Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Ruth Rosen

Ruth Rosen: Activist, Historian, Journalist

Bay Area Women in Politics

Interviews conducted by
Amanda Tewes
in 2022

Since 1953 the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library, formerly the Regional Oral History Office, has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

****

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Ruth Rosen, "Ruth Rosen: Activist, Historian, Journalist" conducted by Amanda Tewes in 2022, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2023.

Ruth Rosen, 2019.

Abstract

Ruth Rosen is a historian of women's history and professor emerita of history at the University of California, Davis, as well as a former writer for the *Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*. She was part of many social movements in the Bay Area, including the women's movement starting in the 1960s, and taught the first women's history seminar at UC Berkeley in the early 1970s. Rosen was born in 1945 and grew up mostly in New Rochelle, New York. She attended the University of Rochester (1963–1967) before attending the University of California, Berkeley (1967–1976). Rosen is the editor or author of important works of women's history, including *The Maimie Papers: Letters from an Ex-Prostitute*, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America*, and *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. In this interview, Rosen discusses growing up in New Rochelle and the community's politics; her parents' conservatism and the formation of her own political identity; involvement with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Civil Rights Movement; attending the University of Rochester and her interest in history; the influence of studying abroad in Mexico and Italy; attending UC Berkeley and switching her focus of study from the history of art to history; studying women's history, including research on sex work; teaching the first women's history seminar at UC Berkeley; briefly teaching at Sonoma State University; research on and publication of *The Maimie Papers*; researching and writing *The Lost Sisterhood*; anti-war activism in Berkeley; the women's movement in the Bay Area, including demonstrations, childcare and communal living; personal involvement with Berkeley Women's Liberation; photography and editorial writing for *Every Other Weekly*; teaching at UC Davis, including earning the Distinguished Teacher Award in 1983; transitioning to professional writing, including for *the Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*; writing a history of the women's movement in *The World Split Open*; resigning from the *Chronicle*; working for The Rockridge Institute; teaching at UC Berkeley and retirement; important relationships with men; friendships with women in post-communist countries; involvement in anti-apartheid movement; the women's movement across the United States, including humor, coalitions and divisions, networks, sex and sexuality, race and class and a spectrum of political beliefs; developing language for "the hidden injuries of sex"; changes in support for and legacy of the women's movement; honors and awards; and her personal legacy.

Table of Contents

Interview 1: March 17, 2022

01-00:00:05

Tewes: This is a first interview with Ruth Rosen for the Bay Area Women in Politics Oral History Project, in association with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. The interview is being conducted by Amanda Tewes on March 17, 2022, and we are in Berkeley, California. Thank you, Ruth, for joining me today, I really appreciate it. So let's start at the beginning here. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

01-00:00:32

Rosen: Well, I was born actually in Manhattan, but that's not where I grew up, that's just the hospital where I happened to have been born. My parents, after the war, bought some very inexpensive land about sixty or seventy miles north of New York City, and my father decided he wanted to build a house there, and he did by himself. What he didn't understand and what my mother didn't understand, since they knew that was a very exciting place during the summer where all these people from New York, the Bronx, Brooklyn, would come for the summer, they didn't get it that if they were going to live there all year round, that was going to be a big change for me and for them. They didn't have that social life that they had during the summers. For me it was terrible, because I couldn't have any friends; they were mostly Lutherans who really did not want to play with Jews or Catholics, so I was very lonely. Then the summer would come, and I'd meet all these kids, and they were incredible. I understood a lot of sophisticated and social things from them, and I learned a lot every summer.

01-00:01:50

So my parents did understand that going to a school that was from kindergarten to twelfth grade, being bused to one building with that, and only one person going to college a year was really not what they wanted, so they moved to Westchester [County], to New Rochelle. They had very good public schools. And then I began meeting huge numbers of people whose parents had been liberals, communists, socialists, whatever, all kinds of people, very intellectual. It was a very liberal town, and it was a very integrated town, a lot of civil rights activities going on. So this was a different zeitgeist. Suddenly I was really encountering in school quite a different group of people.

01-00:02:46

And I would say that through junior high school and through high school, I really changed. A lot of friends gave me things like the I.F. Stone's *Weekly*,

which students may not know what it is today, but it was the most famous weekly honest magazine—a small newspaper that came out every week, and he just used public documents; this was not investigative reporting through secret documents, he just used what was available in Washington. And that's why a lot of us knew later that the war was a lie, and a lot of things were lies, and he did debunk a lot of government things, and he was never proven wrong. So I.F. Stone was a radicalizing effort. Then people gave me sociological books like *The Lonely Crowd* and *The Organization Man*, criticizing conformity and consumerism, brutal capitalism, and [James Baldwin for] civil rights.

01-00:03:54

During this whole period, I think from 1956 on, I was beginning to understand that the Civil Rights Movement was central to what the United States had to do and had to face. I was so amazed by the kids, the courage that they had, to integrate a school, and I was amazed that a president would actually bring in the National Guard to protect them to do it. Then there were other people who were protected to go into college. So watching this, I began to see that this was an important movement, and I also began to understand—you know, my parents seemed very racist to me, and I was now living much closer to Manhattan, near Harlem; I could go down to the Village. And so the world was changing, particularly in high school. I think the intellectual life in that high school, I don't think any place I've been was as intensely intellectual as that high school, even all the places I've gone since. That crowd of people were amazing. So I was quite different by the time I was probably sixteen and I understood that I just couldn't talk to my parents about anything. They would pin "I like Ike" buttons on me and Nixon. They even voted for Buckley, so this was pretty extreme.

01-00:05:19

Meanwhile, I had a very musical life. From the time I was about five I was playing the piano until I was twenty, and I actually considered being a concert pianist. But what I really wanted to be was a conductor, but I realized no woman would ever be a conductor, and that was true for a very long time. I wouldn't have been a conductor, probably a conductor at a high school instead of a serious orchestra. I played snare drum in elementary school, because I really loved the percussion. Meanwhile, the piano was the background, that was my serious instrument. In junior high school I wanted to take up the flute, but the conductor said, "We have too many girls who are playing the flute. Here's a French horn, teach yourself it, and come back in the fall and play the French horn," which is a hard instrument to play. I didn't like the repertoire and it's beautiful if you get the notes right, but I rarely did, and so the desire

for a flute remained there. Then when I went to college, I taught myself the guitar. I played the recorder and I played with groups of people in college, the guitar and recorder, so music has been central to my life throughout, it's always been a thread of my life.

01-00:06:46

Tewes: Was anyone else in your family musical?

01-00:06:47

Rosen: No.

01-00:06:48

Tewes: Where do you think this came from?

01-00:06:52

Rosen: I really don't understand it. My parents had the most ridiculous set of stupid records that were not a bunch of classical records, just sort of movie records. I think it was from being a piano student, I was learning classical music through playing it. I think we had a television very early, so I began to watch television productions with classical musicians. It still drives me crazy to try to remember: how did I end up in a house that didn't have interesting books or interesting records, how did I fall in love with these things? I can't really answer it, it was just I was curious about everything. I would say that by the time I graduated, I knew that my parents—I couldn't tell them anything anymore, and that I was very intrigued by going into the—by the train, it was twenty minutes into New York, and experiencing going to the museums in New York, and going to the Village, and learning about jazz and sort of semi-bohemian life, this was a tremendous excitement for me. In a world that had been brought up with these obnoxious Lutherans who wouldn't play with me, suddenly there was this integrated group of people who respected each other, so it was very exciting.

01-00:08:23

I can't think of anything in high school other than the zeitgeist that really, really impressed me. Almost all my friends were in the orchestra, every one of my friends from high school is a very famous person right now. One played the violin; one played the drums. These are people who are in major orchestras all around the country. So I was playing French horn, but I didn't like it. But all my friends were musicians, and everyone played the cello or violin, we all took lessons. So this is how I think I became really glued to classical music.

01-00:09:07

Tewes: Wow. It sounds like that's had a lifelong impact.

01-00:09:10

Rosen: Yeah, it has, it really has. I actually thought when I applied to college—I got a Regents Scholarship, which paid for most of my tuition. My parents said I couldn't go out of New York, because it was from Governor Rockefeller, a Republican, who gave these scholarships. People might not remember there were Republicans who did such wonderful things then. I really wanted to go to Boston, and I really didn't want to go to Columbia or any place close to my parents, I wanted to be very far from my parents. So it turned out as I went around and looked at colleges with them, since I couldn't go to Boston and I couldn't go to various places in Ohio or definitely not California, I picked a place that was as far as I could get that was still a good school, and the University of Rochester was it. It had a lot of international students, and it had a lot of smart people, and it was a very good school for me.

01-00:10:17

I fell in love, I think, in the first year with politics, boys, and history, and that first year my life was altered and deepened from all those things I'd been interested in high school. I was involved in the student peace movement, I was involved in the anti-war movement, suddenly I had a real social life, and I really—[the University of] Rochester had an amazing history department, even though it was a lag in reputation. When I came to Berkeley to graduate school, that was supposed to be the best history department in the country; I didn't think so, I thought Rochester was by far best than Berkeley. So the people I worked with were unbelievable and they really spent lots of time teaching us how to write, how to think, and how to be critical. I was very early invited to join the Honors College, which meant I didn't have to go to lectures, I just went to seminars. We'd have to write papers every week, we'd have to read books every week, very intense. In many ways I felt like I'd gone to graduate school when I got to graduate school.

