the treatment of the history of women and gender. What you do about likeness and difference. Let's sum it up that way. It was really fun to teach that here.

02:00:09:13

Lage

Was that a hard course to get approved? I always think of this as a rather cumbersome process of getting new courses approved by the Academic Senate.

02:00:09:26

Davis:

I don't remember any difficulty.

02:00:09:30

Lage

You would have remembered, I think, if you had difficulty.

02:00:09:26

Davis

I don't remember anything. It seems to me I started—

02:00:09:29

Lage:

They must have been ready as well.

02:00:09:32

Davis:

No, I don't remember any difficulty with the course. Getting the women's studies program is another matter. As for my own course, I was just reminded about it by my former graduate student with whom I'm having lunch. She was my graduate student. She either audited or took this course, and she reminded me that we didn't have tutorials or precepts or seminars in connection with the lecture course. That bothered me a lot. So what I would do, I taught it for an hour and a half, I think I had the Tuesday/Thursday slot, and I always taught it from ten to eleven-thirty or whatever the slot was. I always went over to a coffee house after that class, and I said, "Anybody that wants to come and carry on this class, I'll always be at that coffee house." I don't know if it is still there. It was right—not on the corner of Euclid and Hearst, but right two doors down.

02:00:10:32

Lage

Yes, it's probably there, or else it is a laundromat. [chuckles]

02:00:10:36

Davis

We did that. I always did that after that class, and there was always a core group. It was a big class, but usually most of the people at some point came to one. There was a core that always came, and we talked in a scholarly way about the issues, or about gender issues today, or whatever. It was really wonderful. I was given a party at the end and so on. I probably had TAs. I can't remember about that. I must have had TAs.

02:00:11:07

Lage:

You might not have if there were no sections.

02:00:11:10

Davis:

I can't remember. I totally can't remember. I think I must have taught some courses in the history of ideas. I must have taught some of the introductory classes.

02:00:11:17

Lage

You taught History 4C, which is the introductory—.

02:00:11:21

Davis

I had some interesting TAs for that.

02:00:11:23

Lage:

And that's a huge course.

02:00:11:27

Davis:

Yes, that was a huge course.

02:00:11:28

Lage

That was Renaissance and Reformation.

02:00:11:32

Davis

Yes, that was interesting to do that, and I had interesting TAs.

02:00:11:37

Lage:

Did you change those courses at all from how they had been traditionally taught, do you think? Did you introduce gender issues?

02:00:11:45

Davis:

Well, I'm remembering some of this already in Toronto, where I taught the introductory course. There what I did was try to make it more interdisciplinary—I don't remember if I did women—but I remember trying to make it more interdisciplinary and trying to bring people interested in interdisciplinary things to—. By then I was really interested in anthropology. Let's see, I'm trying to remember what happened in 4C. I would think that if I did anything, it would have been being interested in a more interdisciplinary approach. Certainly in my graduate teaching, I tried to introduce anthropological perspectives, whether the theme was peasants or religion or family. I remember that last seminar especially, because I remember the papers that the students did and how interesting those papers were, which led to many different nice theses. It was in the year that we did family that I came across the texts that led to Martin Guerre. But one of the things in those graduates courses that I definitely did was—as Palmer Throop had done with social psychology years before—begin with some relevant anthropological, interdisciplinary text.

02:00:13:20

Lage

Do you remember the kinds of people you would have them read?

02:00:13:25

Davis

Well, when we did religion and society, I had them read Clifford Geertz. I was very interested in him, and I probably had them read—I'd have to look back at those syllabi—Victor Turner on rites of passage, but I'm sure I had them read Clifford Geertz, because I was reading his *Interpretation of Cultures* at that time.

02:00:13:54

Lage:

Is this a time when many historians were turning to anthropology? I remember Bill Bouswma did mention also that he became very—

02:00:14:04

Davis:

I think I was an early one, and I think Bill followed along. He was so much of an inspiration for me in so many ways and his work on lawyers and his construction of issues of humanism that I might have been someone who helped him in that regard.

02:00:14:18

Lage

And Stocking?

02:00:14:17

Davis

Well, George Stocking is my favorite ex-brother in-law. I have many ex-brothers in-law. George was married to my sister in-law, Mina, who studied with May Diaz and did her doctoral dissertation as a mature student. They were divorced, but George and I are still friends. The whole family still all knows each other, and George was here.

02:00:14:43

Lage:

That was something that he was quite interested in. The history of anthropology.

02:00:14:47

Davis:

Oh yes, but by the time I came back George had left and had gone to the University of Chicago. Yes, his work is wonderful. The people I saw personally here were Alan Dundes, the folklorist. May Diaz helped me to begin with. In fact, I used some of her work in my peasant course. But I don't mean that we did just anthropology. We did source materials, and we did big texts like the—we did the major readings: [Pierre] Goubert and Le Roy Ladurie on the peasants, and all other kinds of things. I wanted them to look at those texts not just with the questions an historian would pose, but when we did religion, I wanted them to think about religion. What is religion? I thought was helpful for them to stretch the questions, to stretch the perspectives that they brought to bear. For the seminar on family history, I probably used some of the English anthropologists for that. I used Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, whom I later got to know at Princeton, later on. I was using her here and reading her work and having the students read her. So I think that

that was helpful. Did I ever give a graduate course just on gender? I think not. I would just try to put gender in.

02:00:16:22

Lage

That's not in the record.

02:00:16:24

Davis

I don't remember that I ever did here. I would just have a gender dimension in the subject we were following. Those were very important years because of contacts with my colleagues and because of the ambiance here. When I start to say "open"—I always think of this place as physically so much more open, because you won't believe it with the weather as it is now, but it was sunny all the time after the rainy season, and we were outside a lot, and everybody was mountain climbing and playing tennis.

02:00:16:55

Lage:

Is that the impression that—

02:00:17:01

Davis:

I had a sense, in contrast with Toronto and then with Princeton where I went after being here, of being more out, outside. I would bike up to the campus, and it was always sunny. You didn't have to wear heavy clothes most of the time.

02:00:17:18

Lage

So that had an impact?

02:00:17:14

Davis

The spatial sense I would like to talk about in terms of my intellectual discovery. It had been so much of a struggle at Toronto to do new things intellectually, and even though I did have some very nice younger colleagues, it was a struggle to do things like "The Reasons of Misrule" and later "The Rites of Violence."

02:00:17:46

Lage:

Would there have been no one to talk to about it, or would they have been scornful?

02:00:17:45

Davis:

They weren't that interested in it in Toronto. I had one or two people that were interested in it. I had a friend, Rosalie Colie, who later, alas, died, not long after she gave some wonderful lectures at Berkeley. Right after I came here, she gave some wonderful lectures, sponsored by the English department, called "The Resources of Kind," ["The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance"] and then she died probably by suicide not long after. She had been at Toronto—she then had gone to Brown—but she was at Toronto while I was there. She was really interested in the work that I did on the carnivalesque and "The Reasons of Misrule," but there weren't very

many people like her. And here [at Berkeley] if you tried something new, I felt people were—you didn't have to struggle so to get people interested in it.

02:00:18:32

Lage

People within the department?

02:00:18:33

Davis

Within and without. People were just open, more open, even if they weren't literally doing the same things. I felt that Bill and Gene would be more interested. Even if they weren't doing that type of thing, they would be interested in it. Then it was very easy to meet people in other departments. I remember Stanley Brandes, the anthropologist, who was wonderful to talk to, who did European, Spanish, anthropology. Alan Dundes was a help. Have I got the right name?

02:00:19:03

Lage:

Yes, that's the folklorist.

02:00:19:05

Davis:

Then May Diaz, I read her things on peasants. Then I got to know all of these other people, in other departments. I'll come back to Lynn Hunt coming and Tom Laqueur, but—. I'll just mention that Lynn Hunt and Tom Laqueur came, and then Paula Fass, these wonderful young people who I just loved working with. Then you see there were people in the history department like Larry Levine. Oh dear, I forget my—.

