

Oral History Center  
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University of California  
Berkeley, California

Susan Sandler

*Susan Sandler: The Sandler Family and Philanthropy*

The Marion and Herbert Sandler Oral History Project

Interview conducted by  
Martin Meeker  
in 2017

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Susan Sandler

Photo courtesy of the Sandler Foundation

**Susan Sandler** is a Trustee of the Sandler Foundation where she leads funding related to education policy and other areas. The daughter of Herb and Marion Sandler, Susan Sandler earned a BA from Stanford and Masters of Social Work from San Francisco State University. Prior to joining the foundation in 2008, Sandler's career focused on advancing educational equity as an organizational leader, policy advocate, professional development provider, school therapist, teacher and activist. Sandler previously served as President of Justice Matters, an education reform and leadership development organization based in Oakland, CA. In this interview, Susan Sandler discusses the following topics: family background and upbringing in Lafayette, California; education and the development of a social conscience; her burgeoning interest and professional commitment to social justice; and the work and philosophy of the Sandler Foundation.

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## **Project History: the Marion and Herb Sandler Oral History Project**

Herb Sandler and Marion Osher Sandler formed one of the most remarkable partnerships in the histories of American business and philanthropy—and, if their friends and associates would have a say in things, in the living memory of marriage writ large. This oral history project documents the lives of Herb and Marion Sandler through their shared pursuits in raising a family, serving as co-CEOs for the savings and loan Golden West Financial, and establishing a remarkably influential philanthropy in the Sandler Foundation. This project consists of eighteen unique oral history interviews, at the center of which is a 24-hour life history interview with Herb Sandler.

Marion Osher Sandler was born October 17, 1930, in Biddeford, Maine, to Samuel and Leah Osher. She was the youngest of five children; all of her siblings were brothers and all went on to distinguished careers in medicine and business. She attended Wellesley as an undergraduate where she was elected into Phi Beta Kappa. Her first postgraduate job was as an assistant buyer with Bloomingdale's in Manhattan, but she left in pursuit of more lofty goals. She took a job on Wall Street, in the process becoming only the second woman on Wall Street to hold a non-clerical position. She started with Dominick & Dominick in its executive training program and then moved to Oppenheimer and Company where she worked as a highly respected analyst. While building an impressive career on Wall Street, she earned her MBA at New York University.

Herb Sandler was born on November 16, 1931 in New York City. He was the second of two children and remained very close to his brother, Leonard, throughout his life. He grew up in subsidized housing in Manhattan's Lower East Side neighborhood of Two Bridges. Both his father and brother were attorneys (and both were judges too), so after graduating from City College, he went for his law degree at Columbia. He practiced law both in private practice and for the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor where he worked on organized crime cases. While still living with his parents at Knickerbocker Village, he engaged in community development work with the local settlement house network, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council. At Two Bridges he was exposed to the work of Episcopal Bishop Bill Wendt, who inspired his burgeoning commitment to social justice.

Given their long and successful careers in business, philanthropy, and marriage, Herb and Marion's story of how they met has taken on somewhat mythic proportions. Many people interviewed for this project tell the story. Even if the facts don't all align in these stories, one central feature is shared by all: Marion was a force of nature, self-confident, smart, and, in Herb's words, "sweet, without pretensions." Herb, however, always thought of himself as unremarkable, just one of the guys. So when he first met Marion, he wasn't prepared for this special woman to be actually interested in dating him. The courtship happened reasonably quickly despite some personal issues that needed to be addressed (which Herb discusses in his interview) and introducing one another to their respective families (but, as Herb notes, not to seek approval!).

Within a few years of marriage, Marion was bumping up against the glass ceiling on Wall Street, recognizing that she would not be making partner status any time soon. While working as an analyst, however, she learned that great opportunity for profit existed in the savings and loan sector, which was filled with bloat and inefficiency as well as lack of financial sophistication and incompetence among the executives. They decided to find an investment opportunity in California and, with the help of Marion's brothers (especially Barney), purchased a tiny two-branch thrift in Oakland, California: Golden West Savings and Loan.

Golden West—which later operated under the retail brand of World Savings—grew by leaps and bounds, in part through acquisition of many regional thrifts and in part through astute research leading to organic expansion into new geographic areas. The remarkable history of Golden West is revealed in great detail in many of the interviews in this project, but most particularly in the interviews with Herb Sandler, Steve Daetz, Russ Kettell, and Mike Roster, all of whom worked at the institution. The savings and loan was marked by key attributes during the forty-three years in which it was run by the Sandlers. Perhaps most important among these is the fact that over that period of time the company was profitable all but two years. This is even more remarkable when considering just how volatile banking was in that era, for there were liquidity crises, deregulation schemes, skyrocketing interest rates, financial recessions, housing recessions, and the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s, in which the entire sector was nearly obliterated through risky or foolish decisions made by Congress, regulators, and managements. Through all of this, however, Golden West delivered consistent returns to their investors. Indeed, the average annual growth in earnings per share over 40 years was 19 percent, a figure that made Golden West second only to Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, and the second best record in American corporate history.

Golden West is also remembered for making loans to communities that had been subject to racially and economically restrictive redlining practices. Thus, the Sandlers played a role in opening up the dream of home ownership to more Americans. In the offices too, Herb and Marion made a point of opening positions to women, such as branch manager and loan officer, previously held only by men. And, by the mid-1990s, Golden West began appointing more women and people of color to its board of directors, which already was presided over by Marion Sandler, one of the longest-serving female CEOs of a major company in American history. The Sandlers sold Golden West to Wachovia in 2006. The interviews tell the story of the sale, but at least one major reason for the decision was the fact that the Sandlers were spending a greater percentage of their time in philanthropic work.

One of the first real forays by the Sandlers into philanthropic work came in the wake of the passing of Herb's brother Leonard in 1988. Herb recalls his brother with great respect and fondness and the historical record shows him to be a just and principled attorney and jurist. Leonard was dedicated to human rights, so after his passing, the Sandlers created a fellowship in his honor at Human Rights Watch. After this, the Sandlers giving grew rapidly in their areas of greatest interest: human rights, civil rights, and medical research. They stepped up to become major donors to Human Rights Watch and, after the arrival of Anthony Romero in 2001, to the American Civil Liberties Union.

The Sandler's sponsorship of medical research demonstrates their unique, creative, entrepreneurial, and sometimes controversial approach to philanthropic work. With the American Asthma Foundation, which they founded, the goal was to disrupt existing research patterns and to interest scientists beyond the narrow confines of pulmonology to investigate the disease and to produce new basic research about it. Check out the interview with Bill Seaman for more on this initiative. The Program for Breakthrough Biomedical Research at the University of California, San Francisco likewise seeks out highly-qualified researchers who are willing to engage in high-risk research projects. The interview with program director Keith Yamamoto highlights the impacts and the future promise of the research supported by the Sandler's. The Sandler Fellows program at UCSF selects recent graduate school graduates of unusual promise and provides them with a great deal of independence to pursue their own research agenda, rather than serve as assistants in established labs. Joe DeRisi was one of the first Sandler Fellows and, in his interview, he describes the remarkable work he has accomplished while at UCSF as a fellow and, now, as faculty member who heads his own esteemed lab.

The list of projects, programs, and agencies either supported or started by the Sandler's runs too long to list here, but at least two are worth mentioning for these endeavors have produced impacts wide and far: the Center for American Progress and ProPublica. The Center for American Progress had its origins in Herb Sandler's recognition that there was a need for a liberal policy think tank that could compete in the marketplace of ideas with groups such as the conservative Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. The Sandler's researched existing groups and met with many well-connected and highly capable individuals until they forged a partnership with John Podesta, who had served as chief of staff under President Bill Clinton. The Center for American Progress has since grown by leaps and bounds and is now recognized for being just what it set out to be.

The same is also true with ProPublica. The Sandler's had noticed the decline of traditional print journalism in the wake of the internet and lamented what this meant for the state of investigative journalism, which typically requires a meaningful investment of time and money. After spending much time doing due diligence—another Sandler hallmark—and meeting with key players, including Paul Steiger of the Wall Street Journal, they took the leap and established a not-for-profit investigative journalism outfit, which they named ProPublica. ProPublica not only has won several Pulitzer Prizes, it has played a critical role in supporting our democratic institutions by holding leaders accountable to the public. Moreover, the Sandler Foundation is now a minority sponsor of the work of ProPublica, meaning that others have recognized the value of this organization and stepped forward to ensure its continued success. Herb Sandler's interview as well as several other interviews describe many of the other initiatives created and/or supported by the foundation, including: the Center for Responsible Lending, Oceana, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Learning Policy Institute, and more.

A few interviewees shared the idea that when it comes to Herb and Marion Sandler there are actually three people involved: Marion Sandler, Herb Sandler, and “Herb and Marion.” The later creation is a kind of mind-meld between the two which was capable of expressing opinions, making decisions, and forging a united front in the ambitious projects that they accomplished. I think this makes great sense because I find it difficult to fathom that two individuals alone could do what they did. Because Marion Sandler passed away in 2012, I was not able to interview her, but I am confident in my belief that a very large part of her survives in Herb’s love of “Herb and Marion,” which he summons when it is time to make important decisions. And let us not forget that in the midst of all of this work they raised two accomplished children, each of whom make important contributions to the foundation and beyond. Moreover, the Sandlers have developed many meaningful friendships (see the interviews with Tom Laqueur and Ronnie Caplane), some of which have spanned the decades.

The eighteen interviews of the Herb and Marion Sandler oral history project, then, are several projects in one. It is a personal, life history of a remarkable woman and her mate and life partner; it is a substantive history of banking and of the fate of the savings and loan institution in the United States; and it is an examination of the current world of high-stakes philanthropy in our country at a time when the desire to do good has never been more needed and the importance of doing that job skillfully never more necessary.