01-00:11:35

I think that the other thing that really was important in college, besides really falling in love with Russian history, Japanese history, American history, mostly I studied European history and literature. I think what really what came to me in 1963 and 1964 was, of course, the anti-war movement had already started the year before in Berkeley, but I wasn't here. But in 1964, I knew, and everyone that was in college knew, about the Free Speech Movement, so we were very aware of the Free Speech Movement and what

they were saying, and a lot of us were very, very impressed by that. The summer of 1964, when white students from the North and a lot of Black students from the South came together to try to get voters to vote and register in the South, for which they were beaten, for which they were not allowed. It was not all successful, but it did create a huge amount of national attention. You bring a lot of white kids into the South, and they're beaten, and what happens is the media pays attention to white kids being beaten.

01-00:12:56

Interestingly enough, I remember when my father refused to give me permission, he said, "I don't really think it's a good idea for you to go into the South into a war zone without a gun, and I don't want you having a gun. I think it's a war zone. You don't get it." He did. And I can understand at this age, I wouldn't want a sixteen, seventeen—I wouldn't want a young person in my life to go into—I saw how many people were beaten. And moreover, that's summer, the first three people who were killed, Michael Schwerner's mother was my biology teacher, so I knew the mother of one of the three people who were killed in Freedom Summer.

01-00:13:44

I was looking in the *New York Times* for [interracial work]. I had worked almost every summer as a waitress or a counselor at camps in Western Massachusetts, and that's another place where I became educated a lot, because I went to the Music Barn, where I saw Pete Seeger and [Bob] Dylan and [Joan] Baez, and I'd go to Jacob's Pillow where I'd see modern dance, and I'd go to all these places in Western Massachusetts. I would hitch with other friends, and this was a tremendous—after working all day, every night we'd go out and we'd hear the most incredible music. And a lot of this music was folk music that was popular at that time, and it was for workers and old workers songs and new civil rights music. So that summer I met a lot of Black students who had been in Mississippi in 1963, and they taught all of us about what was Mississippi. I couldn't go there, but I learned a lot from them. When I came back, before I came back, when the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred in early August, on the PA system in that very radical camp, we were told that this was a lie, that this hadn't happened, and that the funding for the Vietnam War was not right, that the Congress had to declare a right for a war, and we were all told to write letters, if we agreed with them, to our senators and to the president, and we did.

01-00:15:21

Tewes: Do you remember how you felt at that time?

01-00:15:23

Rosen: I didn't quite understand what this meant, the Vietnam War. I understood that it was a proxy war with the Soviet Union; I understood that it was a based on a domino effect, communism was going to go through all of Asia; but I didn't really know that we were going to really have a huge war, not in 1964. But the Gulf of Tonkin, right away the people here in Berkeley and people where I was seemed to know that this was a lie long before the Pentagon Papers ever came out. By the time I came back to college in 1965, I was really, I would say, a real movement activist. And that spring of April 1965, the very first big anti-war march in Washington, D.C., occurred, we went all night from Rochester on a big bus and we went to Washington, D.C. We walked up the Capitol, and Phil Ochs was singing that incredible song *I'm not Marching Anymore*. This was overwhelming to me; this was a truly momentous experience for me.

01-00:16:41

Also, I saw men who were from World War II in wheelchairs making the difficult effort to wheel themselves up to the Capitol to protest the war. So this also made me realize the anti-war movement was growing. It wasn't just a few people I knew at Rochester or a few people in New York, that this was people from all over the country who went to D.C., from California, all over. So when I went back to college, I was already pretty much involved in the anti-war movement.

01-00:17:14

But I didn't stay in the United States. I then went to Italy for a year, and that was also a radicalizing experience, because I lived with a communist couple, I didn't live with Americans. And I didn't have friends who were American, I had mainly friends who were Italian, and I became fluent in Italian, because no one I knew spoke English, which was the right way to do it.

01-00:17:44

This couple had been *partigiani*, which meant that they were resistors to fascism and Mussolini during World War II, so they would tell me stories about what it was like to be in the resistance movement. They would take me around and show me where they hid, where they put newspapers, and they were also arguing over dinner every time—she was a China-phile, she was really a very great advocate of Mao; he was for Stalin; and I didn't think either of them were really a good idea, but it was interesting to hear about these two people. And I was learning a lot about Italian politics and about European governments. I think it was probably the first time I realized that having two

parties is not necessarily a way to represent all the different opinions. Italy has had a million parties, so has France, and we have this two-party system. And so I learned a lot about government, and I studied comparative government there.

01-00:18:50

Tewes: So what did that make you think about American politics and governance?

01-00:18:55

Rosen: Well, I thought that it was horrible that only two people in the Senate voted against the Vietnam War, that Congress had not declared a war, that Johnson had just decided upon a war. And by the time I came back from Italy—and I should mention that even while I was in Italy and having these wonderful times with a bunch of kids my age, we would go out into the farmlands on people's farms with wine and cheese and bread, and just spend time on the weekends, and during the week we'd go to school. And then also there were nightclubs, and these were very different from what you'd think of as nightclubs, these were places where we all danced to the Beatles. We weren't drinking, we were dancing. There was some drinking, but there weren't nightclubs. And that was really fun, because it was really enjoying European experience of people who were against the war, but people who also knew how to have fun.

01-00:20:02

When I came back my senior year, I had so many credits that I could leave after a half a year, and so I decided—I got a five-year fellowship from Berkeley, all the other places I got in accepted me but gave me no money. And that was actually pretty wonderful, because I wouldn't have wanted to be so close to my parents anyway. I should mention that I came back from that anti-war march and stupidly I was so proud of it and so excited by it and so overwhelmed by it, I told my father about it. Such a stupid thing to do. He literally took a train up to the City of Rochester, went to the president of the University and said, "You cannot let my daughter do this anymore." And the president said, "Who's your daughter? We're not *in loco parentis* anymore. We're not in charge of the students anymore." Then I realized from then on: I really cannot tell my parents anything. So then I came to Berkeley and realized the very first thing that happened when I was at Berkeley was the Stop the Draft movement.

01-00:21:20

Tewes: I actually want to table that for just a second before we get to Berkeley, because you've given me so many things to think about, I want to go back and fill in the blanks.

01-00:21:28

Rosen: I'm going to make it warmer here.

01-00:21:29

Tewes: Oh sure, let's pause for a second.

01-00:21:31

Rosen: No, it's not you, it's the—[break in audio]

01-00:21:32

Tewes: All right, we are back from a break, Ruth, and you gave us a great run through of a lot of your early political thought and early academic work. I did want to back up. I'm not sure we gave the exact date of your birth. You were born in 1945, correct?

01-00:21:48

Rosen: Yes, July 25, 1945, before the atomic bomb.

01-00:21:54

Tewes: Oh gosh, right before.

01-00:21:55

Rosen: Yeah.

01-00:21:58

Tewes: And then we spoke about your family being a very conservative Jewish family. Can you tell me about your parents' livelihoods?

01-00:22:08

Rosen: Well, my mother—it's a long story. My mother was very smart, very organized, and she, in her senior year—her parents were immigrants, very old fashioned, they changed her academic program in high school to a business program so that she couldn't go to CCNY [City College of New York] in New York. She had gotten in already, which meant she wanted to be a teacher, and

she couldn't, so she ran away. She was so angry at them, she ran away to a women's hotel that didn't allow men to go above the ground floor; lied about her age; and entered Helena Rubenstein, and eventually was an administrator for the Chicago and New York offices.

01-00:22:54

Tewes: Can you explain for us who Helena Rubenstein is?

01-00:22:57

Rosen: Helena Rubenstein, she was one of the people who created what was in the 1920s a new industry: cosmetics and products of the hair, for skin.

01-00:23:10

Tewes: So your mother became a part of this beauty empire.

01-00:23:13

Rosen: She wasn't into beauty, though. She was very down to earth, she never used these products, but she learned the industry. She really had a real career, and she wrote a memoir, and the one thing I can say about that memoir right now is that she believed her life ended at age twenty-six when she married my father. He insisted that she stop working and she did feel like her life came to an end, that's when she felt like her life ended.

01-00:23:46

My father also was the son of immigrants from the Bronx, not Brooklyn, and he was also very smart. He went to CCNY, and he went to Fordham Law School by working in shoe stores. And it's strange, I never understood him. He, all those years, even when we lived in the country, he would commute to the southeast Bronx and have like a front store law office where he would actually type his own briefs, Puerto Ricans and Black people would come in, and those were the people he served. If you look at that, you'd think, Oh, this is a leftist who is creating legal aid for poor people, but that's not true. He was a stone racist, and yet he admired those people and helped them. It's very hard to understand, it was almost though abstractly he disliked these people but not personally. In fact, I really found it astonishing when he died, in the hospital everyone who was there was a person of color. And I thought, Is that going to be my situation? Probably not. This was the world he was part of, and yet he was very conservative, very conservative about being Jewish. But once we moved to Westchester, had no interest in Israel at all, neither of my parents had an interest in Israel.