02:00:19:35

Lage

He was here when you came.

02:00:19:38

Davis

No, not Larry Levine. Oh, the other wonderful Americanist who works in popular culture. I still like these people.

02:00:19:48

Lage:

Leon Litwack?

02:00:19:50

Davis:

Leon Litwack. So you see there were people in the department working on subjects I cared about. I see other people [on a list of faculty in the 1960s] who I admired, Paul Alexander.

02:00:19:54

Lage

And many of them also good political activists.

02:00:19:58

Davis

I'll come to that about the department in a minute, but all of these people—just now in terms of intellectual things—

02:00:20:05

Lage:

And Larry Levine was looking at—I don't know if that early—new sources for popular history.

02:00:20:11

Davis:

Oh yes, he was interested in popular culture. I didn't know Leon that well, but there was Larry, who also politically—I was very *sympathique* with Larry Levine. I liked Tom Bisson very much, whom I had known at Brown, a wonderful scholar. Bob Brentano—.

02:00:20:31

Lage

Were they welcoming to this new sole woman in the department?

02:00:20:38

Davis

I will talk about that in a minute. In terms of welcoming, yes. Friendship and welcoming, and their wives. Beverly Bouwsma, Gene Brucker's wife Marion, who is a wonderful person, who was my classmate at Smith, or if not my literal classmate, my Smith friend. Tom Bisson's wonderful wife, who is a scholar too. All of these people, Paul Alexander's wife, they were—I really felt welcomed. Win Jordan I had known. Did I know Win before? Yes, at Brown. Win is sort of related to my husband. Larry's wife, Cornelia [Levine], these were lovely people, and many other people. I'll tell you about some of the problems in a minute. Richard Webster's first wife—Richard Webster's wife who then married—was Ira Lapidus there right away? Was he there already?

02:00:21:23

Lage:

I think so. [since 1965.]

02:00:21:28

Davis:

There he is [on the list]. Ira was there. There was really just wonderful people.

02:00:21:37

Lage

We didn't talk about—

02:00:21:41

Davis

And Reggie! Oh Reggie Zelnik was doing working class history in Russia. So I just felt very much more at home. There was less of a struggle. I didn't mind the struggle at Toronto, but it was much less home. Then young people came, and I'll come back to what it was like in the department, because it isn't only that I was welcome. We'll come back to that. But I'll just say that then in terms of the intellectual dimension, Stephen Greenblatt came.

02:00:22:11

Lage:

To English [department].

02:00:22:12

Davis:

To English. I got to know Paul Alpers, Svetlana I met at a party, I think, either given at Bob Brentano's or at what's his name, Wright, the art historian who is a good friend of the Brentanos?

02:00:22:25

Lage:

David Wright.

02:00:22:23

Davis:

David Wright.

02:00:22:23

Lage:

His office is directly above us here.

02:00:22:25

Davis:

I met this gang which later founded *Representations*. I left just as they were starting it. And they were very interested in—Steve [Greenblatt] was particularly interested in my work. He was much younger than I, but it was so much fun to get to know—. They were very good friends.

02:00:22:41

Lage:

Sounds like there was a creative cauldron.

02:00:22:40

Davis:

Oh, it was so great and there was a group of us, who toward the end of my stay, we all would play tennis together. Paul, and Tom Laqueur—and Tom wasn't then married to Carla [Hesse], but whomever Tom was going around with at the time. Were there any of the historians in that tennis group? Tom and Lynn Hunt. We would play tennis together. We were also a very nice intellectual group as well.

02:00:23:13

Lage:

Had you played tennis?

02:00:23:14

Davis:

Oh yes, I've always played tennis. I still try to play, but God, I don't play very well, my arthritic hips—but yes, I still play tennis [laughter]. So, the intellectual crosscurrent was very important in the new directions of my work. All the good things that I wrote then, that is, some of them had started before I came, because the anthropology interest already had begun, maybe inspired by

my brief time here, but it really had started in Toronto and then really flowered here. And then my interest in literature, partly through knowing Steve and Paul, but especially Steve—both of these things, anthropology and literature, fed into my interest in film, so even before I left here I wanted to make that movie on Martin Guerre. I brought people to the campus, I brought film people, not to the department so much, but I was president of the Society for French Historical Studies. We had our meeting here, not long before I left, and I brought a French filmmaker [Rene Allio] to that meeting—it was the first time that they had had a filmmaker at the meeting—to talk about what it had been like, making an historical film. We showed the film on Bancroft Way at the museum there. What is it called?

02:00:24:25

Lage

The Pacific Film Archive?

02:00:24:29

Davis

Isn't that based there?

02:00:24:34

Lage:

Right.

02:00:24:33

Davis:

We showed his film, *Moi, Pierre Riviere*, and he talked about making it. I thought, "Oh, I really—Oh, would I like to do that." This Martin Guerre case seemed to me the real—

02:00:24:45

Lage

So, you thought of that while you were here?

02:00:24:46

Davis

Oh, yes. In the year I gave the family history graduate seminar with these excellent papers, with very good students. I had wonderful students here in the graduate program, whom I still see and who went on to have terrific careers. Ann Waltner was one of them. She took my graduate course, though she was in Chinese studies, and said, "I'm interested in adoption." I said, "Fine, you can do a paper on adoption elsewhere, but she ended up doing a paper on adoption in early modern France, which was not her doctoral dissertation. Her dissertation was on adoption in early modern, Ming, China.

02:00:25:29

Lage:

Well, there she got the comparative.

02:00:25:33

Davis:

Right, that was very nice for her. Along the way, she said, "You know, I've come across"—I sent them all to the rare book library—"I've come across an interesting book in the law library." She used it because it had a brief section on adoption, and it turned out to be the book on Martin

Guerre by Judge Jean de Coras, and she said, “I think you would enjoy reading it.” So that was how I first came across the primary source. I read it, and I said, “This has got to be a movie.” I can’t remember the exact timing. It was ’76, or in there somewhere. I was writing papers on the family, and I used the Coras book for my own paper. I called it “Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France.” I used the Coras book, because it is all about family. It was about the Martin Guerre case, which is a wonderful, extreme case in family life. Not long after that I brought Rene Allio, not literally *to* the campus, but it was something that many campus people were involved in, because they were historians and graduate students. All of that grew out of this ferment. It was just a wonderfully creative time for me.

02:00:26:52

Lage

There was a lot of interest in educational reform and maybe the ability to bring film in—maybe you couldn’t have done it earlier.

02:00:27:02

Davis

In my case, the educational reform more had to do with the women studies program and had less impact on my wanting to do the film.

02:00:27:18

Lage:

Let me just pause for a second.

02:00:27:17

Davis:

What time is it now?

02:00:27:20

Lage

It’s ten-thirty. We need to come to a spot when it’s good to stop.

02:00:27:26

Davis

Why don’t I do just a little bit more on this and then you can ask me more about Berkeley during the next meeting.

02:00:27:30

Lage:

We haven’t talked—and we can do that when we start the next session—about the actual job offer and your thinking about accepting it. It must have been a big decision to come.

02:00:27:38

Davis:

Yes, about coming here. That’s right, I didn’t say anything about that.

02:00:27:44

Lage

But that can start us out this afternoon.

02:00:27:46

Davis

Yes, but let me just finish on the film. The film thing did not come out of educational reform at Berkeley. That pretty much came out of this being an exciting place to be and my own interest, which was moving from issues of performance in anthropology into thinking about how one could take issues through the surrogate case of making a film. They may not seem to fit together really well. I was so interested in fieldwork in anthropology, and I would talk to people like Stanley Brandes and people who were doing anthropological studies here. Oh, I forgot to mention the Rosaldos—they were from Stanford, but they were living in town here. Renato Rosaldo and his lovely wife, Michelle, who died in an accident when they were doing research in the Philippines. Oh, I think of her so often. He has a wonderful second wife, Marie Louise Pratt. They were a young anthropological couple. I think they maybe were even graduate students when I first met them, finishing here, and then they went down to Stanford, where they taught for many, many years.