Martin Meeker, Charles B. Faulhaber Director, Oral History Center, UC Berkeley

**List of Interviews of the Marion and Herbert Sandler Oral History Project**

Ronnie Caplane, “Ronnie Caplane: On Friendship with Marion and Herb.”

Steve Daetz, “Steve Daetz: Values and Leadership at Golden West Financial and the Sandler Foundation.”

Joseph DeRisi, “Joe DeRisi: From Sandler Fellow to UCSF Professor of Biochemistry.”

Stephen Hauser, “Stephen Hauser: Establishing the Sandler Neurosciences Center at UCSF.”

Russell Kettell, “Russ Kettell: A Career with Golden West Financial.”

Thomas Laqueur, “Tom Laqueur: On the Meaning of Friendship.”

Bernard Osher, “Barney Osher: On Marion Osher Sandler.”

John Podesta, “John Podesta: Building Infrastructure for Progressive Politics with the Center for American Progress.”

Anthony Romero, “Anthony Romero: Leadership of the American Civil Liberties Union in Times of Crisis.”

Michael Roster, “Michael Roster: Attorney and Golden West Financial General Counsel.”

Kenneth Roth, “Kenneth Roth: Human Rights Watch and Achieving Global Impact.”

Herbert Sandler, “Herbert Sandler: A Life with Marion Osher Sandler in Business and Philanthropy.”

James Sandler, “Jim Sandler: Commitment to the Environment in the Sandler Foundation.”

Susan Sandler, “Susan Sandler: The Sandler Family and Philanthropy.”

William Seaman, “Bill Seaman: The American Asthma Foundation.”

Paul Steiger, “Paul Steiger: Business Reporting and the Creation of ProPublica.”

Richard Tofel, “Richard Tofel: The Creation and Expansion of ProPublica.”

Keith Yamamoto, “Keith Yamamoto: The Sandler Foundation and the Program in Breakthrough Biomedical Research at UCSF.”

## Interview 1: November 1, 2017

01-00:00:00

Meeker: Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2017. This is Martin Meeker interviewing Susan Sandler for the Sandler Family Oral History Project. We are here at Susan's home in San Francisco. It's good to be with you here today. Thank you very much. The way that we begin all of these interviews is you just tell me your name and your date and place of birth.

01-00:00:26

Sandler: My name is Susan Sandler and the date of my birth is September 19, 1964 in Berkeley, California.

01-00:00:40

Meeker: Okay. You grew up in an interesting, remarkable family. It's not every child whose parents together run a company. Perhaps some of your childhood friends' fathers were in similar positions heading up businesses. But I would suspect that not many of them had mothers who were also CEOs of big corporations. Was there a particular point in your childhood that you realized the uniqueness of your parents role and thus of your upbringing?

01-00:01:28

Sandler: Yes. So, first of all, there was a point where I had a big misconception, which is that the headquarters, a building in Oakland, they had bought a piece of land and they were building a building and it was going to be a new headquarters. And so when I was around six I knew that my father was involved in building a building and the picture in my head was that he was on a tractor every day doing something with building this building. And so the point at which I began to notice something more along the lines of what you were suggesting is when I was around twelve, when my parents had bought a big piece of land and developed a large home with very interesting modern architecture and a tennis court. And this was quite different from how my peers were living and that's where I began to realize there's something different about my family, what is it, and start to understand it.

01-00:02:39

Meeker: Were you asking questions of your parents about this?

01-00:02:44

Sandler: I don't remember too much. I remember getting very big reactions from my friends and knowing that it had to do with what my parents did but not really knowing that much about it. And coming to visit them in their office. Clearly it's an office building and everybody worked for them and so on. Yeah.

01-00:03:09

Meeker: What about the unique role of your mother in this as a woman heading up a big company?

01-00:03:18

Sandler:

So one interesting thing about my mother is that she was back at work two weeks after giving birth to me. Now, I sometimes wonder why. In today's time you would want at least six weeks, maybe you would want three months. There's different amounts of time. Why two weeks? And she did say she was going crazy. But I also speculate that it was a time when the expectation was so strong to stay home that she was feeling stifled and she needed to get out of that and make sure that she was going back to work. And a story she liked to tell was a back to school night where we did some kind of drawing or writing about our parents and I wrote about her. "My mother doesn't have to stay home and make beds like the other mommies."

01-00:04:36

Meeker:

What kind of response did that get you at school?

01-00:04:43

Sandler:

I don't remember anything about that.

01-00:04:45

Meeker:

So this is something that you learned about kind of after you had done it because your mom would have told you that story.

01-00:04:50

Sandler:

Yeah, yeah. But I think she was relieved. I think she communicated she was relieved that I wasn't upset about it, that I saw this as a good thing. Yeah.

01-00:05:03

Meeker:

Looking back upon it, is that how you think you felt about it? Was it something that you were proud of at the time?

01-00:05:15

Sandler:

I think I took it for granted.

01-00:05:20

Meeker:

So you said that you were born in Berkeley. Where was the house that you were raised in before moving at age twelve or so to Lafayette?

01-00:05:30

Sandler:

Yeah. So that was a little technical when I said I was born in Berkeley. I was born at the Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley. So we were living in Lafayette.

01-00:05:38

Meeker:

Okay. Oh, so you were living in Lafayette at the time?

01-00:05:41

Sandler:

Yeah.

01-00:05:42

Meeker:

And so your upbringing was in Lafayette, correct?

01-00:05:47

Sandler: Yes.

01-00:05:47

Meeker: What was that like for you? Can you tell me a bit about going to school there and what your friendship circle was like?

01-00:06:01

Sandler: So I went to an elementary school on land that had formerly been a ranch. So we had a lot of chickens walking around. We had two peacocks. It was a small school. It was very homey. I had a very strong sense of belonging. Yeah. I could definitely as an adult say what was wrong with it. It was a happy place to be for me.

01-00:06:50

Meeker: Did you develop a pretty large friendship circle or were you a kid who had kind of one or two best friends?

01-00:06:56

Sandler: It was a very small school. There were times when there were only two girls in the class. So the friendship circle would be two. So those two girls or those three girls would have a lot of fun. But I wouldn't call it a large circle.

01-00:07:22

Meeker: Was this a private school?

01-00:07:23

Sandler: Yes.

01-00:07:25

Meeker: Did you go to private school throughout your upbringing?

01-00:07:25

Sandler: Yes. And so I started in public school. So I started in public school and in first grade, the first parents' conference, my mother sat down with me and said, "I'm going to go and talk to your teachers. Is there anything that would be good for me to raise?" And I said, "Well, sometimes I have to wait in line a long time if I have a question for the teacher. It takes a long time." So the second conference my mom sat down and asked me and said, "How's it going with that?" And I said, "Oh, it's okay, Mommy. I don't ask her questions anymore." Or "I don't have questions anymore." And so then they looked into it and it turned out this teacher was a very, very problematic teacher. And the school wasn't willing to do anything about that teacher. They decided to find another school and that's when I switched to private school. And then I did stay in private school.

01-00:08:37

Meeker: What was the name of the school?

01-00:08:40

Sandler: Seven Hills.

01-00:08:41

Meeker: Seven Hills. And did that go through high school?

01-00:08:44

Sandler: Did I stay in private school through high school?

01-00:08:46

Meeker: That Seven Hills? Or was Seven Hills a—

01-00:08:47

Sandler: No. I guess one general point I wanted to make was my parents' strong commitment in the context of running their company [laughter] to parenting, like really being a big priority. So I had a very difficult transition leaving Seven Hills. I'd become very attached. I don't do transitions well. And my mother really took that seriously because it would be easy to say, "There's nothing we can do. You're in seventh grade now and this school ends after sixth grade." But she really tried to listen to what I was feeling and said, "Well, why don't we try to see if you can find another school." Even though that wasn't really the problem it made me feel heard. She visited a bunch of other schools to see if there was—she went through this process with me. So that is what happened, is that it ended at sixth grade and I went to another school at that time. Yeah.

01-00:10:12

Meeker: What was the next school?

01-00:10:13

Sandler: Head-Royce.

01-00:10:14

Meeker: Head-Royce. Okay. And that was through high school?

01-00:10:19

Sandler: Yes.

01-00:10:20

Meeker: Can you describe that school for me?

01-00:10:26

Sandler: Academic. It was much more rigorous than Seven Hills. Small. Small enough not to sort of get lost in the crowd. I became very involved in drama there. That was a big part of my life. There was a teacher I became very close to. That was a big part of my life.

01-00:11:03

Meeker: Who was the teacher?

01-00:11:05

Sandler: His name was Barry Barankin and he taught drama. So those two things came together for me.

01-00:11:10

Meeker: Did you participate then in school productions?

01-00:11:16

Sandler: I did. Yeah.

01-00:11:17

Meeker: Musicals, as well?

01-00:11:18

Sandler: Yeah. Well, he actually stopped teaching drama after my sophomore year and then other teachers came in and I wasn't necessarily involved in the same way.

01-00:11:31

Meeker: What was your academic aptitude? Were you a pretty good student?

01-00:11:35

Sandler: I was a very good student. Yeah.

01-00:11:37

Meeker: Back to what you were talking about with your mother and really paying attention to how you were feeling and making sure that you ended up in a place that you were comfortable with. What kind of values were being taught to you at home? Was the education around what's right and what's wrong, was that something that they made explicit or was that something that happened more through example, for instance?