01-00:25:22

Tewes: Was that uncommon for that time?

01-00:25:24

Rosen: Some people were just not so interested in Israel. They wanted to prove they were really Americans and that they didn't have a divided loyalty, so that was a division among Jews, and it still is. I think my brother, of course, was bar mitzvah-ed and girls were not bar mitzvah-ed. And I felt very jealous because he didn't like going to school to learn Hebrew and I loved it, I love languages, so I learned Hebrew. I also loved the idea of a bar mitzvah; of course, that wasn't to be my fate. I also loved the idea of knowing what the Talmud and the Bible said, this was very interesting to me. I went to Saturday school and learned all this. He hated it, but he's the one who got the whole big thing and all the presents and the money from a bar mitzvah. That's not the only thing he, as a first son, got. So I also saw that all throughout my life that every time there was a choice about what a person was going to get, my brother was going to get a bar mitzvah, my brother was going to get money for college, my brother was going to get money for law school, he was going to get a down payment and a house. They just assumed some man would take care of me, so I didn't get any of that. So I'm trying to remember what you wanted me to talk about.

01-00:26:51

Tewes: That makes me think: it sounds like you had a very gendered experience growing up.

01-00:26:58

Rosen: Yes, I did.

01-00:27:00

Tewes: How did you internalize that? What did you take away?

01-00:27:03

Rosen: What I saw was my mother having wanted to be a teacher, being a homemaker most of the time until she—most of the time, until I was out of the house, and then she worked as a travel agent for a while. But what was really the proto-feminist thing that I saw was that she was not economically independent. She had to beg my father for money, she would get an allowance like a child and she would beg my father, "Ruth needs new boots." It was in the snow and ice, and she would have to beg him, "My son needs gloves." We outgrew things, and it was really humiliating that she had to beg for these things. I remember

her telling me over and over again, "Never be economically dependent on a man." I think it was so humiliating, she had had a career where she was actually—given the fact that it moved into the Depression in the 1920s—she was actually earning a lot of money, even though she had been brought up in great poverty, like a two-bedroom place in Brooklyn where she slept in the living room on a cot. She was really brought up in great poverty, they didn't have enough to eat and so forth.

01-00:28:24

So I did see a lot of things in my mother's life and what she failed to have in her life, because she was a woman, and because the way my father treated her, and then I also saw the advantages my brother had.

01-00:28:46

Tewes: And you mentioned their conservative leanings and that they were trying to involve you in some of these things. You mentioned your own journey to understanding your politics and forming your own political identity. Can you remind me, was that in high school that you could identify—

01-00:29:09

Rosen: It started in high school when people gave me I.F. Stone's *Weekly*, and all these sociological critiques of American conformity, and very brutal capitalism, and critiques of poverty. I mean, that was going on all through my early 1960s, so I was reading all that and the people I said I met in the 1960s. And that continued into college, of course, and it just grew and grew and grew. I was becoming a serious intellectual, and that's not the way I was brought up. But being distanced from my family helped. I didn't have to want their approval anymore. My brother really thought I was some kind of, I don't know, like a maniac or crazy, because I was against the war and because I was in the Civil Rights Movement, so I didn't have any family approval whatsoever. The family I had were movement friends. I think by the time I went to college, by the time I went to Italy, by the time I went to that march in Washington, all of these things were radicalizing. They didn't make me into a communist—I was very anti-communist—but they made me into understanding what social democratic countries do, the safety net they could have, I understood that there could be more parties that represented more than what we have in Republicans and Democrats. So by the time I got to college, I was already really learning now the context for all these thoughts and these beliefs that I now held.

01-00:30:52

Tewes: Would you identify as a Democrat at that point?

01-00:30:56

Rosen: You know, I don't think I could vote in New York then, actually, when I think about it, but I definitely identified as a Democrat.

01-00:31:08

Tewes: And you mentioned your interest in civil rights. I think CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] was the first organization you joined.

01-00:31:14

Rosen: Yeah, when I was in high school a bunch of students, we worked for CORE in Harlem, and helped organize people, get them to vote, help them with agencies that could help them. Then when I was in college, I worked also with civil rights groups in Rochester. And it was also the Civil Rights Movement was everywhere, it was in all colleges, and the television was filled with pictures by 1965. I mean, everyone had heard Martin Luther King give that incredible speech. I didn't go to that, because I was still in high school, but I knew it. And also a lot of the anti-war movement was integrated—not all, but there was certainly an anti-war movement within Black communities, as well, and there was a strong Civil Rights Movement everywhere I went. Even in New Rochelle, which was pretty upper class in many ways, there was a big Civil Rights Movement. And some school was burned down, which I cannot remember, someone told me about it, but I don't know what happened. I think it was after I left.

01-00:32:35

I think by the time I went to college with all these summers meeting all these people, learning all this music, learning classical music, I was becoming a serious person, and I was also learning to have fun.

01-00:32:51

Tewes: That is very important, too. One should never underestimate that in the life of an activist.

01-00:32:57

Rosen: Because all the time in high school and in college, there were always dancing parties and ways that we let out the anxiety and the terror we had about the Vietnam War. I remember so many evening dances, and not people drunk

either, maybe they were smoking dope, maybe they had a glass of wine, but it wasn't—the dancing actually was more vibrant than the drugs in the people I knew. There were people in San Francisco where it was a much druggier place, but not the friends I had.

01-00:33:35

Tewes: That's interesting. And yes, I want to talk about the cultural differences between the areas, but I want to mention that you had a trip, an international trip, before you went to college in the summer of 1963.

01-00:33:48

Rosen: Yes, how could I forget that? When I graduated from high school, I had this wanderlust and I heard from other people there was this program in Putney, Maine. They now have another program, it's different from what I did. And they would take ten people and put them in a city in France, Mexico, all different countries, and those ten Americans would live with ten families in that city, and they'd be immersed for three months in that city. I went to Mexico, and I lived with a family. I learned a lot from them, but most of all I saw the anti-American sentiment from not just Mexicans but from Latin Americans in general. And I didn't understand the idea that America was an imperialist nation, that it was supporting all these dictators. This is what I learned in Mexico, and that's 1963 just after high school. So yes, by the time I went to college. I learned a lot. It was also great, because I was fluent in Spanish, and when I came back my parents saw me as more radical than when I had left, [laughs] and I was glad to just go to college.

01-00:35:16

Tewes: I was curious about that, because I can see a scenario in which they'd say, "No, you can't go to this Experiment in International Living Program."

01-00:35:23

Rosen: They weren't keen on it. They were not keen. I remember them being very, very hostile to the idea, but somehow because a lot of my friends were going, they somehow felt that it was something part of my education. And as Jews, they were very concerned with education and so they really wanted me to be educated. I think that's what made them say yes. It wasn't that expensive at that time. So it was wonderful to live in another country, to have friends who were speaking only Spanish, so I had two experiences. Later I lived in a lot of countries, and I love learning a language and I love being immersed in a culture. I don't like just whipping through a country, I like really living there.

01-00:36:15

Tewes: Yeah, it's certainly a different experience.

01-00:36:17

Rosen: Yeah.

01-00:36:18

Tewes: Ruth, as you were describing your parents' reaction there, I was wondering: do you think they had a sense of class, of trying to make sure you were solidly middle class—

01-00:36:31

Rosen: Yes.

01-00:36:32

Tewes: —and keeping up with the Jones's?

01-00:36:34

Rosen: I think they never thought of themselves as upper class, but given the fact they both lived in great poverty, and my father was a lawyer and made enough money for them to be middle class, it was very, very important for them to look middle class, to have the right way to set a table, to invite people to dinner parties, to do things middle-class people did, to allow me to go to camp, to allow me to work as a waitress and to go—because a lot of middle-class people were doing that. On the East Coast a lot of people went to camp, and then when they were old enough, worked as waitresses, worked as counselors, so this was a very middle-class thing.

01-00:37:14

Tewes: Did you have any particular thoughts on that at that point?

01-00:37:21

Rosen: I loved it, I learned so much during those summers. I mean, I socially changed. Every summer I think I learned something new about social life, and it was wonderful, it was just great to be away. When I was a counselor, I was also teaching kids, it was the first time I was really teaching kids. I was teaching them how to make lanyards, I was teaching them arts and crafts, I was teaching them instruments, music, it was wonderful. The waitressing wasn't so much fun, but when I went to college, actually, I was a waitress in the Faculty Club about twenty hours a week, because I didn't have enough

money in college. My scholarship wasn't enough, and my father wasn't giving me enough, so I had to work throughout college.

01-00:38:11

Tewes: What was that experience like working at the Faculty Club?

01-00:38:15

Rosen: Well, it was really sort of obnoxious. I have never seen a faculty club since then that was like this: in the middle of the day they were having champagne and these incredible dinners, and it was a really like upper-class evening in the middle of the day. I had to carry the plates like this, I had to—I couldn't believe they were drinking in the middle of the day. Actually, my professors weren't there, but there were a lot of professors that were. So I worked there, then I hated it so much, then I got a job in the bookstore. That was great, because I could just look at books all day, and then help people find books and be a cashier. I could spend twenty hours in a bookstore, that was heaven for me.