02:00:29:13

Lage:

Were they from the Philippines?

02:00:29:14

Davis:

No, no, no. He was a Chicano, and she was a gorgeous blond, maybe American Jewish, or I don't know what. I just can't think of her name. Anyway, the film was more about being so interested in anthropology and then being so interested in literary questions and performance. Partly maybe that was a dialogue with Steve? I don't know. Maybe with my Renaissance friends, like Randy, who were interested in performance, but all I know is that I began to rethink even more importantly some of these issues of ritual and *charivari* that I had been writing about. The way the film came in, was that I—when Rene Allio came here, he talked about how he had gone to the village where this famous murder case had occurred. And except for the judge and a few of the physicians in the film, he had cast everybody from the village, and had lived there. Though he hadn't been doing fieldwork on nineteenth century, 1830s people, he had been in a way doing what was like fieldwork with the people in the village who were being cast for the film, having to act those parts, and watching the rushes every week. So it was an interesting comparison to talking about history with my graduate students, where we were taking texts from the sixteenth century, running them through interpretation, working on them. It was another way, it seemed to me, of doing history. Now, obviously you couldn't cite in a footnote that a twentieth-century peasant thought such and such about an 1830 murder case. That is not the way you would *prove* anything, but it was a way of thinking history and doing history.

02:00:31:12

Lage

And the meaning of history.

02:00:31:15

Davis

And the meaning of history. I was very struck by Rene Allio. I partly invited him because I anticipated that, and I thought, "God, I would really like to do that. I would really like to take this Martin Guerre case," which as I say the minute I read it—even before he came—I thought,

“This has got to be a film.” Somehow it all fell together, and seeing that a film could be a way—. Of course, I was also interested in how good history could reach a larger group. Good history. How could it reach a larger group than just readers of a book? Then, of course, I have a long-term interest in performance, because my father was an amateur theater person.

02:00:31:58

Lage:

You had thought you might be a documentary filmmaker.

02:00:31:56

Davis:

That’s right. I had initially thought I might go into documentary film, and I was writing songs. This is an over-determined event. I had an over-determined event in my life, but now it was analytically interesting, so that was a major legacy which didn’t get fulfilled until I got to Princeton.

What is left now, other than my coming here, the two things would be, one: being a woman at Berkeley, including the women studies; and my sense of the department other than being personally welcomed to it, because there are some things to say, that should be said, about the department and its moods and problems in the department. Then I can end the whole thing by telling you about my party, at which the song that I told you about from Smith comes back. So that would be a cluster of things.

02:00:32:53

Lage

That sounds very good, and I have probably a lot of questions about things you might not remember about women on campus.

02:00:32:57

Davis

I read them all on the plane.

02:00:32:59

Lage:

The active women on campus, and people working for change, and the Academic Senate Committee on the Status of Women.

02:00:33:04

Davis:

I’m not sure. I’ll do what I can on that. So when I said, “being a woman,” I meant all of that. And our group, especially Laura [Nader] and Sue [Ervin-Tripp] I particularly remember, and our work, our luncheon meetings, and then the women’s studies program here. And then the department, where some women issues will come in, in regard to the department. So have we got that organized enough for the afternoon?

02:00:33:34

Lage

I think very well.

02:00:33:32

Davis

Do you want to do any of it now, or shall I stop now? Well, my lunch is at twelve-thirty and I want to do some work. I've got a document. It's got some things I really want to look at. So, we've had a good two hours. It's a quarter of eleven now. Let's stop now, and I will come—

[End of Interview]

[Interview #2: June 6, 2003 afternoon session]

[Begin Audio File Davis 3 06-06-03]

03:00:00:01

Lage:

Okay, here we are, resuming the interview with Natalie Davis from this morning. We've now had a break, and you've had time to do some research in the Bancroft. So, we are back and we are going to talk primarily about being a woman at Berkeley, but I wanted to talk first about how you were invited to come back as a tenured professor.

03:00:00:26

Davis:

I had returned to Toronto, and to my surprise got a letter from the department inviting me to—wanting to know if I was interested in being considered for an appointment. Then ultimately they decided to make that appointment. You talked about my being a woman at Berkeley. My question about what to do—questions I asked myself—certainly had a lot to do with that, because my husband was at Toronto in a wonderful position and not as moveable as some men might be with his list of publications and his mathematical creativity, because of the problem that he had with HUAC and this past of being blacklisted. In other words, he couldn't just say, "Oh yes, we will go." We were there in Toronto, we had a home, we had three children in school. At that point, we're now in 19—I guess I must have got the invitation in 1970-'71, because I moved out in December of '71. At that point, it was less common for a wife to make the move, and the husband to somehow negotiate, or work out, or improvise, or follow, or commute. It is more common now. It is still not always easy, but it is more common. We thought about it. My memory of how wonderfully open and creative the months had been in '68, when I was here, was very strong. My work was going in new directions, which I anticipated would be appreciated here. It would be very stimulating, and even though I had now a regular job, a good job with interesting students and colleagues at Toronto; it seemed wonderful.

So, we sat down and talked about it. I remember that night so well. The fire was going in the fireplace in our cold Toronto, and we said, "Let's try it." We said, "Let's try it for five years. The first year, I can take a leave, and then you'll have a leave, and then maybe I can commute some, and we'll see how it goes. We'll try it." I like that formulation, and I've used it with some of my younger friends when they've had choices of this kind. "Well, try it. See if it works. If it doesn't work, stop doing it."

03:00:02:47

Lage:

Had Chandler come out in '68?

03:00:02:51

Davis:

Yes, he had come out after he had finished teaching. The term ends very early in Toronto, so he had already come out by April with our other two children, because I was just out with our son. This time, Aaron, our son, our oldest, was through high school and thinking about college. All three children loved Berkeley. Hannah just had to finish one year. She spent some time in

France, at a school in France. It was only Simone that really had a Berkeley High School time. She was really our Berkeley daughter.

I'm very glad we made the decision that we did. I think we didn't anticipate some of the problems that we had, which we got through. The short-range problems were that you think, "Oh, everything will be fine. Natalie will go out and we'll commute and it will work out." But it was an unusual thing to do, and although it seemed perfectly rational and effective, you do have feelings underneath that are associated with more traditional ways of looking at male/female relations and so on. We were the kind of family with our idealism and our egalitarian beliefs that wouldn't want those feelings to be wide out in the open. I think that they were simmering under the surface. I think it was in a way traumatic—

03:00:04:11

Lage:

You mean on both parts? With you and—?

03:00:04:12

Davis:

Well, I probably felt unconsciously that I was abandoning my family, even though my daughter came with me, and we were commuting. Chan probably felt resentment, "Why did she break up this wonderful home?" He adored that house that we had in Toronto. So, I think—this is nothing that we said to each other at all, but that I think now in advising young people about commuting, even in a different time with different values, I would still say, "You know, you may have underlying feelings about it that you should recognize that they're there." But we worked it out. I think in the long-range, I don't think I would regret this at all for my children, especially my one youngest child. But you know, in retrospect, it was really hard to have a high school kid in Berkeley in those days. It was both wonderful—it was thought of as the vanguard, in some sense, of American life. I think at the time the daughter who was here for one year, and the daughter who did all of her high school work here would have been very reluctant not to be in Berkeley.

03:00:05:21

Lage:

There was so much activity going on, and then the school system was sort of in flux.