01-00:12:12

Sandler: It was not explicit. I somehow seemed to have been born with a concern about poverty, concern about unfairness and people suffering unfairly. I would express that to my father or to my family. But my father responded actually with concern. He was concerned that I was feeling guilty and that that was a very unproductive emotion. And he was also concerned that a generalized desire to make things better in the world actually doesn't translate into making things better in the world. That you have to develop a specialized set of skills to bring value added to make things better. So what he was saying to me, I believe, was not like, "Oh, that's so great that you want—" now, today he feels that I turned out great, right. But back then, as a yet unformed young being, he felt neutral or concerned about it. Or, "If you are going to go in that direction, have an impact and add value," which is absolutely consistent with who he is. There was occasional times of direct transmittal of values. Like my mom would take a friend under her wings, let's say, whose husband had died. And they would point out to me, "This is an important thing that she's doing." So there were some interpersonal things that they would rarely point out. But, in general, there was not direct transmittal of values.

01-00:14:25

Meeker: Did they ever talk about interest in philanthropy or were there organizations that they were supporting that communicated those values?

01-00:14:33

Sandler:

That came from me. So I would say, "I'm really uncomfortable that we have so much money. This isn't right." And they would say, "Well, we can give it away. We have this option. We can give it away." So it was out there in the future as a solution. This is when I was a child. That would be provoked by conversations that I would be raising.

01-00:15:07

Meeker:

When you were saying something like this, where do you think that was coming from? Where do you think that sense of unfairness, awareness of inequality was coming from?

01-00:15:21

Sandler:

I really don't know. I do know that this point when we moved to this really big house, there was some logic in my brain, which is if we have something so much, somebody else must have something too little. There must be some direct correlation here. So I'm really not sure.

01-00:15:58

Meeker:

I asked your father about the role of religion in his life and it's something that he dismisses. He is not a big believer. Was there any moment where formal religion impacted your sense of value?

01-00:16:29

Sandler:

No. I think as an adult I have become more interested. I have joined a synagogue. I really like the spiritual leadership there. But we're talking in my thirties and beyond, right.

01-00:16:48

Meeker:

So as a child there wasn't a regular ritualistic part of your upbringing?

01-00:16:57

Sandler:

We went to Jewish summer camp and that was a meaningful spiritual experience. My brother got bar mitzvah. So I had some exposure here and there. Yeah. Sometimes we went to High Holidays. Yeah.

01-00:17:32

Meeker:

I'm wondering if those experiences worked alongside your burgeoning social consciousness.

01-00:17:42

Sandler:

So for a while we went to Hebrew school at a reform temple, Temple Sinai, in a buildup to my brother getting his bar mitzvah. So we went together. It was a context where I believe that the parents had become much less observant, forced the kids to go. The kids really acted out. It was like very chaotic. It was not my scene at all. And there was this one teacher who was like amazing, right. I remember him teaching about non-violence and aikido is a way to think about non-violence and just like opening my horizons. Right. And more in a sort of spiritual sense going to summer camp. It wasn't values but it was just, I don't know, hard to put your finger on, experience. Yes. I was a sponge

for it when I did have that opportunity. And some of the cultural stuff. To this day I love Israeli folk dancing.

01-00:19:11

Meeker: Were politics ever discussed at the dinner table?

01-00:19:18

Sandler: My poor father. He loves to discuss all of that and I wasn't that interested and my brother wasn't that interested and we gave him little opportunity.

01-00:19:35

Meeker: And your mother? Did she like to talk about that?

01-00:19:41

Sandler: I think my dad was the leader in interest but I think she was perfectly capable of doing it and holding her own and being informed and stuff like that.

01-00:19:59

Meeker: Basically on every background interview I've done, speaking with people like John Podesta and Paul Steiger, very accomplished individuals, each and every one of them talks about their first interview with Marion as maybe the most intimidating and most difficult interview that they ever had to endure. They talk about her as having kind of a laser like incisiveness to asking the right questions and having very high standards. Is that description familiar to you as her daughter?

01-00:20:44

Sandler: What I would say is when I was a child absolutely not. So supportive, so nurturing. I could show you the letters she wrote when I went to summer camp or when I went to college. Just overflowing with love and support and lack of judgment. So I would say it's like a different person. Once I became an adult we might interact with each other in a different context, right, or even a work related context, right. So yeah.

01-00:21:32

Meeker: Can you tell me about that transition, then, from being a child and experiencing warmth to being more kind of an adult on equal footing with your parents?

01-00:21:47

Sandler: Well, I would say one thing that was important was before coming to work at the foundation I spent several years in the workplace, including several years running an organization myself, having a sense of what my skill sets were, having specialized skills, back to my dad's earlier point, a sense of who I was. So going away and coming back was a really important part of working together, I think.

01-00:22:33

Meeker: Can you tell me about your college experience?

01-00:22:34

Sandler:

Sure. Just because we're going in chronological order, I want to say some things about just sort of our home growing up.

01-00:22:42

Meeker:

Okay, please do.

01-00:22:45

Sandler:

That it was very calm and serene. Golden West was not a startup but it was a young, new company that could be like a startup and there's children at home. The atmosphere could have been like long hours, right, a lot of pressure, a lot of fast paced—and it wasn't like that. There was very little going on in on the weekends. There was very little working late at night. What did happen was kept away from us. But that wasn't their belief system. They sort of didn't buy into like you just work these long crazy hours. They said that before we were born they did work those hours but after they didn't. And there was just this sense of serenity. Classical music was on all the time. I don't know. And if you had asked my mother why are things calm, why isn't it rushed, one of the words she used probably most frequently in her life was well-organized. And so she would say it's really important for this to work for it to be well-organized. And I think they used a lot of the tools for running their company for running their home. So there was a binder for the housekeeper. One summer I did the Tuesday and Thursday chores in the binder. So what gets swept on Tuesday, right, and things like that. So she would, I think, say that the organization of the home is part of what kept it calm. And then the other thing I want to say is that it was very child-centered. You can imagine a couple like this having an adult-centered home. And we were playing games. We were singing songs. The dinner table conversation was about our days. I would be, during my day, think about, "Oh, this would be good for dinner table conversation, this thing that just happened to me at school." So they wanted to know about our day. So anyway, that's just a little about what it was like. And then another story I thought about was—there was a point at which—and I should have said this when you were asking about religious education—when my mother got together with some other Jewish parents and created sort of a more secular Jewish educational little school because they weren't satisfied with the local temples. So for, I don't know, two or three years after school, a couple days a week, we would have this school that my mother had organized.

01-00:26:04

Meeker:

What was part of the curriculum of that school?

01-00:26:07

Sandler:

We would be learning a little Hebrew. I remember doing a play of Purim. I was Queen Esther. Stuff like that.

01-00:26:17

Meeker:

I like what you just were describing as far as how your parents ran the household and how it was calm because I've spent a lot of time reading

through annual reports and newspaper accounts of what was happening in the business and there were some really, really tumultuous times given the broader context, particularly in the 1970s when you start to have various liquidity crises and so forth. And it's remarkable that they were able to create a context that that did not seem to intervene.

01-00:26:56

Sandler:

Yeah. I wouldn't be surprised. People would often say that at home my dad was more short-tempered and my mom was nurturing and not short-tempered and at work my dad was sort of this outgoing fun guy and at work—there's things that you heard, right? So I wouldn't be surprised during his period if my dad lost his temper and did so more frequently than if it wasn't such a crazy time. I remember my mom talking about him missing a lot of sleep. So worry was happening. Stress was happening. But in terms of the pace of life, in terms of the activities that were going on, that was different.

01-00:27:52

Meeker:

It sounds to me like they were at home often for dinner.

01-00:27:57

Sandler:

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. And one decision they made from the beginning was for all this to work, the thing that had to go was their social life. So they weren't doing social stuff. They weren't going to miss dinner for some social event.

01-00:28:22

Meeker:

What kind of holidays did your family celebrate?

01-00:28:25

Sandler:

So we had this Christmas tree that was this high. [laughter]

01-00:28:33

Meeker:

A Chanukah bush? [laughter]

01-00:28:35

Sandler:

It was technically a tree. Chanukah. Thanksgiving. That's it.

01-00:28:51

Meeker:

Your parents are also fairly well-known for having a pretty wide circle of friends and interesting people that they liked to be around. Do you interact with these professors and scholars that were coming over to the home at all?

01-00:29:09

Sandler:

Yeah.

01-00:29:10

Meeker:

Yeah. What did you think of that kind of people?

01-00:29:17

Sandler:

I liked them. They were interesting, they were fun, they were progressive.

01-00:29:26

Meeker: Were there any particular regular visitors who you liked to interact with in particular?

01-00:29:31

Sandler: So Tom Laqueur, who continues to be one of my dad's closest friends. He really stands out. He would spend time talking to me and so on. Yeah.

01-00:29:52

Meeker: Did you like have adult conversations with these visitors, these friends?

01-00:30:01

Sandler: I did. Now, my parents had some other friends, a couple called the McKees, and I was just rereading—you know, the anniversary of my mother's birthday was recently and one of the things I did was I read some letters that she had written to me and my brother when we were at camp and it's riddled with, "We went over to the McKees. We went over to the McKees. The McKees—" And so that's another couple that was very important. And they had a really fun house. We used to like to go to their house just because it was a fun place to be. So yeah.

01-00:30:45

Meeker: Well, maybe now's the time to talk about college.

01-00:30:48

Sandler: Sure.

01-00:30:49

Meeker: So where did you decide to go?

01-00:30:52

Sandler: Stanford.

01-00:30:55

Meeker: You had mentioned this conversation you had with your dad about if you want to make an impact then you need to develop this kind of skill set. Is that something you had in mind when you were thinking about what college to go to and perhaps what to study while there?