01-00:39:09

Tewes: And was all of that work experience enough to help you get by financially?

01-00:39:14

Rosen: Yeah. And she's still my best friend from college, she had a car, one of those wonderful bugs, Volkswagen bugs, and she couldn't park it on campus, and I was living off campus, so I would take her car and go places, and then bring it back to her, so we shared that car. She now lives in Massachusetts, and we talk once a week for an hour, we have a date on Friday afternoons. And she I met the first day of college.

01-00:39:53

Tewes: Oh my goodness. Do you want to say her name for the record?

01-00:39:56

Rosen: No, I think I'll protect her privacy, but it's quite wonderful. Also I met the first day a man who became my boyfriend for a while, but then we became friends, who is still my friend this many years later, who is a very famous sculptor and painter in Europe. He lives in France, and I've visited him many times. We still email all the time. He sends me pictures of various sculptures and paintings. These are two people I met the first day of college and I thought, Wow, this is really great, [laughs] these people are wonderful. I don't think everyone at Rochester was wonderful, I think I just lucked out that first day.

01-00:40:41

Tewes: [laughs] It was a good first day.

01-00:40:42

Rosen: And the reason I met him was because we were both getting on the line to be exempt from the language requirement, because we both knew Spanish and he knew German, and so we didn't have to do any languages, and that's how I met him, he was on the line. And she was across the hall from me in the dorm. First day!

01-00:41:02

Tewes: First day. You mentioned that you had gone into college thinking that you wanted to study music, because that's been a passion of yours, and then you switched to history.

01-00:41:12

Rosen: So fast.

01-00:41:13

Tewes: [laughs] Do you remember the moment that you—

01-00:41:17

Rosen: I think music was a way to be separate from my family. The piano was in the basement—it wasn't a very good piano, it was kind of a cruddy piano—and practicing was a way that I think I didn't have to deal with them, all of them. The minute I got to college, there was boys, there was an intellectual life. And my first course that I had was with a very famous historian named Hayden White, and I just fell in love with the idea of: how did people live at different times, what was their life like, and I just became fascinated. Also, the History Department had a lot of people who were like that, who were very charismatic and very intense in helping students, and it was quite wonderful.

01-00:42:11

I mean, had the English Department been like that, I probably would have gone to the English Department, but that wasn't the case. That's not quite true. I remember saying to myself, "I'll spend the rest of my life reading literature, but will I really spend the rest of my life reading history, and will I understand the context in which literature took place?" So even if the English Department had been superb, which it was not, I realized that for the rest of my life I'm not

going to be reading history, for the rest of my life I'll be reading literature; I don't need to be in the English Department.

01-00:42:50

Tewes: So you were separating your academic from personal interests there?

01-00:42:53

Rosen: I think I just knew I'd be a reader, I'd be reading novels and poetry for the rest of my life, whereas I was really getting serious about learning history. I didn't know then I would go to graduate school, but I was really loving—this Honors College was magnificent. I mean, being in these seminars was just like being in graduate school, and so I was learning amazing things.

01-00:43:19

Tewes: You mentioned that you were really interested in Russian history.

01-00:43:23

Rosen: Yeah, I found Russian history very interesting, and I think I just had a proto-feminist—I don't know where it came from, maybe from seeing my mother's life, maybe from seeing my brother's advantages. But somehow two things happened in college: I was in a European Modern History seminar, and what we had to do was read one very important intellectual in the nineteenth century or twentieth century and read all their work and talk about that person's significance. I went in and I said, "I want to read Simone de Beauvoir." And he said, "Why don't you read Camus, why don't you read Sartre?" I said, "I've already read them, I don't know anything about Simone de—" and he said, "Well, she's just very wordy and not very important," he said. "But if that's what you want to do, go ahead and do it," so I did. That was my junior year, so that was pretty impressive.

01-00:44:19

I think also my junior year, I don't know where this came from, four of us in this Russian history seminar went to the professor and said, "We're really interested in the role that women played in French and Russian literature. They're always the ones who are on the outside and critiquing the culture. Did these literary people use women as the people who were the outsiders and then go on a train and get killed, or they drown themselves, is that like a pattern in European literature?" We went to this Russian historian who was magnificent, and he said, "Okay, you come to my house. You have a car?" "We have a car." "Come to my house in the snow," and we'd have to stand outside until he finished playing his piano, we'd go inside, and we'd talk about

Dostoevsky or Tolstoy or, oh my goodness, everything. We just spent a whole year reading Russian literature, it was wonderful. And we did learn that, in fact, women did play a very important role as an outsider, as a critic of the society. Their voice is the one who is saying things about—and they don't do well, their life ends poorly, because they can't get the independence that they want, and they can't get what they're dreaming about. So those two things happened while I was in college.

01-00:45:53

Tewes: One follow up to that: was your family of Russian descent?

01-00:45:58

Rosen: Lithuanian. Yes, I just found a piece of paper that my father—I had written down all these places where my grandparents came from. They're all within an hour of Vilnius or Kovno, and very close, they were villages, and came very early in the early twentieth century, like a lot of people who were—the old people didn't come, because they couldn't do a trip like that. They came and they were very poor, they did have some relatives, and they thought they would help them, but those relatives never showed up, so they had a hard time. But they didn't know each other then, either.

01-00:46:49

Tewes: Did your family have connections to Europe still in World War II?

01-00:46:53

Rosen: No. They knew what was going on in World War II, but I learned more about the Holocaust later than from my parents, and I don't know why.

01-00:47:15

Tewes: You did mention they were interested in seeing themselves as Americans, I wonder if that was—

01-00:47:21

Rosen: Very interested in proving that they were Americans. I remember when I was quite young, the Brownies and the Girl Scouts weren't treating me very well, because I was Jewish, and these kids were not Jewish, and they weren't allowed to play with me. The person who was the head of these groups wouldn't treat me well, either. One day I heard a woman talking to my mother in the kitchen, and the door was closed, and I heard my mother say, "Why are you treating my son like this?" He was in the Boy Scouts. And she said, "Because we don't want you people here." That was really shocking to me.

That is the age that you finally realize there's nothing wrong with you, but the group that you belong to. Later when I read Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, he said the same—he's the one who reinforced that idea that you can really be treated badly for quite a while and not get it that there's something wrong with you, people won't play with you, they won't come to your house. But around seven or eight, as Malcolm X said, you begin to think of yourself as part of a larger group who is despised, discriminated against, and you have to then move out of the sense that there's something wrong with you, and that's not an easy thing to do. Then you have to understand that you are part of something that's much larger than yourself. And I didn't know that until I heard this conversation with my mother and this Boy Scout leader.

01-00:48:54

Tewes: Yeah, that must have been quite an indelible experience.

01-00:48:56

Rosen: That was really shocking, because I did understand just what Malcom X said.

01-00:49:03

Tewes: I'm curious, hearing you say that, if you think that's had an impact on how you've been interested in connecting with oppressed groups over the years.

01-00:49:12

Rosen: I think so, but I think also the Civil Rights Movement was even more powerful, because my parents, although they didn't want me to marry or have any relationships with non-Jews, which never happened, they never got what they wanted, but I still—and since they didn't really pay attention to Israel, but they did pay attention to discrimination against Jews, for sure, and I think I learned more about discrimination from that and also the Civil Rights Movement.

01-00:49:53

Tewes: We're mentioning these really interesting academic lines you're following as an undergrad, and you'd also mentioned your activism work. I also want to just place us in the moment. We are in the middle of the Cold War, 1963 is when you start college to 1967. You've got all sorts of things happening: Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy's assassination.

01-00:50:20

Rosen: Unbelievable, it was just awful.

01-00:50:23

Tewes: Yeah, what was the atmosphere like on campus?

01-00:50:27

Rosen: You know, 1963 was early. I was just meeting people. And so the Missile Crisis, I was terrified, I really thought we might have a nuclear war. The assassination of Kennedy I will never forget. I was in college, and somehow Rochester had an outage, and so the whole city was dark, and it just coincided with the assassination of Kennedy. So I will never forget that, people running up and down the corridor saying, "The president has been killed!" We didn't have any televisions, we went to one television, hundreds of us went to one television to watch what was happening. By then I was very liberal, and I thought this was terrible. The Cold War was terrifying in many ways. I understood that we were really involved with proxy wars and not really having a war against Russia, though we hate them and they hated us and there was a lot of propaganda both ways. But nevertheless, it was terrifying to grow up thinking you might have a nuclear war, that was scary. And because they both used that as a threat, deterrents worked. George Kennan was right [about the idea of containment]: if both of you have nuclear—I mean, I was very against that, I thought it was insane that everyone should have nuclear weapons, but it turned out if they had nuclear weapons and we had nuclear weapons, we were not going to use them because we would annihilate everybody. So it was a threat. I don't know what will happen in the future right now. I am living in terror through the war in Ukraine, but then we understand deterrents really worked.

01-00:52:24

All through high school and college, I did understand we were not going to really die from a nuclear war. I also did know that the above ground testing was terrible for our health, and I also knew that it was a women's group that was very central in forcing the government to use underground testing of nuclear bombs.