03:00:05:29

Davis:

And there were a lot of difficult times. It was both exciting, and new and experimental, but it was costly for the sexual experience of young people. My children didn't happen to get involved in drugs particularly, but some children did. It was the beginning of a really difficult time. We were dear friends with the Bellahs, Bob and Melanie. We're still friends. You may remember their story. While we were here, their oldest child committed suicide. And my daughter and Hannah too, the older one, these were people that they knew. Our families knew each other, and they knew each other. So in some sense the Bellahs lived through our worst fears. But in many ways it was also a wonderful time, and all three children grew from that.

03:00:06:24

Lage:

Did all three children live here then?

03:00:06:22

Davis:

Well, at some point. Aaron had already finished, but he was always in and out, and he spent some time transitioning between high school and college, as they did in those days. Hannah did one year here. I guess she finished up here. She had been in France. She had been in Toronto in high school, then France, and then finished up. Then she went off to France for a time. Simone was the real Berkeley daughter. I wouldn't undo it, but I'm just saying that it was not as trouble-free as—nothing ever is.

The years both intellectually and emotionally were very rewarding. Ultimately, and this gets a little ahead of the game, and maybe I'll come back to why I decided finally to leave toward the end, but it was a wonderful intellectual time, with terrific colleagues and students who I just loved working with, and whom I'm still seeing. I just had lunch with one former student today.

Now, I mentioned before that the department, in an individual way, was extraordinarily, on the whole, very warm and welcoming. A couple of people were not interested in me or my work, either politically or personally, but that's the case everywhere. On the whole, it was a very warm welcome. I felt a couple things about the department. Its quality was quite wonderful. My image of it was of a group of extremely egalitarian aristocrats. Aristocrats maybe is the wrong term, but it's sort of like gentry, of a high level—people who were completely egalitarian, because they had such a sense of being quality and elite. Not snotty. It was not snotty, it was not arrogant. There are universities, I think sometimes Harvard has had a little bit of this tone, of a sense of elitism that's really arrogant. But Berkeley's was a sense of quality—what is the word we use—samurai, like a samurai.

03:00:08:41

Lage:

Were they self-satisfied?

03:00:08:44

Davis:

No, I think, there was a sense of quality that came from feeling that they were men of quality, of good work, that they respected each other. Moreover, I thought it was a sense of brotherhood, which had partly been born and forged during the fights that they had, which I was not privy to, because when I came in '68 the worst fights had been before or after. In the late sixties, early seventies there were struggles, when there was a lot of turmoil on this campus. I don't even know all of the details of who was on which side, although I know that there was some polarization. But they had found ways to talk it through, and it had led to what I would call a strong, and in many ways a very attractive sense of brotherly loyalty, even though some of them still had very strong political grievances—just differences not grievances. Differences, because there were some people on the right and some people on the left. I felt that was something that was part of their past, and that did not prevent me from being warmly welcomed by most of the members of the department.

03:00:10:05

Lage:

Did it make them less friendly to newcomers?

03:00:10:09

Davis:

Here is when I felt it was a problem. When we would sometimes have a disagreement that involved specifically women, I sometimes felt that the way it was being handled really had to do more with this quality, which in many ways was a valuable quality. It is nice to have a department, which even though they had very different views on things, has this sense of respect for each other. But I had felt at the time that it got solidified in a certain style so that when certain new kinds of problems came up—and they were new partly because they had to do with women—they didn't handle them right, that it needed some kind of—. I'm thinking about how we had a similar kind of thing at Princeton later, which was a university style, not a department style, but a university style of one big family, which led—. When Princeton became more diverse, both religiously, color-wise, and women-wise, gender-wise, because all this happened at once, it took some shaking up of those old—in Princeton I would call it family style. Here, I would call it a sense of egalitarian, but elite, brotherhood.

03:00:11:39

Lage:

Brotherhood. And you use the word brotherhood advisedly, I'm sure.

03:00:11:41

Davis:

Well, I do, because it had that kind of quality of real male—it was very attractive, in a way, of male—which, as I say, did not prevent individually a very warm welcome. I think Lynn [Hunt] felt the same way. I was one of the people that was very happy to have Lynn come, and brought her in. It did not prevent an individual warm welcome, but it did mean that certain issues—I don't know whether I should go into these.

03:00:12:01

Lage:

I think you should, but would you also talk about—

03:00:12:06

Davis:

How public is this going to be?

03:00:12:10

Lage:

It can be as public as you want it to be.

03:00:12:13

Davis:

Well, why don't we talk about this and then we can decide what to bracket.

03:00:12:18

Lage:

And we can always take pieces out. Would you also talk about what was it like to walk into a meeting and be the only woman there, and how did you present yourself?

03:00:12:25

Davis:

Well, I was used to that already, from Brown and from some of my time at Toronto before Jill came.

03:00:12:34

Lage:

Did you have a conscious way of presenting yourself?

03:00:12:40

Davis:

By the time I got here it didn't make any difference. The one person in the department who really wished that I weren't there—I remember his saying, "When I hear her walk up the hall, she walks up the hall like my mother." I'm a fast walker [thumps the table rapidly], so when I would be wearing heels or something.

03:00:13:01

Lage:

They weren't used to the sound of heels going down the hall.

03:00:13:02

Davis:

Well, maybe so, but I must have really reminded him of his Jewish mother or something. He is now dead so it doesn't—that's the one person who really objected to my kind of history and my politics.

03:00:13:20

Lage:

Was he an old timer?

03:00:13:22

Davis:

Yes, I don't know what he was so hot about; I didn't really care why he was so angry, and it doesn't make any difference. I don't remember feeling awkward about departmental meetings. It was just very nice, especially Diane Clemens came the year after [1972], and then we got Lynn.

03:00:13:39

Lage:

So, by '74 there were four women. [Paula Fass and Lynn Hunt came in 1974.] But then again, this is a big department, so four women.

03:00:13:43

Davis:

So that was really—

03:00:13:44

Lage:

And only you and Diane had tenure?

03:00:13:45

Davis:

That's right. Well, I immediately stuck up—I got to know Diane, but her work was very far from mine, but Lynn and I became—Tom Laqueur had already come, a wonderful young scholar and friend. I'll be seeing him for dinner tonight. We're still friends. Lynn and I became friends very soon. I always found ways to have girlfriends my whole life, so if I didn't have them in the department, then I had them elsewhere. I had my class. I missed my husband when he wasn't here. I missed family life—I had my daughter, but that I missed. But I somehow, I made women friends, some weren't in the department. Then we had our women's group, which I'm going to tell you about when we talk more about the women and the campus. We were meeting all the time.

I'll give you an example of the issues that came up. We were doing various things on campus to improve the status of women. At one point, a memo came down from the administration, which I felt was given by a bureaucrat who didn't believe in the idea, and that only ill will could have something so badly phrased. Maybe he didn't consciously know it. There had been some concern about sexual harassment on the campus. Usually when administrators do this, unless they are really are very subtle and agree on the policy and are wise, they either use such a policy to get at some faculty member that they don't like for other reasons, or they do it in a way that is just bound to backfire. I remember that this memo came down—not asked by our women's group that I haven't described for you, but I will later. This was not what we had asked for. It said something like this: that students who have any complaints should take them to the authorities. It was inviting complaints in this very public way. It was something that—I said, “This is bound to fail,” and it seemed to be inviting public denunciations, rather than going to talk to an ombudsperson or something of that kind. It was nothing that I think that any faculty woman would have wanted to have for graduate students or for young faculty.

There was a person in our department whom we knew was already in lots of trouble in this regard. This was not targeting him. It was a general thing sent to all departments. But he was behaving very, very badly, and already I felt badly because I felt that this brotherly spirit that I'm describing was covering for him. They thought he was doing the wrong thing, but rather than the chair at that point being a strong father figure, going and saying to him, “You stop that. You stop that.” People were reading the final exams that he refused to read, because the particular girl wouldn't—. I mean it was just appalling. It was not handled in what I thought was—if you ever want to use male authority, be the father, tell the son that this is simply unacceptable. Play with these gender roles. But I felt that that simply—

03:00:17:32

Lage:

Was this discussed formally in a meeting?