01-00:31:21

Sandler: I think that I assumed that wherever I went to college I could learn those things. I knew I wanted to do those things. When I was going to graduate school, yes, I was thinking about those things. But not for college. Yeah.

01-00:31:39

Meeker: What did you study at college?

01-00:31:41

Sandler: I actually majored in English literature. But I was an activist and did lots and lots of other stuff. In fact, I was counting up all the various kinds of

volunteering. My niece is getting to the age of thinking about volunteering and the number of things I volunteered in in college was quite numerable.

01-00:32:04

Meeker:

Did you do any of that volunteer work before going to college?

01-00:32:07

Sandler:

I think I did. I'm trying to remember what though. Tutoring was maybe the only thing that I can really remember. Yeah.

01-00:32:28

Meeker:

How did that then expand while you were at Stanford? What other volunteer activities did you do?

01-00:32:34

Sandler:

So maybe it will help me to just start by listing them out. So poverty was definitely the starting point and for me there was this sort of crude logic. If wealth is the thing that my family has, then let me start with poverty and particularly global poverty. So there was a campus organization that focused on that. And actually, really was foundational for my political development because there's an analysis when you get into global poverty about paternalism, right, and USAID, we're just going to do our model of development, which may not work in your country and our equipment, which even the humidity isn't going to work to maintain your equipment. Who gets to decide what is development? Like all of these issues coming up that I got exposed to through that. So that was very important for me to start thinking about.

01-00:33:42

Meeker:

And that era would have been in the Cold War, too, when development was always in that context.

01-00:33:48

Sandler:

Right, right. Let's get back to that because non-violence was a big thing for me. So I played a major role in organizing a campus-wide fast once a day, where all the students turn in their meal cards and then the money goes to these groups in the global south. These groups get to pick what they're going to do with the money and stuff like that. So that was one key organization I was in. I was very interested in non-violence and there actually was a co-op on campus that was focused on non-violence. That was the theme of the co-op. So I ended up living there and being a leader in that co-op and one of the things that the non-violence movement believed was that consensus decision-making was a more non-violent way of making decisions than voting. And I ended up facilitating most of the meetings and teaching a course on consensus decision-making, because Stanford has something where students can do research and teach a course. So that was sort of some things I got to really in-depth. In terms of just outright volunteering, so there was something called Barrio Assistance, which is tutoring kids from East Palo Alto. There was boxing up stuff for the local shelter for homeless people. So I did that. We

were involved in the sanctuary movement and hosted refugees. One of the things that the local Salvadorian refugees wanted was for the women to be able to learn how to drive. So I organized like sort of a driver's ed thing for them. I feel like I'm forgetting a lot of stuff. So there was definitely stuff around homelessness, stuff around—I was part of the rape education project, so we were doing like this educational programming around rape. Just lots and lots. I was a busy bee.

01-00:36:10

Meeker:

It sounds like it. Were your parents aware of this volunteer and activist work that you were pursuing?

01-00:36:18

Sandler:

Yes.

01-00:36:20

Meeker:

Did you ever have a conversation with them about it? What did they think?

01-00:36:23

Sandler:

I don't know what they thought. I think that they felt very good about how I turned out when I was a more fully formed adult. But I don't know what they thought when I was on the way. [laughter] And I think my dad, he tends to worry about things, so he might be like, "Well, is she going to be guilty?" or "Is she going to do this?" and stuff like that. I do feel that we've been a very close family and that when a child in the family develops an interest it brings the parents along. And I remember having a conversation with them about recycling and them saying, "What good is recycling one piece of paper going to do?" And then some years later saying, "The whole company is recycling now," which obviously is going to do a lot more good, right.

01-00:37:38

Meeker:

Right, right. I'm curious. In this period of time in your college and then grad school, as you really start to develop, like you said, into a more fully formed adult and you have the issues that you're most interested in, were you trying to influence your parents, recognizing that they did have some power to move in these different directions?

01-00:38:05

Sandler:

No. I don't think that had occurred to me. Yeah. Yeah. I was just trying to figure out my own path.

01-00:38:20

Meeker:

You had mentioned grad school. Can you tell me about that experience?

01-00:38:23

Sandler:

Yes. Let me think. I don't quite know where to start. Except that I think that I have in my life had conflicts between wanting to have a broader impact and realizing, "You know what? I really like working directly with people," and ultimately what that translated into for me was social work. And there were a lot of things about social work that appealed to me and I decided to get a

master's in social work. So let's go back and talk about the four years before I went to grad school because they have to do a lot with my family. Because when I graduated from college I felt like this is the time to really start to get ready and prepare for being part of a wealthy family. And so one thing I wanted to do was learn more about how the financial world worked so that I would feel comfortable with investments that I had to manage and making decisions about things like socially responsible investing, which would be hard to do if you don't feel comfortable with investing at all and so on. So I wanted to work in a firm where I could get that kind of experience. And the firm I ended up in, not only by coincidence, but at least somewhat by coincidence, was a firm that specialized in the banking and savings and loan industry, called Keefe, Bruyette & Woods. So I actually learned a lot about the savings and loan industry through this job, which really sort of gave me this perspective for understanding what my parents were doing and so on.

01-00:40:30

Meeker:

That firm was a financial consulting firm?

01-00:40:34

Sandler:

It plays many functions. I was in the research department. Companies would consume the research. There'd be a report on a company and it would say, buy, sell, hold, right. And then that company also did mergers and acquisitions but I was not part of that company, that part of the company. Yeah. So I spent a year, even though this is not something I wanted to do at all. So I spent a year working in this company learning about investing. Then when I left I said to my parents, "You've always said that if we wanted to start giving more money away we could. Let's get started now." So they were receptive and we spent time as a family, what are we most interested in. And, again, at that point converged around this issue of poverty. So I then spent some time doing some research around different options related to where we might be giving. And just at one of the points where I might have come up with some recommendations my uncle died. So this was a very big important point in my father's life. And that sort of, from a separate pathway, catalyzed my dad to start becoming more active around philanthropy. So if you were to ask my dad, "When and why did you decide to become active in philanthropy?" he would say, "When my brother died." And then this coincided. In fact, there was an actual meeting where I was going to present some options for giving that we decided to put the butcher paper charts in the suitcases when we traveled to my uncle's memorial and talk about it a little bit, which is just a weird thing about my family, that we would ever do something like that. So we worked through that process. We actually made a grant together, which oddly enough led to my meeting my husband, the grant that we made. We almost hired a staff person. But what became clear to me was my staffing my parents in philanthropy, these two strong people, this made absolutely no sense. And that they were now on a path to becoming more philanthropic and I now needed to pursue a path to my career separate from that, right. So that's like a summary of the four years since I grad—and so then it's like, "Okay, so what do I want

to do? I now know how to be comfortable with investing. My parents are now pursuing a path that they're going to lead on philanthropy. What do I want to do?" And that's when I decided I wanted to get a master's in social work and when I wanted to go to graduate school. And I went to San Francisco State.

01-00:44:32

Meeker:

Tell me about the idea of pursuing social work. It sounds like you were already doing some of this kind of work when you were an undergrad and then I imagine continued with volunteer activities. Did you have a vision of how and where you would plug into the broader system?

01-00:44:51

Sandler:

I was wrestling between the different things I liked to do. I was this English literature major and I really liked to analyze things. And what's the subtext? What does this really mean? I didn't like doing things that were really elitist, right. So is there something where you can help people, other people analyze things, like it's not an elitist way of analyzing things but it's empowering, right. That it would be empowering for people and help them make change. And that came together for me in the ideas of Paolo Freire. I don't know if you're familiar with Paolo Freire.

01-00:45:33

Meeker:

Tell me who he is.

01-00:45:35

Sandler:

So he is a Brazilian educator who wrote. His most famous book is called *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. So he was teaching adults to read in low-income areas in Brazil and they would be bricklayers and he would teach them to read and write the word brick and at the same time they would be talking about who makes the bricks and who profits from the bricks and so they're reading, writing, and understanding sort of workings of what's going on in their society and what they can do about when they're feeling powerful because they're learning to read and write and they're coming together in a group where they could make change in their local community. So I was like, "That's what I want to do." It puts it all together. It puts the analysis together and the empowerment together and the larger change together. And you can potentially do that in social work although you're not teaching, you're maybe doing a support group or something like that. So that was my interest and there were places in the Bay Area that knew how to do that or there were things in the social work program at State that could facilitate that happening. So that was something I was really pursuing.

01-00:47:03

Meeker:

Do you have those kinds of experiences then? Did you partner with those kinds of organizations?

01-00:47:10

Sandler:

I did. When you're in grad school you do internships so I was able to find internships that enabled me to learn and pursue that kind of work.

01-00:47:23

Meeker:

Can you give me some examples of what those—

01-00:47:26

Sandler:

So my first internship was at the Center for Working Life. This was working with the labor movement. And clients were union members. We had contracts with unions. So I was doing mental health work but also with this idea of how do we empower workers and the labor movement at the same time that we're doing this mental health work. So that would be the first one.

01-00:47:54

Meeker:

This seems like a lifelong education that was sometimes experiential, sometimes classroom and formal based. Were you starting to develop a broad overall analysis of what the main problems were and how you as an individual might best address them?