01-00:52:48

But nuclear was there, and the Cold War—I only know this as a historian, I don't think I knew this as a high school person or a college student—but the Cold War dramatically changed everything. It made girls study science and math—not my generation, a few years younger. The amount of money that was given for scientific research, the amount of money that was given to colleges, the National Defense Education Act gave people all these fellowships to people to go to graduate school. I got my fellowship from

Berkeley, but most of my friends got it from the government. We all had five-year fellowships; it was really incredible. So many of my friends got these National Defense Education Act from the government. I got a career prize, I don't know, but that's what I got. This was all prosperity from the Cold War. They were determined to create a really educated young group of people who could advance science—and the engineering, the science that was going on, how much money was given to scientific research. The Cold War ironically created a lot of positive things for us.

01-00:54:25

Tewes: That's really good context. And as my last question about Rochester, I'm thinking a pattern—I should say a transition piece—here at your graduation, Clark Kerr spoke. Can you tell me what that experience was like?

01-00:54:42

Rosen: Well, I left Rochester in February and I had to come back for my graduation, because my parents insisted they see me graduate. So there it was June of 1967, and we knew that Clark Kerr had treated the students [at UC Berkeley] terribly. It turns out that we didn't understand how he was being treated by the FBI, as well. We didn't know a lot, but we thought he had treated the Berkeley students terribly [during the Free Speech Movement], and a lot of us just turned our backs to him, stood up and turned our backs to him. Had we really understood the books that came out later about the way he dealt with things and the FBI, oh my God, how the FBI was involved in Kerr's life in a very negative way, I wouldn't have done that, I would have suggested someone else. And I still would have suggested someone else, because he wasn't the person to inspire me; at that point, you want someone who will inspire you. It would have been nice to have Hillary Clinton.

01-00:55:50

Tewes: You mentioned this wonderful fellowship that allowed you five years at Berkeley.

01-00:55:58

Rosen: Actually, right after college I then went to Mexico.

01-00:56:02

Tewes: You went back to Mexico?

01-00:56:04

Rosen: I went to Mexico after high school.

01-00:56:06

Tewes: Yes.

01-00:56:07

Rosen: Oh, that's right, excuse me, [laughs] that's right. After high school, then I went to college, yes.

01-00:56:12

Tewes: What did you do for those six months, since you graduated early?

01-00:56:15

Rosen: I came to Berkeley, and I had no money, and my parents didn't give me any money. I went around looking for a job, and every job they said, "You're too qualified," and then other people said, "You're unqualified," because it was like programming and scientific stuff. So I got a job as a receptionist in the Political Science Department at Berkeley, and I didn't tell them that I had a five-year fellowship, and I was going to start being in the History Department for the next five years. I just was a receptionist. When students would come in, I'd tell them where to go, I took the mail, and I gave it to various professors in their little boxes. And I also saw how much the Political Science Department was involved with really war political people, really pro-war people. I mean, I didn't open their mail, but I saw it, I saw that they were very involved with the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice. There were some really nasty things going on in Berkeley's Political Science. I didn't know it, I wouldn't open it, but I could see the return addresses. I did that and that allowed me to work, and then I started graduate school in the fall. And I was also living with someone who had also been a student at Rochester who had come to Berkeley, and we lived together for nine years.

01-00:57:43

Tewes: Where were you living around town?

01-00:57:44

Rosen: In Berkeley.

01-00:57:48

Tewes: What was your impression of Berkeley and the Bay Area as a whole?

01-00:57:54

Rosen: I loved the air, I loved the sky, I loved the color. I remember writing letters to people on the East Coast and saying, "Berkeley is so congested. Every time I have to do something, I have to stand in long lines to get courses." And that was true, it was so different than Rochester, which had fewer students. It had maybe 3,000 undergraduates instead of 30,000 students, so I was just stunned by how many people were on campus and how crowded it was. I liked the atmosphere in Berkeley, I liked the anti-war movement, I liked the fact that so many people, by the time I was here, had been in Freedom Summer and had come here and were some of the best leaders of the anti-war movement, so I just thought it was quite wonderful. But I actually ended up with some wonderful professors, but as a whole department, I didn't think they had the time or maybe the willingness to have the kind of influence on me that Rochester had.

01-00:59:13

On the other hand, there were people, when I began to do pioneering work in a field that no one knew, women's history, there were enough professors who really sponsored me, gave me things, endorsed me. And so I am very, very grateful to those people.

01-00:59:34

Tewes: I think we should also mention that you entered UC Berkeley going to study art history.

01-00:59:42

Rosen: Yes, I didn't want to study art history. I asked a professor at Rochester to write a letter of recommendation for the History Department at Berkeley. He said, "You know, you studied so much art history last year in Italy, you shouldn't really go into the History Department. You'll never get a job." There were no women in history, and that was true—I was the only woman in all my history seminars. So I went to art history, and I still got a five-year fellowship. I hated it, because it was just memorizing dates, it wasn't really looking at art in a very profound way. And I did a very interesting master's thesis, but I had to learn German to do it, and it was really two years that were unhappy. Although I am a passionate lover of art, it took me a few years to get rid of how awful they taught it.

01-01:00:33

I went to the graduate dean, and I said, "I really want my five-year fellowship to be switched to the History Department. I've applied there, and it's six

months past their deadline, but they've accepted me, but I can't go there without my fellowship." Then he asked me what was so bad about those two years. And at that point, I became speechless, my throat tightened, my eyes got wet, and I thought, Don't cry, don't cry, but I couldn't speak. He saw me being speechless and he said, "Okay," signed it, and he saved my life. Later when I was a professor, I wrote him a letter saying, "You absolutely saved my life, what you did made a complete difference in my life." I can't remember his name now, but I remember writing quite a number of times saying, "This is what administrators should do to see what students really need, and you saw what I needed."

01-01:01:38

Tewes: It is interesting how maybe the least likely people can have such a big impact.

01-01:01:43

Rosen: Yeah. And the first thing that happened, I came into the History Department and the person who would end up being my advisor in my dissertation, I had a chip on my shoulder, I was sort of fed up with graduate school, and he just said, "Well, what would you like to do?" And everything I said, he was interested in. I said, "I'd like to learn more about women." He ran down to the library, he said, "I just saw an article about that. Why don't you read this?" And then he said, "What else are you interested in?" Everything I said I was interested in, he found books. He told me, "Yes, you can be in this seminar." Everything I wanted was possible, so the chip on my shoulder disappeared and I was happy.

01-01:02:22

But I have to say, I was the only woman in every seminar, and some of the things that the women's movement later talked about really happened. I remember being in a seminar—people would say in the women's movement, "If a woman said something a professor would ignore it, then a man would say the same thing and they'd say, 'Oh, that's really a brilliant insight.'" And once I was in a seminar, and I said something, and he ignored it. Then someone, a male, said the same thing, and he said, "That's a very interesting interpretation." I thought, God, the women's movement is really right about this. [laughs]

01-01:02:59

That didn't happen that often, but there were a lot of people who thought the idea of gender and women's history was ridiculous, and it was so new, and I didn't have the language to yet explain it in a very sophisticated way, but there

were enough people that really sponsored me and endorsed me and helped me. One of the great things was my advisor, Larry Levine, who was the first person I met and said, "Yes, you can do what you want," and then Natalie [Zemon] Davis, who's one of the foremost European women's historians, came my third year to Berkeley, and she took me and taught me about women's history. It didn't matter that it was European history, she taught me how to think critically about gender in any period, and that gave me the sophistication I needed. Then I had a language, then I could write grants, then I could say what I wanted to do. Also, Arlie Hochschild was in the Sociology Department. In the History Department, you had to have one field outside of history, and I chose sociology, and she was teaching a seminar on sociology of gender or women, something like that, and that's what I took, and she was so supportive. She was a young assistant professor and teaching me what she was just starting. And between her and Natalie Davis, I had two really wonderful women; Larry Levine was very supportive; and there was a wonderful Russian historian, Reggie Zelnik, who was a prince, who was in Russian history. Since the British historian said, "No, I'm not going to do anything with women's history, get out of here," so I went to him and I said, "You know, I took a lot of Russian history. Do you think I could do women in Russian history? Could that be part of my comparative women's history?" And he said, "I don't know very much about that, but why don't we take a year and both learn it?" And we did, and he was a prince, and I miss him so much.

01-01:05:20

Tewes: Was there the name "women's history" at that point—

01-01:05:25

Rosen: No.

01-01:05:26

Tewes: —in the late 1960s?

01-01:05:32

Rosen: In the 1920s there were a group of women who were not allowed to go into the American Historical Association meetings, so they created what was called the Berkshire Women's History Association, but it wasn't women's history, it was just women doing history. But sometime—and I can't remember, someone else will have to give you this—sometime quite soon when I was in graduate school, people in UCLA, Rutgers, Michigan, there were a whole bunch of people who had one person in their seminar who were doing women's history; there were a lot of us all over. The reason that we were there and able to

organize is that we piggybacked on this very old group that had already organized in the 1920s, so we had an organization, and we knew what they did. They had an annual conference, and we understood something from them. Yes, I think there were people that were beginning to use the word "women's history." "Gender" was not used.