03:00:17:31

Davis:

No, no, no. It was all done in this sort of—it was a public secret. It was all done in this way, but people knew about it. But then in the wake of all this came this memo. This particular person feared that he would be denounced in a public way and wrote us all a letter, denouncing the entire policy as an attack. You see there were only a couple of us in the department. I may have been the only woman. Maybe Diane was there, but I don't remember that she was particularly

engaged with this, but Larry Levine and I, we talked about it. The man said that this was just another part of this affirmative-action business, and he didn't like it all, and he would never vote for another woman candidate again until this kind of thing stopped. Well, at that point, I think something was coming up for Lynn.

03:00:18:45

Lage:

Her tenure?

03:00:18:46

Davis:

Maybe her promotion or something like that. I couldn't believe that the brotherliness would support this man. He finally came to the meeting, and I think he just abstained or something. But it was an extremely difficult moment. To me, that was the worst moment of my time here.

03:00:19:06

Lage:

This was a tenure committee situation?

03:00:19:09

Davis:

Well, no, it was the whole department. We were voting on a report. I saved the dossier for a long time, in case there was ever any trouble, and I think I finally threw it away, after about twenty years. You see, it was exactly the moment in which the brotherly solidarity, which had its good points, came into conflict with a new set of rules and a new set of persons. It needed to stretch and it needed other kinds of interactions. It had to do with one of the young women in the department, the appointment or promotion of a young woman in the department. I can't remember now whether it was Paula or Lynn.

03:00:20:14

Lage:

So the sexual harassment policy became intertwined with a personnel issue?

03:00:20:22

Davis:

Yes, a personnel issue that the person felt—. The man who really was behaving impossibly in our department—all over the campus you can find people who behaved impossibly—but he then took this memo, which as I say was an ill-considered memo, and used it to denounce in a really quite—in a letter to all the members—at least all of the senior members, maybe the whole department—the whole policy in regard to women at Berkeley, and us, and then said, “I will not vote, we can not have any fair voting on the appointment or promotion of women, and I will not do so, until the whole thing comes to a stop.” But he did it in a state of panic because of this memo that had been circulated.

03:00:21:05

Lage:

What was the response of the department?

03:00:21:07

Davis:

Well, in terms of the women, that all worked out. We got through it, but it was the example of one ethos, we might say, one way of doing business in the department, which was put to the test, which had lasted through the troubles of the late sixties and early seventies, the exciting troubles, but was put to the test. I left not too long after that. It was late in my six years. I'm sure that things have worked out. They must have. At Princeton, we had to find a new way of doing—we actually changed the constitution because it was a campuswide issue, and it wasn't on the same point, it wasn't a sexual harassment issue—but it was the same kind of issue, and I'm sure that they had to work that out. That would be an important thing to say. That was when it came to a head.

03:00:22:19

Lage:

This really was disturbing. Would something like this make you want to leave Berkeley? Was it that strong?

03:00:22:30

Davis:

I wouldn't have left only because of that, but I felt bad about it at the time. I felt if I were to say—and it is so ungracious to say that, because I was so warmly received, and I had such lovely going away parties, and I had such good friends, but one is not always rational and fair. If I were to say that, I think it would be unfair for me to say, to have felt that way, but I did feel quite bad about it. Even though we got through it, we won, we got the—I just felt that, how can they let this man, how can they want to cover for this man? There's probably some deep, I don't know what. How could they want to do that?

03:00:23:19

Lage:

So you may have felt that he was expressing something for the rest of them as well. That's what I'm hearing.

03:00:23:28

Davis:

I didn't feel that any of the three of us—Diane left, and I didn't really know that distinction of her work. She was an interesting woman. But I did not feel that my work, or that of Lynn and Paula, who were young, was in any sense—I didn't feel insecure in regard to the quality of my work. Or rather to say, any insecurity that I had did not come from that. If I had it, it would be because that maybe this should be better or that should be better. I had very great faith in both Lynn and Paula, and deservedly so. They are just wonderful scholars. Lynn has had a fabulous career and Paula similarly. So, I don't remember feeling insecure, but I felt just a kind of—it wasn't a scholarly insecurity. I just felt a breakdown of loyalty. I wish I could almost recreate that time because—and in terms of—

03:00:24:35

Lage:

Did you feel less a member of the department as a woman?

03:00:24:35

Davis:

I remember on these issues feeling really glad that Larry Levine was there, because when these few times that these things came up, Larry always stuck with the women. Thank God for Larry Levine. Maybe Charlie Sellers too, although he was one of the people who didn't come through that [period of the] late sixties, early seventies. There were similar friends, some came through a little bit embittered, and I think that Charlie was one of the old-timers that had been through too many battles. I don't know if he would even come—maybe he came to the meetings—but Larry was always there as someone who would really give support. It was so subtle. It was so understated, what I'm talking about, but it wasn't really an emotional division in regard to this issue. As I say, we got through it.

03:00:25:35

Lage:

Were there any others besides Larry that you would think of as actually being supportive?

03:00:25:41

Davis:

You mean when push came to shove in regard to this? Well, the others might have been—probably Reggie Zelnik—but it was just really that Larry was the one who was right out there. We weren't just standing alone. There were some votes in all of this in which we were alone. Maybe we had wanted that particular person simply not to be allowed to vote at all. That may have been the symbolic issue, that we felt that he should not vote. If he was going to say ahead of time that he would not vote for any woman candidate, then he was essentially—that may have been how we—

03:00:26:22

Lage:

You need a—

03:00:26:22

Davis:

The disqualifying issue, and they voted us down. Maybe he voted against her, but I think he abstained. I forget how it went on the final vote. That may have been the issue, where I felt disappointed. It is such a long time ago.

03:00:26:40

Lage:

It is a long time ago. It would be nice to sort of track down what the actual happening was.

03:00:26:42

Davis:

Well, I finally threw it away. I can't remember—I had it either under Paula's name or Lynn's name. Maybe it's still there. I'll look. That was, I think, the test. I repeat, that I'm sure that that got worked out.

Shall we talk now about the women's group at Berkeley? On the campus at large, having done this already at Toronto with Jill Conway and others and founded the women's history course there, I was prepared. We immediately went into luncheon meetings here. That was fine.

03:00:27:13

Lage:

Were these meetings that you organized?

03:00:27:18

Davis:

I can't remember. I think maybe it was—some of them did it in a personal way. I'm afraid I can't remember. I'm so sorry. It's so long ago, but we would meet at—what was it called? The union or wherever.

03:00:27:31

Lage:

The student union or the Faculty Club?

03:00:27:27

Davis:

I think that we would meet at the student union. I don't think it was the Faculty Club.

03:00:27:32

Riess:

Was it through the Women's Faculty Club?

03:00:27:38

Davis:

I don't know, maybe it was at the Woman's Faculty Club. But we would just meet, and the ones I met with were Laura—I think May came at first, and Sue, and—

03:00:27:45

Lage:

Give their last names.

03:00:27:45

Davis:

Sue Ervin, Laura Nader.

03:00:27:53

Lage:

May Diaz?

03:00:27:53

Davis:

I'm sure May was at some of them to begin with. Sue Ervin-Tripp will remember the whole group of names. Oh, and the woman who then became the head of Wellesley, who is in political science, who was not properly, she did not have a proper appointment here. She was a very fine political scientist. Her husband was in the political science department. She was somewhat of a lecturer and so on, but was already showing the kinds of skills that led her to become a very fine— I think she was maybe president of Sarah Lawrence or Wellesley. She's still an important college president. Alice—

03:00:28:39

Riess:

Not Ehrlich.

03:00:28:39

Davis:

What was her last name? I have it in my address book in that briefcase there, but Alice something.

03:00:28:48

Riess:

Ilchman.