01-00:48:16

Sandler:

So one thing was really getting exposed to issues of racial justice. A couple things came together in my life in that way, in 1990. I already had been doing a lot of research on poverty in the process of my family's thinking about getting started in philanthropy and poverty's of interest and seeing race clearly plays a role here. But then at that point in time San Francisco State had a big commitment to racial justice. So their commitment was 50 percent of the faculty and 50 percent of the students be people of color. And their program was set up so you could attend school at the afternoon and evening and you could work. So it made a much more diverse group of students able to attend. And then another part of their commitment was a year-long sequence you would take called ethnic and cultural concepts and principles of something. That was basically on culture and race. That was a much deeper level of education on those issues. So I was getting this deep exposure to issues around race and then like two months later, shortly after I entered into the program, I met my husband Steve, who, as you've seen, is African American and who is also committed to racial justice issues. Yes. So there was this point in my life where all of this was in the context of racial justice being sort of a framework and an analysis and a driving force for what I was trying to do.

01-00:50:10

Meeker:

Were you getting a sense not that there would be one specific way to ameliorate centuries of injustice but I guess some people, thinking about this, get immobilized because there's so much to do and not a single thing to do at the same time. Were you beginning to develop a sense of what the right path for you to pursue was in response to this?

01-00:50:44

Sandler:

Well, the other thing I would say is that I have a love for education. So one of the first post-graduate experiences I had was there was a particular therapeutic orientation that really was aligned with what I was saying about Paulo Freire's approach and the kind of methodology I wanted and what they would do is they would get contracts with schools and they would place you in schools as

a mental health person in the school and they would train you in this therapeutic methodology. So I was getting to learn more about the workings of schools and deepen my skill set and so forth and because I was having this racial justice framework I was learning sort of how the race dynamics were playing out in schools. So that was very foundational for me and most of my working life since has, in some way or another, been addressing the racial dynamics of schools and what we can do about it. So in that sense I started to narrow further there.

01-00:52:09

Meeker:

About this time, the early nineties that you're discussing, is also the same time that the board of directors of Golden West starts to become much more diverse. Do you remember having conversations with your parents about this? Where was that motivation coming from?

01-00:52:28

Sandler:

I remember they were very proud and pleased about it but I don't know like how the idea germinated. Yeah.

01-00:52:40

Meeker:

Looking back on Golden West, I'm wondering did you get a sense of the success of it and why it was such a successful enterprise?

01-00:53:01

Sandler:

Well, [laughter] yes. Yes. I know what the short list is. I remember sending paragraphs back and forth to my dad in the early phase of working with you of what makes it so successful and it's all the stuff that you have been hearing, right. I don't have anything new. A, it's a very analytical approach and each situation is analyzed without preconceptions on a case-by-case basis. Should we have ATMs? Should we go with this trend that the rest of the industry is doing? Should we make loans to people from poor neighborhoods, right. So the importance of analysis and not just doing what others are doing I think is important. The focus on good execution. Not just the idea but the details, logistics, operations of an idea so that it is well-executed is key. The organizational culture is very important. That is aligned around a goal, aligned around standards, motivated, positive culture, merit based. It's hard when you ask me right off the top. If I were to prepare, I've made the list many times, I know the list. And the analysis goes with the focus. It's not that people love to do the stick to the knitting, right, and that's where the analysis ends up leading, that there is a core business and there's core drivers and you have to understand that in any business and not sort of lose track of that.

01-00:55:27

Meeker:

Looking back on it, do you see it as also a values based organization in addition to a well-run business?

01-00:55:38

Sandler:

I would say my parents are ethical people who really loved running this kind of business, as opposed to some people who are like, "Let's make it easier for

people to be able to own homes," right. So that would be where you would start with we have a value about access to home ownership. Whereas here's some ethical people who really love to run this business.

01-00:56:19

Meeker:

Something also that was talked about in various conversations was the gender dimension at Golden West and maybe the way to get into that conversation is for you to tell me about how you learned about your mother's experience in breaking the glass ceiling on Wall Street and then—

01-00:56:41

Sandler:

Right. Well, one thing I want to say is that people talked about her so much in that way that I think it's important to understand that that was not her goal. Right. She was not taking this up as a cause. She was not doing this on behalf of women and being the first so that other women wouldn't have it as hard, those kinds of things. And we used to have some very direct conversations about that. So I used to ask her, "Are you for women's lib?" And the way I got the phrase women's lib was because I used to read *Mad Magazine* and they had jokes about women's lib. [laughter] That's about all I knew about women's lib. And she would answer, "I'm for Marion's lib." And she was very clear. This was not a cause. She wanted to work in business and there wasn't any fanfare about it. And she was a very driven person. So I just think that that may not be quite understood. And she was fine if somebody said, "Please, will you speak about this? It would be helpful to other women." She would say, "Sure." But that was not what was motivating her. So I think that's important.

01-00:58:24

Meeker:

How do you think that that perspective on personal will and achievement played out in the larger organization?

01-00:58:37

Sandler:

When you say personal will I do think how could she make this happen, how could she pull this off, I think is her drive. And a couple of stories came to mind. Something that was not what other people did, was not what was done, but she wanted to do it and so she just did it and there's no fanfare, there's just doing it, right. And these are stories that have to do with a context of being a child of immigrants who don't know a lot about navigating the society. So when she was a little girl she decided she wanted piano lessons. And my dad probably told you this story.

01-00:59:29

Meeker:

No, I haven't heard this one.

01-00:59:29

Sandler:

Oh, really?

01-00:59:30

Meeker:

Yeah, yeah.

01-00:59:31

Sandler:

She wanted piano lessons. Found a piano teacher, found a way to get to the piano teacher's house, got herself piano lessons. Right. That's just how she was built, right. Then she got older and she really didn't like Biddeford, right. It's a small town and she was not a small town person. So she arranged to go to high school—I can't remember if it was in Portland or if it was another city. She just found a city to go to high school and went to high school there. There's things that she really wanted to do and she just does them and she doesn't make a big deal about it. She just does it.

01-01:00:27

Meeker:

Do you think that that approach then plays out in the business?

01-01:00:33

Sandler:

Yes. Okay, I'm going to tell you one more story, which is when I first went to the foundation my mother was trying to sort of structure a sense of apprenticeship for me, for me to really be learning things. So the first grant came that I was making at the foundation and it was a project grant, which means it had some specific outcomes it needed to achieve. What my mother told me was I had complete and absolute responsibility for achieving these outcome without regard to any interfering external factors, that I had to hold myself completely responsible in every way, in every aspect for these outcomes. So I think that her telling me that would likely be an example of applying that will to running the company. I don't know enough about seeing her in action in the company but that's what I would speculate.

01-01:02:00

Meeker:

Interesting. Well, that maybe is a good segue then to talk more about the foundation work. But I'm curious. You graduated. You got your master's in social work from San Francisco State. Did you enter into the field at that point in time?

01-01:02:18

Sandler:

So I did the post-graduate work, which was working in schools doing mental health work with young people and families but also really understanding racial dynamic of schools, which then led me to start an organization that focused on that. So it was primarily partnering with one school and working on racial dynamics and working with teachers, youth, and families, which then led me to start thinking about the policy implications. So from sort of looking at these issues as they played out on the practice levels in schools to how they played out in policies and that's sort of the work that has continued for me since then.

01-01:03:13

Meeker:

What was the organization called?

01-01:03:14

Sandler:

That first organization was called Project Respect.

- 01-01:03:17  
Meeker: Project Respect. And what year roughly is this?
- 01-01:03:20  
Sandler: Nineteen ninety-four.
- 01-01:03:23  
Meeker: Okay. And does that organization still exist?
- 01-01:03:23  
Sandler: No.
- 01-01:03:25  
Meeker: Okay. But then there was another policy kind of organization that you established, too?
- 01-01:03:31  
Sandler: I didn't establish it but I then went to and started engaging there in policy work and that was Justice Matters.
- 01-01:03:40  
Meeker: Justice Matters, which does still exist.
- 01-01:03:42  
Sandler: It does but it's changed its focus quite a bit.
- 01-01:03:45  
Meeker: Okay. So it's less about education.
- 01-01:03:47  
Sandler: Yeah. But at the Sandler Foundation we have started an education policy think tank, which very much carries on this work.
- 01-01:03:57  
Meeker: That instance, that story about your mother telling you about how you were solely responsible for this, that was a grant that the Sandlers made to the work that you were doing or a grant that you were administering while at the foundation?
- 01-01:04:17  
Sandler: So I came to the foundation to make grants from the foundation. So does that answer your question?
- 01-01:04:29  
Meeker: Yes, it does. Yeah. Who was that grant to? Do you recall?
- 01-01:04:34  
Sandler: I believe it was to the Council of Chief State School Officers.
- 01-01:04:39  
Meeker: Okay. Can you tell me about that experience? Were you able to have them meet the goals that they said they were going to? [laughter]

01-01:04:48

Sandler:

Well, it's really unfair because I met the goals in a crazily successful way that was only so serendipitous, right. That would never, ever happen again.  
[laughter]

01-01:05:00

Meeker:

Well, tell me about that story. I'd love to hear that example.

01-01:05:05

Sandler:

Okay. As you may know, my parents are a fan of collecting a lot of information by talking to a lot of people. I had just made my transition to the foundation. And Obama had just become elected, right, so we're talking early 2009. And they said, "Talk to lots and lots of people and see what the opportunities are." Okay, how do I explain this? So there's a certain kind of way of testing students that's called performance assessment, which is in contrast to multiple choice, fill in the bubbles, what can you memorize, to can you actually simulate real world activities. And it leads to much higher quality teaching. And I want to say that there was \$300 million set aside, but maybe it was two hundred million, of the stimulus package for groups of states to come together and get money for testing that could be better than the kind of testing they had been doing and could maybe even be performance assessment. And somebody had suggested maybe some states would apply and do that for performance assessment. So the grant was designed to inform the states about this opportunity in case they wanted to take advantage of it and also to inform the US Department of Education about the opportunity so that they might encourage or be receptive if states did apply for it. And in the end two groups of states applied and they both heavily emphasized performance assessment and basically got all the money. So basically a \$200,000 grant led to getting \$200 million dollars.