01-01:06:35

Tewes: Yeah, I definitely want to ask questions about that when we get there. [laughs]

01-01:06:39

Rosen: And in some ways that's too bad and in some ways it should have been used when appropriate, because there are ways that talking about things and how they are gendered that's important. But women's history is also different, women's history is also the experiences of real women and what they did and what happened to them. There can be gendered things in life, in politics, you might say that's a very gendered insight or conclusion or resolution, but women's history was not just gendered, it was really about women's lives, and that's what we spent our time on.

01-01:07:27

I just got a letter yesterday from a student who I taught the first women's history course at Berkeley, and she said, "When I left that class, you influenced me so much. And I graduated, and I went to Boston, I created the 9to5 Organization of Working Women, and I've been doing that ever since." She said, "I've written a book. Would you read it, and tell me whether you would blurb it and endorse it?" I thought, Amazing, I've never heard from her since the 1970s, and I had a real influence. I know other people that that's happened who have stayed in touch with me, but that's a long time ago.

01-01:08:17

Tewes: I think this would be a good time then to speak about that seminar. This was the first seminar on women's history, and I think 1970 you started that?

01-01:08:27

Rosen: I think it was 1970, I'm not certain. Sure, yes, it must have been 1970 or 1971, because in 1969 I was still in art history. Yeah. So it must have been 1970 or 1971. Advanced graduate students—might have been 1971—were allowed to teach seminars so that the faculty could teach these big classes of 400 people. It was a way of also teaching us how to teach. I decided I was going to have women's history, and I had enough professors that thought that was a good idea. What I did is every single person in there, I gave them a whole bunch of

topics that I thought they could research, that there would be material on, and I said, "Learn how to do research on this, look for secondary sources, go to the library, and write a paper on this topic." She reminded me in the letter that she wrote on the Women's Trade Union League, which was a group that helped women workers in the turn of the century. I mean, I was just stunned by this letter, it was really quite incredible. It was a wonderful group of people. I know all of them did incredible things and have written me one time.

01-01:09:47

But we were also a little weird. I remember once we would meet sometimes off campus and we'd have a potluck, and everyone would bring Jell-O: [laughs] orange Jell-O, green Jell-O, yellow Jell-O. It's like somehow, we thought if we actually cooked, that was un-feminist. It was very funny. These were disgusting Jell-Os to have to—and we gradually understood this not necessary.

01-01:10:19

Tewes: That's funny, I wouldn't even think about that.

01-01:10:24

Rosen: And they wrote great papers, and those papers became part of my lectures. I used their research in part of my lectures, they gave me a lot of material. They wrote very long papers, forty pages maybe, and they did a lot of research. And as I did research on new topics for lectures, their research was very important.

01-01:10:47

Tewes: That brings up a good question. I'm thinking this is such a new field, not a lot out there, this is the first course at Berkeley. How did you come up with the syllabus even?

01-01:10:57

Rosen: Well, I didn't, I really came up with ideas of different things. I had read several books. There was a book called *Century of Struggle*, it was about women. Mary Beard had written a book about women. So I had read a few books that people had written about women, so I knew about a number of topics. I knew women were abolitionists, I knew women had been part of the Women's Trade Union League and it helped women workers, I knew that women were muckrakers, I knew that women were part of the Settlement Movement, and I knew about Jane Addams, so I knew about various things, I knew about Eleanor Roosevelt. So I just gave them a whole list of things and said, "Pick something that feels right to you." I was not telling them what to

do, I was thinking about: what are good subjects to do research on, not what I need, but what would they be able to do, wouldn't be too hard for them, and would be interesting to them?

01-01:12:01

Tewes: Do you know if they had any difficulty finding primary sources?

01-01:12:04

Rosen: Oh yeah, oh yeah, [laughs] very much. Students always had trouble finding primary sources, and so I'd go into the library with them, I'd find them with them. Later when I wrote my first book, that was a student's question that got me to write that book. When I actually went into the library I thought, My goodness, I actually think this is my dissertation.

01-01:12:31

Tewes: We'll get that in just a moment. I'm curious what the campus community thought about this new women's history seminar and what your professors and male colleagues in the History Department thought.

01-01:12:46

Rosen: I don't know, I stayed away from a lot of people who were kind of grumpy and very—not very evolved. Now some of these people became quite evolved over time, but the people I mentioned: Natalie Davis, Larry Levine, Reggie Zelnik, Arlie Hochschild in Sociology, who else was in the History Department who was—there was someone in European history—just a few people, but the rest of the people, they didn't do anything in women's history, but they knew it was sort of happening. Even when I was interviewed for a job quite a few years later, there was a very important person, very major historian, who asked me, "What is important about women's history and what do you learn from gender?" By then I could answer that question in a more sophisticated way, but he wasn't really clear about it, and that's the way people were at Berkeley at that moment. Yet a few years later, he had a graduate seminar, and all my students had been in my seminar before him, and he said, "You know, your students have made me change everything I do about labor history. I suddenly understand there were women doing all this different work, and now labor history, it's really evolved," and he evolved. And as his daughter went to law school, he saw the way she was treated—

01-01:14:15

—and that, by the way, is one of my insights, I think. I think fathers who had daughters and watch their daughters grow up during this period, many of them

evolved, because they didn't want their daughters to be treated badly. Some fathers just wanted them to get married and have babies, but I saw a lot of men evolve, because they were fathers, and they wanted their daughters to be treated well.

01-01:14:44

Tewes: Do you have a theory as to why that is?

01-01:14:47

Rosen: I think there's two reasons. One was that they cared about their daughters, and they saw that there was something wrong with women being treated, there was social injustice. The other thing is it became hip to be—some of the people in the Berkeley History Department started writing books about sex, about women, and they began to—it was a new field, and they could write dissertations, and they could write books that were going to make a kind of splash, too.

01-01:15:25

Tewes: Speaking of which, I know that—I think the party line we learn in grad school in history programs is that in the 1960s and 1970s, activism that's happening [in the larger society] forced history departments to really rethink the way they approach history, so a new social history comes out of that, and such. Were you seeing that happen on the ground?

01-01:15:43

Rosen: Yes, I saw that. In the department I was in, it was very clear. If I think about all the people I was friendly or not even friends with, but they were my graduate student friends, I was in seminars with them, we were all very involved with not history from above. We weren't interested in who had been presidents, or presidential policy or social policy; we were interested in social groups, we were interested in Black lives, we were interested in women's lives, we were interested in urban history, we were interested in Native American history. All that was bottom-up, and there were books that were coming out and very important articles that were saying that's what you should be doing, and we absolutely agreed. So I would say everyone in my class, all the men and me, we all picked subjects that were about groups and a sociological perspective looking at a group, as opposed to dates. Most of those people were all attracted to that kind of new social history.

01-01:16:56

Tewes: And it's interesting to think of women's history as part of that moment.

01-01:16:58

Rosen: Women's history was certainly part of that. One of the reasons why people probably allowed me to do it.

01-01:17:06

Tewes: Well, that's a good perspective, yes. [laughs]

01-01:17:09

Rosen: But these people I mentioned, they were enthusiastic and truly very wonderfully supportive.

01-01:17:22

Tewes: I do just want to conclude with one more thing about your teaching here. I think you also taught a class at Sonoma State [University] for a little bit.

01-01:17:30

Rosen: Yeah, one year. This is how I met my best friend. She was teaching a half a year at Sonoma State, and her husband was at Stanford [University], so she was commuting between Stanford and Sonoma State. Then he had a sabbatical in France, so she needed someone to replace her. She kept going around and asking who could replace her, and she was a Latin American historian teaching women's history, and she didn't really know much about it, and she felt bad about that, she was a brilliant historian, and everyone kept mentioning me. So she told that department to interview me, and seventeen people interviewed me, and I taught one course at Sonoma State. That taught me to lecture before I was a professor, which was good practice. At the same time, I was actually a teaching assistant for a professor at Berkeley, so I was teaching at Berkeley and I was teaching at Sonoma State, and it was a lot of work.

01-01:18:36

Tewes: And doing your own research and work.

01-01:18:38

Rosen: I probably was. Well, was I doing research then? I certainly wasn't doing research like I did later for my dissertation. Maybe for graduate seminars I was doing research, because I was never—I wasn't writing books at this point. Any research I was doing was I was taking a course in Southern history, a topic that was about Southern history or research on that, or it was popular culture. And I picked a topic to do research on popular culture in a particular

moment, a particular kind of popular culture. My research was very specific what the professors decided the seminar would be.

01-01:19:19

Tewes: And this professor from Sonoma State, is that Mary Felstiner?

01-01:19:21

Rosen: Yes.

01-01:19:27

Tewes: And did you work with Pauline Bart [at UC Berkeley] at all?