03:00:28:47

Davis:

Alice Ilchman. She was very much of a presence, even though, as I said, her position was not a tenured position here [assistant professor of education]. She was already thinking very wisely about—Alice was one of our real members. We weren't invited by the administration to meet; we just met to talk about getting more women here, and just the whole scene in our different departments and comparing notes. I may have been one of the people that initiated it because, as I mentioned this morning, I initiated that study at Toronto of the women in the graduate program. There were so few women then on the faculty at Toronto, there was no point in doing much with the faculty at that point.

03:00:29:33

Lage:

And this was going on across the country.

03:00:29:36

Davis:

For sure. We were just doing what many people were doing. And we would meet. Out of that came at least some of the things that led to the women's studies program. I think we maybe had some meetings with the dean.

03:00:29:51

Lage:

Were you involved with something called the League of Academic Women?

03:00:29:55

Davis:

Maybe.

03:00:29:57

Lage:

These names don't really matter.

03:00:30:01

Davis:

I remember mostly the lunches and the discussions and "We've got to do this, we've got to do that." I also remember that a woman in either social psych or sociology did a study of tenure.

Not very many of us were tenured. We were very concerned about this because we didn't like this huge group of juniors who weren't going to be—we wanted them to be really seriously considered for tenure. I was very interested in this study. I was one of the people that she interviewed, and it turned out that almost all of the people in our little group had been to women's colleges. Sue Ervin-Tripp had been to Vassar, I had been to Smith. I forget the others.

03:00:30:42

Lage:

Did they all feel that this was an important—?

03:00:30:48

Davis:

Oh, I think they did. Maybe not for the present generation, but for the generation that we were. Things really have changed over time. To have had those years of being taken completely seriously, I mean not even having to worry about anything, were very important. We thought it was interesting that of the eight or whatever tenured women, that most of them had that background.

03:00:31:39

Lage:

Was someone like Marian Diamond at all active?

03:00:31:43

Davis:

I don't recall that name.

03:00:31:44

Lage:

Here are some names. I have Elizabeth Scott.

03:00:31:47

Davis:

I think she was certainly someone we knew, if she didn't necessarily come to the lunch. She was definitely a person who—

03:00:31:51

Lage:

Arlie Hochschild.

03:00:31:51

Davis:

Well, Arlie came later and was definitely, totally engaged, and was a wonderful, wonderful addition, totally wonderful.

03:00:32:03

Lage:

But you don't remember Marian Diamond getting involved in it?

03:00:32:05

Davis:

Well, maybe she was, maybe my memory—

03:00:32:06

Lage:

Well, I'm just thinking that some of the women weren't so concerned with the groups, with social action to make changes. I don't know if she was one.

03:00:32:19

Davis:

I just don't remember.

03:00:32:26

Lage:

You were also on the Academic Senate Committee on the Status of Women.

03:00:32:26

Davis:

And we did a report.

03:00:32:31

Lage:

It sounds as if that committee, which later became the Committee on the Status of Women and Ethnic Minorities, which seems—

03:00:32:39

Davis:

And it grew out of it, I remember—I just don't remember the details. I'm so sorry I'm not a good interviewee.

03:00:32:48

Lage:

It sounds like one of the roles of the committee members was to actually try to work with departments on campus, to get them to initiate more affirmative action in hiring.

03:00:33:00

Davis:

I do remember that I—and I remember the report and thinking about the report, but I can't remember the details. I certainly was deeply engaged in doing this in [the Department of] History, and we did get, at least we got some.

03:00:33:12

Lage:

Tell me what you would do in history to try to get more women?

03:00:33:13

Davis:

Well, just be on the hiring committee and find good people. Well, just have my eyes open and notice these [women] were out there and they were good.

03:00:33:25

Lage:

Did you make contacts with colleagues on other campuses?

03:00:33:30

Davis:

To generate—? I can't remember. [pauses to remember] I don't think so. I don't think that I necessarily did this. I mean later on I might do this, and I certainly did this at Princeton, but the main thing at Berkeley would be to just be very attentive to the people that came in. To be fair, my department was much more advanced than that Toronto department that I had left. A Toronto colleague began to phone me and ask, "What are we going to do? He wanted to get more women. Here they would put me on hiring committees.

03:00:34:09

Lage:

Here?

03:00:34:12

Davis:

Here. I was on the graduate admissions committee, I think partly because they thought I could make good judgments, but they also wanted me to be there as a woman to do this.

03:00:34:23

Lage:

Well, they were under pressure, too. If you remember the HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] was surveying this campus, and actually there was a lawsuit.

03:00:34:31

Davis:

There was? Was there really?

03:00:34:35

Lage:

So I think the campus was under tremendous pressure.

03:00:34:38

Davis:

But I didn't feel from my colleagues that—I didn't feel that. What I've seen in some departments such as my husband's mathematics department, which finally has a few women in Toronto, I didn't feel here that the history department consciously and actively did not want women. Just as when I repeat those examples of that tension that finally came to a head in the department, that other people were consciously—

[Discussion interrupted by library loud speaker]

So, I did not feel ill will in the history department in this regard. I think that there were some individuals that wouldn't particularly rise to this, and you would have to really work hard to convince them. But with others, I think it was just that they hadn't—I mean Bill Bouwsma invited me, and I'm a woman. I think with others it was a question of lack of imagination or outreach. Dick Herr had women students and had a wife that was interested in scholarship. He

was a supporter of good women. Larry Levine, I think Leon Litwack on the American side. I'm sure Dick Herr must have been very enthusiastic about Lynn Hunt coming. I'm just sure of that. And Reggie Zelnik as well. So it was more a question of inertia or lack of imagination, not, I don't feel, outward hostility, "No, we don't want to have any women."

03:00:36:33

Lage:

The question of quality is always brought up, that they first wanted women, but it was difficult to find women who were of the quality that the department was accustomed to.

03:00:36:44

Davis:

Well, they may have said that but we found them.

03:00:36:48

Lage:

What did you think of that argument?

03:00:36:48

Davis:

Well, whenever I hear this, I think, "Well, you just aren't looking, or you are just confusing quality with a certain style." I never take that seriously at all. I always felt that you can get around that, that that is not a serious excuse. Maybe people believe that, but it isn't serious.

03:00:37:08

Lage:

You mention style. Do women historians bring a different style to the—?

03:00:37:22

Davis:

Well, their topics can range. We all did a very—that is, the four of us: Diane, Paula, Natalie, and Lynn, that first group—we had a very different kind of interest. Diane was doing a rather traditional, very good, diplomatic history. Lynn was doing, when she first started, first very excellent social history with a somewhat quantitative base. I was actually moving from social to cultural history, which Lynn finally did too. Paula was working on education and psychoanalytic kind of questions. So, in terms of topic—I found this also in a paper I actually wrote when I was here on women historians. Did I write it here? No, I wrote it in Toronto and I gave it here. I gave it here in the Bancroft. It was one of the first papers I gave here, on women as historical writers, from the old days. I went back to the Middle Ages. I did this Christine de Pizan that I was telling you about, that I had done in my graduate student days, and went through some women who wrote historical books in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. And I made the same point there that I'm making to you that the range in topic and style is really quite considerable. There's not a women's topic. But I did notice with them, and I notice it with the four of us and other women I've known, that there's usually a point in which a woman historian stops and says, "There's something special about my being a woman historian, irrespective of the kind of history that—." There's usually a moment in which they reflect, a kind of a real reflexivity and self-consciousness about it that you wouldn't necessarily expect. All of us have done that. Secondly, and I've noticed this despite enormous differences in personality, that there is a conversational

style that some men have as well. Bob Brentano had a very wonderful conversational style, thinking of this, where you find ways to work things out.

03:00:39:19

Lage:

Intellectually, you mean?