01-01:07:53

Meeker:

So what were the goals then? The goal was you were providing them with seed money to be able to implement these studies and perhaps an alternative way of testing?

01-01:08:04

Sandler:

Yes. So that the states would be doing different kind of testing with students, which would then make them need to be doing different kinds of teaching with students, which would make teaching much more engaging, which would mean that students would be asked to really think and so on. So on the assumption that the kind of test derives the kind of teaching that happens, let's change the test.

01-01:08:36

Meeker:

So 2009, the foundation is involved, and like you said, here's education policy, funding education policy research. There's a great deal of emphasis put on medical research, particularly through UCSF and allergies and asthma. By this point in time CAP had been established, ProPublica had been established. There's so many different initiatives. What was the process early on that you

and your brother and your parents decided you were going to emphasize, what kind of areas you were going to emphasize through the foundations work.

01-01:09:20

Sandler:

It was very informal. It was before 2009. So 2007 was when we sort of officially had staff and an office but I would say there had been probably iterations of figuring this out maybe in 2003, 2004 where we would just brainstorm a list, what issues do you really care about, and we would only consider something on the list if at least two family members had said they really cared about it. And then we would explore it. So it was that simple. And then that leads to something that I wanted to talk about, which is one thing that I think people don't understand well about my mother, is they see her as being very passionate about specific issue areas that we give to. And I think that she's very passionate about impact. And people will say, "Oh, your mother, she cares about young people so much." And I'll say, "Oh, you know, why do you say that?" And it will turn out that they happen to know about a particular grant we made to an organization that relates to young people. Or just recently, "Oh, your mother, she's passionate about investigative journalism." And I know that that was my dad's idea, right. And ProPublica is a really good example because that was something that was my dad, he first thought of and thought there was a need for. And my mom played a supportive role. This is something he really cares about. Let's make it work. But also she had this passion and this drive to really make a difference and she really rolled up her sleeves with ProPublica. And I believe she came up with the name, I'm pretty sure. She wanted it to be a really good name and that is a skill set she has and she, I think, came up with that name. And that's a bit more hands-on than she would usually be. But I would say that she was issue agnostic. But people who touched a particular organization she was part of just project onto her that she cared about that issue when what she really cared—and there would be people—we would get condolence notes. "She cared so much about X or Y." And I know she didn't care. [laughter] Not that she actively didn't care or something but it's just that what she wanted was she wanted these things to change and to do what it would take for them to change.

01-01:12:38

Meeker:

It's interesting you say that because I'm preparing to interview Dick Tofel and Paul Steiger. I was doing a lot of reading about ProPublica. I guess there are different ways of pronouncing it. And Dick Tofel, it seems like one of his main thought tasks has been what is impact, because he recognizes that that is something that is essential for them to do. Impact is not how many people might look at an article or post it to Facebook. It is change happening.

01-01:13:16

Sandler:

Right. That's right, that's right.

01-01:13:18

Meeker:

And it sounds like, at least, this is a value that your mother held.

01-01:13:24

Sandler: Oh, absolutely.

01-01:13:28

Meeker: What kind of change was she looking for, do you think? What kind of impact did she want to have? Because I don't get the sense that it was just change or impact for impact's sake, or change for change sake.

01-01:13:49

Sandler: Say more. Why don't you get that sense?

01-01:13:53

Meeker: Well, change can be lots of things, right. The election of Trump to the presidency represented a big change. It was the triumph of populism on the national political stage. That's one way of looking at it, which is a change beyond established political parties. That's change. But it seems to me that's not a kind of change that your mother would have been interested in. The change that she wanted to inspire, the impact that she wanted to have, was a particular kind.

01-01:14:29

Sandler: Well, I would say she's very pragmatic. Like political parties would seem pretty abstract to her. So that would be one part of the answer to your question. And she didn't talk about this kind of thing a lot. I think her sense of her role and her contribution was to make it better, make it work, and also be a critic of the things that weren't going to work. Right. And I don't know if my dad talked to you about this but she played that role with him, as well.

01-01:15:18

Meeker: How so?

01-01:15:20

Sandler: Well, there was one way that she was very supportive and then there was another way where she was like, "This group is not together. That meeting we had with them raises a lot of questions. I've lost my confidence. I don't think we should be wasting our time with them." And my dad might fall in love with something, right, and so they would balance each other in that way. But she wouldn't be negative to the point where she would try to stop him from doing something he wanted to do. It would just be more like, "Well, this is what I think."

01-01:16:05

Meeker: This is fascinating. I feel like I'm really getting a new sense of insight into the distinctiveness of Herb and Marion because a lot of the stories, they're two sides of the same coin or they shared the same values and each went about it in a slightly different way. But I guess what I'm hearing is that—

01-01:16:32

Sandler: Oh, no. No. No. And the other person to talk to is Steve Daetz. And I think he would say some very similar things. My dad would fall in love with stuff and

my mom would see the negative side. It didn't become some big conflict about it.

01-01:16:59

Meeker:

Well, it also seems like your father tends to approach topics with a great deal of passion. There's almost kind of like an Old Testament prophet in him. Inequality riles him up. But it sounds like what you're describing is that your mother didn't like disagree with or run counter to that but what she was really interested in was that, "That's great. Now, will this approach to changing that work?"

01-01:17:36

Sandler:

That's right. Yeah. That's right, that's right.

01-01:17:40

Meeker:

That's fascinating. I think that we're getting some more contour to these individuals and their lives. I'm curious in these family meetings, two votes to make sure that you would pursue something. What were some of the topics that were brought up that were put in abeyance or decided not to pursue for a period of time?

01-01:18:07

Sandler:

That were what? Put in abeyance?

01-01:18:10

Meeker:

Yeah. Were there topics that were completely rejected or topics that were, "Let's not pursue that right now."

01-01:18:20

Sandler:

Well, first of all, the one that my mother from the beginning articulated as caring about—so there was one that never went too far, which was—child abuse actually was an issue that my mother was able to say at the beginning, "I care about this." Criminal justice was one that we looked into, we tried, and weren't able to find a strategy. There are different things related to voting. Some we still sometimes consider but others didn't work out so well. We tried for a while. Let's see, what am I thinking about? One that's been of interest but hard to find and we may be making some headway is campaign finance reform. So I don't know if I should count that one because we're moving forward a little bit on it now. Was there stuff about nuclear weapons? Was that at one point a thing? I'm sure that my dad or I have lists somewhere if that's ever of interest.

01-01:19:51

Meeker:

For these different issues that haven't been pursued, correct me if I'm wrong, but it sounds like it wasn't a disagreement about the idea itself but rather were there individuals or organizations that could actually push this thing forward.

01-01:20:12

Sandler:

Right. Right. Well, there's two levels. One is the problem solvable. Right. So campaign finance reform can be a catch-22 where all the people who are

currently in office got in through the current funding system and they're not going to support a change. Right. So if you want to change policy and get campaign finance reform, nobody who's a legislator will support it. Right. So that's an example of is the problem solvable and we have to figure out an angle where it could be solved. And then who can solve it. All of the standards that my parents took from running a company on good management, good execution, and all of these things, is there anybody who can do that and that's often no, right. So it's hard to find what meets all those things.

01-01:21:26

Meeker:

What was frustrating your moving into criminal justice reform?

01-01:21:31

Sandler:

So one thing is that who is incarcerated, they're in tiny numbers. A lot of it's at the county system. The federal system is actually not that big. You have to go state by state. You can't just do a sweeping change. And then we did do some searching of organizations and what were the organizations that were thought to be the most promising. And for one reason or another they didn't meet our criteria. So I think those were some of the reasons.

01-01:22:19

Meeker:

What sort of criteria is important?

01-01:22:22

Sandler:

So first of all, we have it on our website but it's going to go back. It should look very familiar to you about the company, right. So it's about good management. It's about good execution. The kind of plan and strategy. Those are the kinds of criteria. Basically it would be similar to the company.

01-01:23:01

Meeker:

Was there a process by which these attributes that your parents valued in doing business with individuals, whether it was through Golden West or through the foundation, these were taught to you or was this kind of just you were brought into it through example?

01-01:23:24

Sandler:

Well, I knew some of it through my time at this firm. Well, first of all, reading the annual reports. When you read the annual reports you do pick up what the underlying principles are. Visits with management is what it's called and you meet with the senior team and you learn those things. So I did it from another angle. And then they were taught to us. And they were taught to us by, "What did you think of the meeting with that person?" And we would have a foundation meeting. So in many ways.

01-01:24:12

Meeker:

Apropos of these foundation meetings, can you walk through the process by which you come up with a series of issues that you are in agreement that deserve the attention to the point that actually a check is being cut to an organization? How do you get from A to Z at the Sandler Foundation?

01-01:24:30

Sandler:

Because it's a family foundation there's not a lot of bureaucracy and there's not a set of formal steps, right. It's enough meetings with the leadership to start to have a comfort level that they meet our criteria for leadership, that they have a plan, and a viable plan given what the problem is that we're trying to solve in society. They can make a difference. So it's really meeting and it's sort of finding out more details and seeing how they write it up, what the budgets look like. My dad really likes to understand org charts. He likes to understand. Org charts mean a lot to him and he'll ask a lot of questions about those. He is interested in certain things about budgets and how they work. So it's developing comfort level and then involving the rest of us at key junctures. And then it happens.

01-01:26:20

Meeker:

How are you typically involved in this? Do you get a sense of now, when your father comes to you, what kind of feedback he's looking for? How do you typically plug into this decision-making process?