01-01:19:29

Rosen: Yes, Pauline Bart was just for a short while at the Sociology Department, and she was there when Arlie Hochschild was there, and I think I worked with her before, and she taught me a lot of things. I don't know how to describe it. She was kind of an unconventional person, and she would say things that were rather extreme, but later I would learn a lot from her, and she was an interesting person. I didn't learn how to be a professor the way I learned from Arlie, but I did learn a lot about how women's lives are from her. I mean, she would just tell anecdotes and she would point out about what's helped women. And since she was a sociologist and I was doing women's history, I was learning a lot about groups of women. I think that was for only a year.

01-01:20:36

Tewes: When you say "how women's lives are," you mean in the contemporary sense?

01-01:20:39

Rosen: Yeah, probably, about how teachers were treated, about how workers were treated, various groups of women, and married women.

01-01:20:50

Tewes: Yes, I think that's a good education for things we'll get to in just a moment. I did want to make sure we paid attention to your academic work here. So you're thinking about comparative women's history. How did you get to American side of history, by the way? You had been doing all European.

01-01:21:06

Rosen: Yeah, at Rochester I did European, Russian, and everything, but I only took one thing in American history. Mostly European history, Medieval history,

Modern European history. I don't know why, I was just very attracted to all those intellectuals of the nineteenth century, and it was very interesting to me, and the twentieth-century existentialists. But when I came here, I realized, you know, this is the middle of the Vietnam War, I felt like I had to know American culture. If I was going to talk about American involvement in the war movement, I had to know about American history. I figured I now have a lot of comparative history, so that's good, I know the differences, and that's when I started doing American history right away. And also, it was necessary at Berkeley. Your first field was what you were doing, like American history; your second field had to be a comparative field, like religion in three different places; and then your third field had to be a completely different discipline. My first field was American history, my second field was comparative women's history, and my third field was sociology.

01-01:22:32

Tewes: I can see how all that fits together for your interests. What was your research like at that point?

01-01:22:43

Rosen: I had done so much research in art history, oh my God, so much, and in German no less, I had to learn German to do it. When I came, Larry Levine said, "You've practically done everything you need to do for a PhD, you've done so many research seminars, three languages. I think you need two more graduate research seminars and then you could take your orals and maybe be done." So I did take research seminars. One was on popular culture, which he was teaching, and one was on the South, and I was very interested. Actually, someone wrote a book about this—I never did—but I was interested in the fact that that year was the hundredth anniversary of the Civil War and all these diaries by Southern women were being found in attics, and they were being collected in various places, and a lot of them were in our library at Berkeley. I thought, Wow, maybe I should think about what these women were thinking during the Civil War. And so I wrote about how they were, in fact, of course desperate to have the men in their family live, but also how angry they were that they were so incompetent, that they didn't know how to do things. Once slaves left, they didn't know how to make a fire, they didn't know how to cook, they didn't know how to feed animals, and they said, "Our education was useless." So they actually understood that being a belle, a Southern belle was really a useless thing during the Civil War, and that's what I wrote about in that research seminar. And then later a very fine historian wrote a book on that.

01-01:24:33

Tewes: So clearly rich for—

01-01:24:35

Rosen: It was a wonderful subject. The first seminar was on popular culture, and I decided to look at the first women's magazines in the 1860s, and think about the women's magazines in the 1960s and think about: what are the common denominators? They're, of course, very different, but is there really a big change in a lot of things? And there weren't. There were advice columns, there were all kinds of things that were still there about fashion and so forth and how you should behave. So I wrote it on that, I wrote it on women's magazines, and that was popular culture.

01-01:25:23

Tewes: What led you to the history of sex work?

01-01:25:28

Rosen: Well, that was quite late. When I was a senior, I had to think about what I was going to pick for dissertation. I was interested in doing a dissertation on Mable Dodge Luhan, who had these salons in the Village and all these famous intellectuals and socialists in the Village, and it was an incredible life, all of these photographers and artists. But her work was sealed until 2000, which seemed at that point a very long time, so I couldn't do that. Then one of my students said, "I'd like to learn about prostitution." She said, "I don't know how to do it." I said, "Well, let's go into the library and let's see what we can find." Then I saw that there were huge numbers of books called *The Social Evil in New York*, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, *The Social Evil in New Haven*, *The Social Evil in*—just all cities, and I wondered, What is this all about? I realized that they had really investigated and interrogated the question of prostitution, why was prostitution allowed.

01-01:26:49

She wrote a paper that had a little bit of that. She read some of those books and she saw that there really was a change. She really didn't understand yet, what I understood later was that prostitution was seen as a necessary evil in the nineteenth century, and it became seen as a social evil in the twentieth century, because of syphilis, and because of the idea that in equal marriages, men should not go and infect their wives, they should have love relationships with their wives. So it was her idea of doing a research paper, I think it was her senior thesis, that got me to think about this might be a really interesting—I wasn't thinking about sex workers at all. As I did research—and I did it in

many places in the country—I began to know that there were sex workers, and I interviewed various sex workers in different places. Particularly in San Francisco, there was a group called COYOTE [Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics], and it was run by Margo St. James, so I learned about prostitution in its contemporary form.

01-01:28:03

Of course, then it was still in the newspapers for the most part, but the biggest difference that it changed was Americans decided they had to abolish prostitution and they decided they had to abolish liquor, and they did both by World War I. Now by the Second World War, FDR said we can have liquor; no one ever said we could have prostitution, so the laws that were passed during that whole twenty-year period that I wrote about are still there, they haven't changed. That's what fascinated me, is that we really are the—we inherited that incredible effort to get rid of prostitution. Now it just changed, women had been mostly in brothels where people could protect them, where they had other women there, where there were people playing the piano, were there were jazz pianists from Louisiana. It was a very different scene. They weren't out on the street, for the most part, and they didn't have pimps. Once prostitution was illegal in various ways and you couldn't have it in a federal way, it had to go state by state, city by city, except if it was interstate, you took a woman across states for the purpose for sex, "immoral purposes," I think the word was. So that meant every state had to figure out how are they going to do this. Women in various states would go to mayors and say, "We want to abolish prostitution," and other people would say—they'd go to the Mayor of San Francisco and they'd say, "We want to abolish prostitution." And they'd say, "What do you want to do with them?" "Oh, we'll create a domestic agency." That was about the last thing prostitutes wanted to do, was clean women's homes.

01-01:29:53

I began to understand this is a very big story. It's a story about how doctors thought it should not be abolished; how American do-gooders thought it should be abolished but didn't have any solution and didn't really care that much what happened to prostitutes; then there was the prostitutes' view; and then there was the suffragettes/feminist view, which was not very good. So in some way, my dissertation became a series of chapters, like essays.

01-01:30:30

Tewes: Do you think that made your work stand out?

01-01:30:35

Rosen: I don't know. I was already an assistant professor and had already published one book when I did my dissertation, so I don't think that that—it did stand out, I mean, *The New York Times* wrote about it and all that, but I had already done a book that was about prostitution before that, so I already was known as someone who had written about prostitution. I changed the dissertation, because it was still graduate student level, it wasn't as serious, and I didn't write as well. As one person said, "You don't know how to put these essays together and learn how to sew them together." That was quite true. I already was known about doing prostitution, because of a book right before that, and so I didn't finish my dissertation until my second year as an assistant professor.

01-01:31:37

Tewes: Right, so that's 1976?

01-01:31:39

Rosen: Yeah.

01-01:31:41

Tewes: Let's talk about this book that you were working on. [laughs]

01-01:31:46

Rosen: I got a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, which doesn't exist anymore, and you could go anywhere and study any discipline that was different, you could see the interdisciplinary quality of this period, any discipline that was not your discipline of your dissertation. I went to Harvard to study criminology, because I was working on prostitution. I was kind of burned out, I have to admit, and I spent more time learning Balkan folk dancing than I did my dissertation the first few months. Studying for my orals was really hard, I mean, it was just I had to know so much. I really started working on my dissertation after a few months, burned out, and I got serious, and I was in the Schlesinger Library, which was the library for women's history, and the librarian said, "What are you doing here?" It was also very cold in that place; I don't know why it wasn't heated, I remember wearing a heavy jacket. I said, "I'm writing a dissertation on prostitution." She said, "Well, we just got cartons of papers written by a prostitute." She took me into this room and there were boxes and boxes, they weren't cataloged, they weren't dated, and I had no idea where they—I knew who they were from, because they were the daughter to whom this prostitute had written. So this prostitute had written to a Boston Brahmin, whose husband was a famous

biographer at Harvard, and her daughter donated all of these letters from the woman we called Maimie Pinzer, which was not her actual name, because we had to protect her name. And there it was, unbelievable, a thousand pages of letters.

01-01:33:46

That is what I dropped my dissertation for, partially because the National Endowment for the Humanities gave me $1,500 to write an introduction and annotate these and put them in order, and that took three years, so that was a lot of work, so I just did away with my prostitution dissertation. It was very hard. I had to figure out from the content when she was doing this, when she was doing that, to put it into some kind of chronological order, because she was writing, "I'm in Montreal now," "I'm in New Jersey now," "I'm in New York." Basically, she got out of prostitution, because this Boston Brahmin woman kept supporting her to teach her new skills: stenography, typing, and all kinds of things. And also, when she went to Montreal, she created a halfway house for prostitutes, so she did a lot of things for her.