03:00:39:23

Davis:

No, just emotionally. If there is a conflict or something. I don't mean that women don't fight. They fight as much as men. But, there's less fussing about honor, at least in our culture. I'm not talking about any essential traits that all women have in all time, but just American styles. I think it is not an accident that [Robin] Lakoff is here. She did the study on "She says, He says," and Sue Ervin was interested—or Sue Ervin-Tripp as she later became known—were interested in gender and women's speech. That happened at Berkeley when we were here in that first period. It hadn't occurred to me, but it is no accident that it happened just at the time that women were being part of the academic dialogue.

03:00:40:13

Lage:

And kind of self-consciously.

03:00:40:15

Davis:

Yes, and it was happening, I think, on this campus. The milieu was stimulating. So I'm sorry that I can't recall all the details about that senate committee or even about the founding of women's studies. I do know, in regard to women's studies, that I did feel as I did later at Princeton and earlier at Toronto, that A) there was a role for the more women's center-activist side, that there was a role. But, that B) it really should be distinct from the courses, which didn't mean that I was not wanting to associate myself with feminism in its many varieties, but that I really felt that the courses should be very good academic courses. The topic is so terrific, women and gender. There are so many interesting and challenging things that have come up from the beginning and over the decades. I mentioned that I had been lecturing about that recently. And that there were some issues in regard to women's studies here that are perhaps echoed in the Gloria Bowles' article⁶, which I haven't had time to read. I would certainly have wanted to have good relations with that center, but I did want to have really good people teaching in the courses. I really did care about that part of it.

03:00:41:45

Lage:

Did you think it was important to have a department of women's studies, or would you have liked to have seen every department incorporate it?

⁶ Gloria Bowles, "A Quiet Struggle: Women's Studies at Berkeley," *Chronicle of the University of California: A Journal of University History*, 5, Spring 2002, pp.69-82.

03:00:41:53

Davis:

Well, I don't remember the issue here, because I had to think so hard about it at Princeton. I preferred—I wouldn't say adamantly in all cases, but for Princeton—I really preferred a program, a well-supported program with a nice office and good secretarial support, but with students still taking their degrees in departments with a joint—I forget what they call it, an emphasis; there's another technical term—in a program. Women's studies, they could do it for African American studies. I liked the mix between the disciplinary base and a women's studies emphasis, where you could do your senior thesis on women's studies, but you also had to pass by the history department. I like that particular way. I think it is creative, I think it helps bring the topic back into the departments, as well as allow the student to be in between the two. I know this is a very controversial issue, and on some campuses perhaps that isn't the best solution. I probably would have preferred that for Berkeley—a strongly supported program, but with very close links to departments.

03:00:43:11

Lage:

Has the women's studies program, as you've seen it work out on various campuses, usually gotten embroiled the politics, in the feminist politics, as well?

03:00:43:24

Davis:

Some places it has in a way that has been quite doctrinaire and some places not. At Princeton, it's just really worked out very, very well. I don't know the state of things here right now. It's been a long time. At Princeton, we managed to keep the program open—and I just was there lecturing for the twentieth anniversary—considerable flexibility and quite a range of views. In some places, the cultural studies people have expelled the Marxists, and in some places this kind of feminist expel that kind, and queer studies has gotten in fights with these people. So in some places it hasn't. I think it's essential that there *not* be that doctrinaire position, or else the whole field is going to flounder.

Now, I have this urge to tell you about my departure, just as a sense of closure, even though we can come back and do other things.

03:00:44:23

Lage:

You can do that, but I hope we have time—

03:00:44:25

Davis:

Before we have to leave, can you tell me five minutes before, so I—?

03:00:44:33

Lage:

Oh, we'll definitely have to.

03:00:44:33

Davis:

Because I'm happy to stay on after the library closes, if we can get ourselves out of here.

03:00:44:37

Lage:

We have twenty minutes before it closes, but I think we can get ourselves out.

03:00:44:45

Davis:

I'm sorry that I had so many things that I've forgotten.

03:00:44:43

Lage:

Well, I would expect that you would, especially having left so long ago.

03:00:44:49

Davis:

Well, and being so deeply involved in the Princeton [department], and then when I got to Toronto, after I retired, they put me on the committee to rethink the institute for the study of women at Toronto, so I was doing it all over again.

03:00:45:01

Lage:

I want to ask you about teaching and mentoring to women. I've always heard that you were a sort of a—people flocked to you, especially the women.

03:00:45:13

Davis:

Well, I had male graduate students as well as women graduate students, but I always tried, while keeping some distinction—I never wanted to “let's just all be equal together.” I always respected them a great deal, but I didn't want to take the path of “we're all buddies together.” But I always, maybe because of being a mother—I always felt that that was a big advantage, that I remembered about what it is to be a human being, being human myself, that I always did with both younger colleagues and with my graduate students, and an occasional undergraduate that I got to know well—I tried to take seriously the choices that they might have to face, and to help give them some perspective on that. I never felt that I didn't want to go beyond my role, but if I saw that somebody was really having a difficulty that wasn't strictly narrowly academic, I didn't feel shy about saying, “It looks to me as though you've got a problem.” Though without being interested in being a therapist, I was certainly willing to help people think about decisions—marriage and jobs, and how do you put that kind of thing together.

I certainly, when Paula and Lynn came—I also welcomed Tom Laqueur with the same warmth. I liked him very much. But I saw Lynn and Paula right away, and we would have lunch together. It was just wonderful to have them. It was a pleasure for me. It wasn't just doing my duty. As I say, I had these friends in other departments and then I had my women's coffee clatch after my class, which maybe sometimes had mentoring features, because we would inevitably stray from thinking about the topics in the course, to thinking about life choices, since it was a course about women and family.

03:00:47:25

Lage:

This is with your undergraduate students?

03:00:47:25

Davis:

This is with the undergraduate course. There too, there was a kind of possibility of getting support as well as having an intellectual exchange with them. I looked at it, very much, I repeat, as a pleasure for me, because so often these were interesting people.

03:00:47:48

Lage:

Did the students seem any different here to you from your previous experience in Toronto or later at Princeton?

03:00:48:00

Davis:

Well, the undergraduates were very different. The graduate students were the same really. They were fine. They were wonderful here, wonderful students at Princeton.

03:00:48:14

Lage:

How were the undergraduates different?

03:00:48:16

Davis:

The undergraduates were different in that here they were from much more diverse class situations. In a way they had seen more of the class world and the social world, but they were really California kids. Whereas at Princeton, though there were fellowship students, and by the time I got there, some effort at diversity because, as I mentioned earlier, the coming and bringing in of the women, was also trying to open up the campus to non-Protestants—there were few always before, but more freely—to non-Protestants and to blacks and so on. So there was some diversity among that student body, but they were really mostly, fairly elite families. Whereas the Berkeley kids were much more streetwise and savvy, the Princeton kids had traveled all over the world. In some sense each group knew more than the other group in very different ways.

03:00:49:26

Lage:

Which were more fun to teach?

03:00:49:28

Davis:

Well, they were both fun to teach. The one nice thing about Princeton was that the classes were small, and there were always what we called precepts or seminars. I didn't have to go meet over at the coffee shop in order to have a seminar, which I loved doing that. But the classes were much smaller and every student had a senior thesis, and every student had a junior paper. They pay a fortune to go there. [Library PA system announces the closing of the library]

03:00:50:06

Riess:

[to Lage] You know we'll have a hard time getting out downstairs.

03:00:50:08

Lage:

Oh, that's right, we should finish by five then.

03:00:50:12

Riess:

I think we should, yes, so if you want Natalie to talk about her farewell.

03:00:50:15

Lage:

Right. Did we finish that thought or did we get—?

03:00:50:23

Davis:

I think that that's—

03:00:50:24

Lage:

Okay, before farewell, I have one more question. Many people in this series on the history department have talked about the social life in the history of the department, after hours, with faculty getting together, with usually the women preparing the food and giving dinner parties.[laughter] How did being the only woman faculty member—?