01-01:26:40

Sandler:

I think that depending on the issue there's a different role, right. So there's some issues that we sort of take point for and then there's some issues that we're part of the general team for, right. So some issues I feel like I'm part of the general team. I'm in the loop, I need to make sure that I'm informed, I need to raise good questions if I have them, express possible concerns to think about. And that's my responsibility as a team member. And then there's something where I'm taking point, I'm doing much more of the work, I'm taking more responsibility to keep everybody else involved when they needed to be informed. So the roles are different.

01-01:27:42

Meeker:

Those that you're taking point on, I would guess that ProPublica at this point is one because you're on the board, right?

01-01:27:48

Sandler:

I am not on the board.

01-01:27:49

Meeker:

You're not on the board.

01-01:27:48

Sandler:

No.

01-01:27:50

Meeker:

Is that CAP that you're on the board of?

01-01:27:52

Sandler:

Yes.

01-01:27:53

Meeker:

Okay, sorry. Well, walk me through those that you play point on and what that role is like for you.

01-01:28:01

Sandler:

So I clearly played point on something called the Learning Policy Institute, which is an education policy think tank that we incubated and launched and that I now chair the board of.

01-01:28:17

Meeker:

What is your role then on the board? What kind of work do you do?

01-01:28:22

Sandler:

So I speak regularly with the CEO, like maybe once every two weeks. I'm involved in planning the board meetings and chairing the board meetings and then sort of roll up my sleeves on an ad hoc basis when we're doing our strategic plan or just specific projects.

01-01:28:47

Meeker:

What do you hope Learning Policy Institute will achieve?

01-01:28:51

Sandler:

Well, I'm trying to figure out the right level of specificity. But that it changes education policy at the state level in many states and at the federal level in a way that really, really benefits the education and lives of children in this country.

01-01:29:20

Meeker:

Are there any particular policy initiatives that are really at the top of the agenda?

01-01:29:23

Sandler:

Yes. So there's four issues. One is early childhood, sort of quality and access of early childhood. Another is resources, that schools have enough funding and resources to provide a good experience for all students regardless of their income. Another issue is teacher quality. And, again, that all students, regardless of their income, have teachers that are really good and quality and then the last is more about the nature of learning, that our schools are teaching children to really think, to think critically, to collaborate, to be creative, to take knowledge and apply it to solve problems, things like that.

01-01:30:14

Meeker:

I assume the Sandler Foundation provides a fair portion of their operating expenses?

01-01:30:23

Sandler:

I'm just trying to think what we make public or what we don't make public. Let me just hold off on that.

01-01:30:33

Meeker:

Sure, that's fine. I guess the question that I was going to follow that up with is how are you evaluating—those are major goals. Those are transformative goals. These are things that aren't going to be done in one election cycle. How do you as a representative of the Sandler Foundation evaluate progress being made towards those goals?

01-01:30:56

Sandler:

Yes. Well, so, first, let's just say that the goals, if you compared the size of the goals to the amount we're funding, the amount we're funding is small compared to the size of the goals. Also, if you compare the size of the goals to education funders with a very different point of view, let's take the Waltons, it's a tiny fraction. And, again, if you compare the size of the goals to public school spending it's a tiny fraction. So how can you hope to have any impact, right? And so the way we hope to have impact is once again, I think, going back to our core principles, is that we chose a CEO who I believe has had the most impact on education policy in this country, who has changed the most policy in this country, who has changed the conversation in education policy in this country. And I will say that education in this country has swung back and forth like this. So when I say that she did that, in the nineties she moved it this way and in the two thousands there was a backlash this way and now it's trying to come back this way. So I'm not saying that—[laughter] right, right. But what I am saying is this is a highly impactful person who has the toolkit to make that kind of change and that that's more important than money. Right. That ability, that know-how, those individuals building those kinds of teams is really important. And that was why my parents company was so successful.

01-01:33:03

Meeker:

I'm curious. When you are playing point on an organization like the Learning Policy Institute, what are your fellow foundation board members interested to hear from you in order to make the determination whether funding will continue or not? Do you go and present a case? Is it kind of like they're part of your portfolio and you advocate for or advocate against those organizations within your portfolio? How does that actually work?

01-01:33:47

Sandler:

It's pretty informal. Yeah. So it might be in the guise of staying informed but then there's like, "Are there any thoughts, any questions, any comments?" So then there's this opportunity to say, "Well, I would be concerned about blah, blah, blah," but it's not like, "Okay, we're going to vote." There's not a thing for blocking or convince me otherwise. It's just like a family discussion.

01-01:34:34

Meeker:

Have you had an opportunity to employ some of your skills around consensus decision-making in these situations?

01-01:34:44

Sandler:

Sometimes. And it's not really the consensus so much as people digress, things wander. So it's about trying to stay on track and summarize what we're

hearing. And maybe we're hearing two different things and maybe we should talk about the first one first. It's more some of that. That's the other thing, is that right now, and I could be just forgetting it, that we don't have meetings that seem like superheated. So they may be chaotic or not on the same page. Which there's an opportunity to table.

01-01:35:36

Meeker:

What other projects are you serving point on right now?

01-01:35:40

Sandler:

So things related to leadership and specifically leadership of people of color. And we're looking at maybe starting or significantly investing in an already existing leadership organization or potentially fellowship type of program. So that's one thing that I'm really working on right now. And then I'm quite interested in things related to voting and things related to community organizing.

01-01:36:17

Meeker:

Okay. What do you mean by community organizing?

01-01:36:19

Sandler:

So usually there's organizations that self-define themselves as community organizing. They have a base of members and those members choose issues they care about that they want to change and pursue and learn skills so that they would go from being members to being leaders in the organization and pursue a strategy from public meetings and rallies and petitions and letters and effecting the funding streams and other forms of pressure to win the policies that they want to win.

01-01:37:03

Meeker:

Has there been much conversation in the board meetings or with you, on the boards of directors of these organizations, about the nature of social change, about how effective social change is made in this day and age? The reason I ask this is there's a fair amount of discussion right now about what is the appropriate role of online organizing, are public rallies, for instance, still effective in the way in which we like to think about the March on Washington 1963 being effective. Do these kinds of conversations happen in your experience?

01-01:37:55

Sandler:

Yes. We haven't had a meeting where we said this is going to be the topic of the meeting but after Trump got elected we said maybe we need to broaden the types of strategies, be more open to different types of strategies and maybe we should learn more about that. So that has come up.

01-01:38:20

Meeker:

That's interesting. Do you have any thoughts on that?

01-01:38:22

Sandler:

I do think we should explore it now. I don't have like I believe this kind of action is going to be more effective in this day and age. I don't have like an answer but I believe that sort of broadening the options and being more open might make sense.

01-01:38:47

Meeker:

When you're engaged with the leaders of these organizations that you're sponsoring or interested in working with, do you think it's appropriate to have those kinds of conversations or do you want to work with them to help broaden their approach?

01-01:39:06

Sandler:

Well, I would say what's very appropriate is to learn from them. What are you finding? That's one of the best ways a funder learns. Like what are you seeing out there? If we're talking about actions that are, let's say, more edgy—if a funder suggested it, that means that we're suggesting it to someone who's less edgy. They're not going to be very good at being more edgy at all, right. You really shouldn't be suggesting—there's a lot of things where funders suggest something to a grantee, it's not going to work.

01-01:39:47

Meeker:

That's in some ways what I was getting at. Hearing the way in which your father, for instance, talks about what is the appropriate role of a foundation to play in the lives of these organizations. Different foundations have different perspectives on that. I'm just trying to get a sense of what your vision is for that.

01-01:40:11

Sandler:

Definitely learning. I have been a grant seeker and one thing I appreciated from funders is they had more of an overview of the landscape and I would become informed of things that I hadn't known about. And then you just need to keep the awareness with you, that every little thing you say can be misinterpreted and carry much more, "Oh, you'll get money if you do this," or they really want you to do this, just to carry that awareness with you. But at the same time you are two human beings who might have known each other for years and who can read each other's body language, who can have a conversation.

01-01:41:07

Meeker:

You had mentioned that you don't recall a lot of heated conversations in foundation board meetings. Can you recall any moments where there is maybe meaningful disagreement about an emphasis on a certain program or a pursuit of a certain issue?

01-01:41:30

Sandler:

The problem is remembering them, right. Like I think these things have all happened. And I do get heated. [laughter] I just am having trouble remembering them. Yeah. And also, I might not get heated about we should

give a grant to A versus B. I might get heated that so-and-so keeps interrupting me or so-and-so dismissed my point. Right. So I'm heated but I'm not heated on the questions you're asking me about. Yeah.

01-01:42:10

Meeker:

What are your personal interests right now? Where do you think the foundation should focus its efforts?

01-01:42:16

Sandler:

Well, I think, as I described, the work related to leadership, work related to voting, and the work related to community organizing.

01-01:42:30

Meeker:

When you've got these ideas, are you spending a lot of your own time researching and reaching out to potential organizations who you think are doing good work and you'd like to work with?

01-01:42:46

Sandler:

That is important work for funders to do and I have some limitations because of health right now so I have to think of some workarounds that I wouldn't have quite as much in the past.

01-01:42:59

Meeker:

Well, I think the Sandler Foundation doesn't accept applications, right?

01-01:43:03

Sandler:

Right. But you try to spend time with people and get to know people, sort of have your ear to the ground and stuff like that.

01-01:43:21

Meeker:

Actually, can you tell me about that policy? Why does the foundation not accept applications? It seems like a lot of foundations now are not open to applications.