03:00:50:47

Davis:

Well, that was a little hard for me when Chandler wasn't here especially. I think it was hard for me to be alone especially when my daughter left, in terms of my deciding to leave. I really felt lonesome. There were wonderful parties. Beverly Bouwsma's parties were just fabulous. I think of her among the great party givers. We had such a good time. The food was so good. I sometimes gave nice parties when Chandler was here.

03:00:51:16

Lage:

I'm thinking of the gender role though. I have the picture of the women preparing all of the food, and here you are bridging the faculty and the women.

03:00:51:27

Davis:

Well, I didn't mind. When Chan was here, we always cooked together. I think that there may have been some. Didn't the Zelniks cook together? I forget. The thing is that I don't really have a memory of this. I don't normally have a memory on this. I don't mind being a scholar and a cook both, especially since my husband, if he were there, would always help me. I loved to cook and he loves to cook. We have kitchen wars sometimes, but I think the hard part for me—. I don't remember minding that, and I didn't feel uncomfortable. I always liked the wives a lot. Dick Webster's wife, who later divorced him and married Ira Lapidus, was a poet. I loved to talk to her. And Beverly Bouwsma, who is not a scholar, but a very intelligent, well-read woman. Oh, I always enjoyed talking to both. I did feel really some poignancy when my friend Melanie Bellah said in one of her memoirs, that when I would come to their place, she would be irritated because I would go and talk with her husband. I talked with her *a lot*. But I didn't feel myself abandoning the women. It so happens that her husband's work at that point was *so* close to my own that we

really liked to talk to each other, but I didn't think of that like a gender thing. So, maybe people did look at me that way.

03:00:52:54

Lage:

Maybe they were looking through the gender lens.

03:00:52:56

Davis:

They may have. Many of the wives I just loved. What was hard for me was being—when my husband, the years when he was back in Toronto and we were commuting every few weeks, it was hard for me. One of the reasons that I left, the main reason I left, was that I was lonesome. My daughter went off. My husband wasn't getting a job on the West Coast. I kept wanting to press him. I said, "You know the period is over, you should get one." But it wasn't working out. It was getting so complicated to see him, and I just didn't like to see what it was doing to our—it was attenuating our relationship much too much. So when Princeton, who had been calling me anyway—I had turned down Michigan already, earlier, because I didn't want to leave, I just got here—but Princeton had been calling and then finally after one weekend, when I had to go to all of these different places to meet my husband in Saint Louis, not even in Toronto, I called Princeton back and I said, "Well, now this time if you ask, I'll come. I just can't swing this anymore." I didn't even ask my husband, because I figured—he loved being here, but he wasn't here that much. He adored Berkeley. I was just too lonesome. My mother had died, and it was too lonesome. It was very sad to leave, because I adored it here, but I really felt it was important for my life and my marriage to be closer to Chan, and he wasn't coming out here, and I didn't want to keep putting pressure on him, and feeling "Oh, he's not coming out. He's not getting a job out here."

So that's what I did, but what I wanted to tell you about—. I had, now, first a gorgeous party at Beverly and Bill Bouwsma's. It was so lovely. Oh, they were so dear. Then we had a formal party, which was at the woman's union [Women's Faculty Club]. It looked as though it was going to be totally formal; it was this beautiful room.

03:00:55:00

Lage:

Now, who was involved in this?

03:00:54:59

Davis:

My graduate students organized it. David Kessler downstairs remembers it. He said, "I remember that party," and I said, "I'm going to tell Ann about it." I was there, and they had flowers, and there was a big presentation and Jan Dagler [?], and I think [Gretchen ____?] who's passed away now, was a medievalist—various, a lot of students, Kathleen Casey, Alison Claremont [?], they were all involved. We were sitting there, very polite, and all of the sudden the graduate students, some of whom had disappeared, came in, there were a lot of people there, and they put on a *charivari*. One of my most important papers, carnivalesque paper, was about *charivaris*, which are noisy mass demonstrations with people saying, "*charivari, charivari*." They did a wild dance, and they had made this doll of me which I still have, with a face like me, dressed like a Smith girl, which Gene Brucker's wife made, because Gene Brucker's wife Marion was in my

class, as I mentioned, at Smith, or my cohort. Oh, it was just wild! My children were there. My son was definitely there, I think my daughters were there, but certainly my son was there. When you do a *charivari* to get out of it, you have to do a forfeit. So, they said, “Forfeit!” All of my feminist students were there. Oh, this wonderful woman who teaches at Davis. Oh dear. All of my feminist—because now I had graduate students.

03:00:56:38

Lage:

Ruth Rosen? Was she with you?

03:00:56:35

Davis:

Ruth Rosen was there, and, oh, my friend who teaches at, whose first husband was a sociologist, who teaches at UCLA. She was there. I had worked with both of them. I just can’t think of the second one’s name and I’m now going so fast. They were all there. “Forfeit, forfeit!” And my son, who is himself a performer and a musician, and so forth, said, “Sing them ‘You Can’t Get a Man with Your Brains.’” The song that I sang a part of.

03:00:57:15

Lage:

So, tell that again, since that’s not on the video.

03:00:57:15

Davis:

I wrote, when I was in my junior year at Smith, not long before I met and eloped with my husband who was a graduate student at Harvard, I wrote a song to the tune of “You Can’t Get a Man with Your Gun,” “You Can’t Get a Man with Your Brains.” It was a very funny song. Well, it is a very funny song.

03:00:57:39

Lage:

You can give us a verse.

03:00:57:44

Davis:

[She sings] You’re sharp as a biscuit, hmm, you’re a dean’s list Sophia Smith, but when a man wants a kiss, kid, he doesn’t want a quiz kid. Oh, you can’t get a man with your brains. You may have a cranium that understands uranium, a home with a cyclotron, but a man after hours, wants anatomic powers, oh you can’t—and so on. [Stops singing]. It was really—

03:00:58:07

Lage:

Your feminist students must have loved that.

03:00:58:09

Davis:

Well, I sang this song. It was so embarrassing. Ruth Rosen and this wonderful other student who were the two particular ones who I had worked with on the graduate level—came up and they gave me a big hug afterwards. It was really spectacular, that party. They were a little mad at me

for leaving, because some of them hadn't finished their theses. So the *charivari* had a little bit of a bite to it.

03:00:58:42

Lage:

And *charivaris* do.

03:00:58:43

Davis:

That's the idea of a *charivari*. The person has in some sense offended against community mores by letting his wife beat him. That was the way it was in the old days, or a gross mismatch, or some violation of community mores, and then you get back at them. So, it was just fabulous. It was the most wonderful party, and then I thought my son had thought of such a good way—it was such a good forfeit.

03:00:59:08

Lage:

Was he surprised by it, or did he know it was going to happen?

03:00:59:10

Davis:

I don't think he knew it was going to happen. I don't know. Maybe he knew, but he was so right on about what would be the embarrassing to do. [laughter]

03:00:59:24

Lage:

You've said the Berkeley years were transformative. Can you say how they affected you?

03:00:59:33

Davis:

Well, in terms of my trying—and it was good that I was on my own for a while, even though I got very lonesome at the end—that I had my own space as a scholar, because when I was at Toronto, my husband was always the main one, and he was so engaged, this that and the other thing, politically or what have you. And here I had my space, and I had my life to work out. So that was one thing. The second thing was all this interdisciplinary connection and the welcoming to the new perspectives, whether it was gender studies or my initial interest—I didn't do the film until I got to Princeton—but the support for my interest in anthropology and the things I wrote here. I just felt all of these wonderful friends that I made, who I'm still in touch with all the time. I felt that it was transformative. I changed from being a social historian doing some pioneering work—that work on the trade unions and on the Reformation, that was good work. But then I became somebody who was doing several different kinds of things and I expanded. That was very much associated with the open spaces of Berkeley.

03:01:00:51

Lage:

I think that is a very good way to end, and we might even leave before they throw us out of here.

[End of Interview]