01-01:43:32

Sandler:

Yes. As a grant seeker I was very frustrated. So there's a couple of reasons. So one reason has to do with staffing. If you did accept applications you would need somebody to read them and also make recommendations on them. And we would rather give the money away to grantees rather than spending money on staff to read grant applications. Right. So there's a big principle. I'm guessing my dad discussed that with you.

01-01:44:04

Meeker:

I think I didn't ask him that question. I regret that now. Yeah.

01-01:44:07

Sandler:

All right. So let me just stop and say about that. We have relatively low budget and that enables the money to be given away. The model of giving larger grants that are general support grants and that are basically ongoing grants enables us to have a very small staff. We don't have to say, "Did you

do the deliverables for this project?' right. And we don't say, "now the project's done so we have to find a new grantee to replace, what we're going to give to instead," and so on. So we are able to have a very small staff and have most of the money go to just the grantees. So that's important to us. So if we had applications that would affect us on staff. It would be an application process so that would be maybe a little bit about more bureaucracy. But we like to find our grantees. You can say that it takes away because there's some aspect of the landscape that we are not getting exposed to. But let's say criminal justice, or whatever the issue is, we will talk to many, many people and say who are the organizations that are doing something? What should we know about? What can you tell us about them? And learn a lot about the landscape of organizations before we start. And then we would maybe reach out to the organizations we decided to reach out to. So that is a preferred approach, where if you were to get an application it wouldn't be, "Oh, they have a reputation for doing what they say they're going to do and they're so smart at this." You found out all this stuff about them already. It wouldn't have allowed us to do that. But I do get the problems.

01-01:46:30

Meeker:

That's interesting.

01-01:46:31

Sandler:

And I remember when I was a grantseeker. What we were supposed to do is look up the foundation board members. Can you find a board member that—right. And then I'm on the other side as a foundation board member, where somebody thinks that if they can have coffee with me something's going to happen. And I know nothing's going to happen, that the work they do doesn't fit our focus. And that's my time. It's like we're all set up and opposed to each other.

01-01:46:57

Meeker:

It's a world of limited resources and a lot of great ideas. How do you deal with those kinds of situations? Now that you are on the other side of the equation and you've been on both sides, has that impacted the way in which you hold your own position now?

01-01:47:20

Sandler:

Well, the simplest thing is the human dignity aspect, right. When people are asking for money it's often very uncomfortable and they're only doing it because they believe in a cause. And that is really important to respect that and respect them. And also I would often feel like I'm not valid because you don't want to give me money. And to be like I bet what your cause is really worthwhile, right, is the message I tried to convey. So just the simple human courtesy, respect part is one piece of it. But then the next piece of it is as a fundraiser, my most valuable resource is my time. Right. If I'm cultivating this one, I don't have time to cultivate that one. So if this one is definitely not going to work out I want to know because then I can maybe cultivate that one. Right. And that's a really important decision for me to make. That's what I

tell them. I've had to raise money and my most important resource is my time and I'm super focused and this is what I'm focused on. So this is not going to be a good use of your time.

01-01:47:41

Meeker:

That's interesting. That's a good approach. So I think we're reaching the end here. But I want to give you an opportunity to go through your list, make sure that I've managed to ask you about everything I said I was going to. [laughter] Because I know that we jumped around a bit on the timeline and I want to make sure that we covered everything that you'd like to.

01-01:49:12

Sandler:

We did it all.

01-01:49:14

Meeker:

I do want to ask this question. You had mentioned this interesting conversation we had about your parents kind of different approaches to it and your mom wanting to have impact, wanting to make sure things were well-organized and well-executed and your father having specific issues and specific kinds of change he'd like to see happen. Where do you see yourself in the midst of those approaches? Or how would you define the kind of impact you'd like to see?

01-01:49:59

Sandler:

Well, I definitely have issues I'm passionate about. Of course once you've been around my mom, you want it to be well-executed. You want to have a ProPublica like impact. [laughter] But I come to the table much more passionate about specific issues than I would say my mom did. Yeah. And, of course, my dad wanted impact, too. So let's just say we're all the same on that and the thing that I would say for myself is that I have issues and at times my dad does.

01-01:50:33

Meeker:

Do you intend to continue working with the foundation into the future? Is that something that is of an interest for you?

01-01:50:40

Sandler:

Yes, yes.

01-01:50:41

Meeker:

Yeah. What do you think the future holds for the foundation? Where would you like to see it go?

01-01:50:47

Sandler:

We're planning to spend it down.

01-01:50:51

Meeker:

Well, if the economy continues to move, that will be hard to do because the foundation will keep earning, right. I don't know what the trajectory is. Is there like a sunset date that you'd like to see it spent down?

- 01-01:51:10  
Sandler: The last time we evaluated it we were comfortable that we could do it within a rough frame of time.
- 01-01:51:21  
Meeker: Okay. And that frame of time is not public?
- 01-01:51:25  
Sandler: Let's say up to twenty years. But it could be sooner.
- 01-01:51:33  
Meeker: And so during that period of time I guess it's these issues that you've expressed interest in that you would really like to see a focus on?
- 01-01:51:42  
Sandler: We haven't finalized a spend down plan, right, where we're committing. Yeah.
- 01-01:51:50  
Meeker: Is that something that will happen in the coming couple of years, do you think?
- 01-01:51:55  
Sandler: When it gets close I think you have to get really specific. Yeah. And we also have a plan. This is another thing, is what we call the Mack truck plan. And this is probably another thing that comes from my parents' sort of practices from the company, which is what if me, my brother, my dad, Steve Daetz, our executive vice president, were hit by a Mack truck. We have a plan that would designate where the money goes if we couldn't make a single decision tomorrow. And that would involve different kinds of reinvesting in what we're currently giving to. So we do have that in place. And that is pretty unusual, I think. At least for a family foundation that doesn't have a big staff and stuff like that.
- 01-01:53:06  
Meeker: Do you foresee another CAP or ProPublica in the future of the Sandler Foundation?
- 01-01:53:15  
Sandler: So what you're saying is a start-up or are you saying one that has the renown?
- 01-01:53:23  
Meeker: Well, I think both. A start-up that you hope will have a major impact in a particular kind of field.
- 01-01:53:34  
Sandler: Okay. So I'm not quite sure how to answer that. I do believe that for the education sphere, the Learning Policy Institute is like a CAP. It's been around for two years and just sort of the renown it's developed and sort of the domino effects it's having and just the way it's affecting the space is like a CAP except it's within one space. So it doesn't have quite the—as well known. It's possible that the work on leadership that I'm exploring may be something

similar in leadership. I don't know. The start-ups for us, some of them have really taken off but that doesn't mean that they will.

01-01:54:30

Meeker:

Well, I think that's a part of the definition of a start-up, is you want to do something big and accept failure.

01-01:54:38

Sandler:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, true.

01-01:54:36

Meeker:

Are there any final thoughts that you'd like to add?

01-01:54:47

Sandler:

I can't think of any.

01-01:54:51

Meeker:

Hopefully it's all right to ask this but I'm wondering if you would talk about your mother's passing and the impact that that had on the family.

01-01:55:11

Sandler:

Well, I'm not sure where to take it so I'll speak a little and then maybe you can ask some questions. But in the last years of her life she was suffering quite a lot. So I think that was very difficult, especially for my dad, who was her primary caregiver. There's definitely a feeling of helplessness. And also she didn't have a specific disease she was dying of, so it was very like unclear where things were going. So that was a period of time. And then there's a period of time of just recovering from her having been intensively ill. And for my dad, he had lost so much weight. He hadn't slept probably much in months. So there's just a period of time before the whole experience starts to take on some perspective and some stability again. To remember her from a little bit more of a—so I don't know. If you had specific questions?

01-01:56:54

Meeker:

Do you suppose that near the end of her life she had an appreciation for what she had achieved?

01-01:57:07

Sandler:

I think the illness made it very difficult. She was in a lot of pain and in a lot of uncertainty about what was happening to her. I think when you have a disease where you know that you're dying, if you're lucky you can take a step back and appreciate things. When it's from day-to-day and just suffering and unknowns, it makes it harder to do that.

01-01:57:42

Meeker:

Right. So if you have a kind of cancer you can have an idea of what the terminus is. It was asthma related but then a lot of other—headaches and all sorts of other things. Herb did talk about that fairly extensively. I can't imagine how she lived through it as long as she did. But then also, as you described, not really knowing what—

01-01:58:11

Sandler:

Yeah. And here's the other thing I will say. This sense of drive, this deep drive that she had, made this period of her life very hard on her. Somebody else would say, "Well, clearly my health is failing. I'm going to accept that. I'm going to have peace with that. I'm going to appreciate what's left." It wasn't like that wasn't in her consciousness but there was this other part that was such a fighter. I don't think I can completely define or grasp everything that was going on for her. But what I can say is that her level of drive and determination made this illness probably more difficult than it did for somebody who had less of that.

01-01:59:26

Meeker:

Through her will did she think that it would be possible to overcome this?

01-01:59:30

Sandler:

I don't know if she thought that or not. But I do know that there was at least part of that going on.

01-01:59:35

Meeker:

Did you ever get a sense of where this drive originated?

01-01:59:41

Sandler:

No. Sometimes they've talked about her mother and there's a story they like to tell about her mother having—she had a pacemaker installed maybe. And about my mother and father coming to visit her, I don't know if it was a hospital or convalescent home, and they had given her a walker. And she was carrying it around. [laughter] Yeah.

01-02:00:13

Meeker:

And you think your mother inherited some of that.

01-02:00:17

Sandler:

Yes. Yeah.

01-02:00:19

Meeker:

Maybe that's a good place to wrap-up.

01-02:00:21

Sandler:

Yeah.

01-02:00:22

Meeker:

All right. Thank you, Susan.

[End of Interview]