01-01:34:47

Later when she wasn't writing letters, she got married. And this was during the flu, the 19[18] flu, and her sister and brother's families were all really sickened and finally died by the flu, so she adopted two children. And she took that husband and children to Los Angeles, and that's a whole other story that is not in that book, because they didn't really want me to find her, because then there would have been liability and an estate. Every time I said, "I want to know what happened," no one was interested. *The Feminist Press* wasn't interested in my finding out, nor was Harvard, so that's where the letters end. I now have a whole other story and I'm not quite sure what to do with it.

01-01:35:43

Tewes: Wow, is there—I don't know, it's been fifty years since you first published that.

01-01:35:55

Rosen: Right, and this is how it happened. I should say that when *The Maimie Papers* came out, it was considered a notable book by *The New York Times*. They wrote endless articles about me and about how I found these letters. And of course, it was sexy, it was a prostitute. Even though she didn't talk about sex, she talked about how she did it, how she found men, how she would go to nice places, how she wanted to have middle-class manners. Her whole thing—she wrote beautifully. In fact, the woman who was getting these letters, sent her

letters to *The Atlantic* magazine, which is a very high-class magazine still, and they said, "These are fabulous letters, but I think our readers would find them too inappropriate—they're not going to want to talk about prostitution." So they were sent back to this woman. But that's how good the letters were, they were really very good.

01-01:36:55

Now how did I find out about the rest of her life? Well, one day someone, a professor from Texas, called me up and said, "Are you Ruth Rosen?" I said, "Yes." "Did you find the *Maimie Papers*?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "My father was the adopted son of Maimie," and his wife worked at *The New York Times*, and they both saw the book, and they didn't believe that I actually did it, that it was a fake thing. He was a professor at Texas, I think his brother was a professor somewhere else, and they were trying to convince their father this was his mother, I think it was definitely his father—that she really existed, that I really found true letters, this was not some fake thing. They kept saying, "A woman doesn't get tenure by making up a book like this at the University of California." He told me a lot about his—what his father had told him, and he said, "Start emailing with my father, get him to trust you, and then go interview him and talk to him." So I did, and I flew to New York where he was—not New York City—and I went and talked with him, and he told me that when she adopted him she did not treat him well, and she did not treat his sister well, and that they both ran away when they were sixteen.

01-01:38:34

Now this is a real shock. All these letters had made her seem like the sweetest, kindest person, from whom she was getting money. Here's this adopted son on a video, which the sons had taken of him, saying that they ran away, because she treated them so badly, first in California, then elsewhere, and they just felt like she was just horrible to them. When I thought about writing an essay or something about this, it was a long time after the book was published, it was probably within the last eight years, the two brothers were absolutely enraged at the idea that I would write this. The father wanted me to write it, he wanted me to write it, he felt it was important that how badly she was treated would counter the fact that in the letters she came off like an angel. But the sons were the ones who were just—they said they'd sue me; they just were in a rage. We went back and forth and back and forth. Then I also tried to think, and who would publish this, and why would people be interested in this? Most people don't know about the *Maimie Papers* anymore, it wasn't published yesterday, and *The Feminist Press* is not going to have another epilogue on the book, where would it be published. I'd have to say that everything that happened in

the *Maimie Papers* was different and then it was very difficult to figure out what to do with it.

01-01:40:11

So I still have all those letters, and I know what happened; and I have pictures of him, I took pictures of the father, the adopted son; and I have all these kinds of nasty letters from the—the sons wanted me to meet him, and yet they didn't want me to write about how badly he was treated. So the irony was they wanted me to meet him, but they didn't want me to write about him.

01-01:40:35

Tewes: They wanted you to know but not to analyze.

01-01:40:36

Rosen: Yes, that's right. So it's still sitting there.

01-01:40:44

Tewes: What an interesting epilogue for that.

01-01:40:46

Rosen: And the interesting thing was when this guy called, this professor from Texas—I think it was Austin—I was maybe a full professor then, he said, "I have to tell you, I'm the son of the adopted son of Maimie Pinzer." I thought, Is she going to continue to be part of my life until I die, is this going to go on and on? I don't know what to do with that, it's a very hard thing to do. I talked to a lot of colleagues, a lot of friends, who would really be interested in this. Someone who had read those *Maimie Papers* would be interested, but not necessarily people were—that was a long time ago. It was very hard to figure out where to write that.

01-01:41:38

Tewes: I'd still think that proves the long tail of this work and the importance that it's made in the study of women.

01-01:41:46

Rosen: Yes. Since the sons were so angry, even though they're the ones that got me in touch with their father, I didn't want to deal with their anger, and I didn't want to—and I also couldn't figure out where to publish it. Who would know that she had come off as such an angel and then had been such a horrible stepmother, and who would care? They cared; the father cared. It was kind of

like, I couldn't figure out who would want to—who would be interested. Anyway, that is how Maimie came into my life and continued to being in my life.

01-01:42:31

Tewes: And I think that's a great place for us to leave it today. Is there anything that you want to fill in from what we've been discussing this morning?

01-01:42:38

Rosen: I think I just want to add that when I finished the *Maimie Papers*, I had very little time left. At the University of California, if you don't finish your dissertation within two years, you lose your tenure track position and then you get demoted to a lecturer. And that's a really horrible thought. I had a wonderful job, a research job, at the University of California. So I was finishing the *Maimie Papers* at the same time I was doing the dissertation, and the second I finished that, both of them, I then had to write a book and change my dissertation quite a bit and have a book available to get tenure within a few years. I then spent the next few years doing more research, going to more archives. I went to Laramie, where all the archives that Laura X had sent them to, I went to the Schlesinger [Library], I went to many other places. For the next book I interviewed about a hundred women who had been in the women's movement, I just interviewed a lot of people—no, that was for my last book, excuse me. [laughs] I didn't interview women for that book.

01-01:43:51

I decided that the real change was that women had gotten out of that brothel and that they were really alone on the street with pimps, so I called it *The Lost Sisterhood*. The book got a lot of attention, because no one had ever written about prostitution, and it really was the first book, and it was very national. It really covered New York, California, it covered so many cities. So when you'd finish reading that book, you'd understand it was a national movement. Later people decided to write very specific dissertations on Chicago or New York or some city where people were French or people were all Black, and people wrote lots of very specific things. But what I did was sort of show that there was a movement, and that's all. That was enough for me, and that was really hard. I mean, no one knew that, and I didn't know that. That was the book. Because I had already finished *The Maimie Papers* and it was published, and had finished *The Lost Sisterhood*, I got tenure.

01-01:45:07

Tewes: And we will definitely be speaking about your teaching career at the University of California, Davis the next time we meet. Thank you so much, Ruth, this was a great first session.

01-01:45:17

Rosen: Okay.

Interview 2: March 18, 2022

02-00:00:04

Tewes: This is the second interview with Ruth Rosen for the Bay Area Women in Politics Oral History Project, in association with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. The interview is being conducted by Amanda Tewes on March 18, 2022, and we are in Berkeley, California. So thank you, Ruth, for another session.

02-00:00:22

When we left off yesterday, we spoke a lot about your academic work at Berkeley as a graduate student, and I also wanted to speak about some of the activism you were doing on campus or maybe off campus in the community at the time. I know part of the work that you were doing was in the anti-war movement and Stop the Draft, specifically. What can you tell me about that?

02-00:00:47

Rosen: When I first arrived at Berkeley in 1967, I was pretty shocked that there was actually a movement to try and close down the draft office in Oakland. We marched to Oakland, and amazingly all these buses that were coming to bring men to go to Vietnam—because people went from the West Coast to Vietnam—what was astonishing was that some of those buses could not get through, and the police actually had to be backed up, because there were so many people. But that's really not an accurate assessment of what happened. What happened is that a lot of people who were adults at that time thought this was very immature, the sheriffs and the police thought it was outrageous, and just ordinary people were trying to get to work, and young people trying to get to work, would just curse at us for trying to stop the draft. We would say things to the young men as they came off the buses to go to Vietnam, "Don't go!" and "This war is insane." and in the end everyone felt good that we had done a very dramatic thing, and it went across the country, but in the end it didn't really matter, we didn't achieve anything. But it was a way of expressing to other groups around the country that one thing you can do is to try and stop draft offices. And that happened. Some places burned down draft offices, and a lot of people who then concentrated on the office where young men went through, where they had their physicals.

02-00:02:27

The other thing that was important in the anti-war movement that I did was as a graduate student, and being somewhat articulate and a token woman, I was asked by a lot of the, as they were called, male heavies, to be the token

woman who spoke about anti-war activity on Sproul Plaza. I spoke there, I spoke in Ho Chi Minh Park—these are all things that only people at Berkeley would know exactly where they are—but I did speak a lot of times with very famous men. Because I had a press pass, I did not get hurt, but there were times when the Oakland sheriffs literally encompassed and circled, the way Putin is circling Ukraine, and squeezing everybody into one place. When that happened, I realized that people are really going to get killed here, and I sort of snuck out with my press pass, I really did not want to be injured.

02-00:03:33

Later, a little later, I began to feel that a lot of the young men who were fighting in the anti-draft movement were throwing rocks at the police and sheriffs, and throwing rocks into professors' offices, and it seemed this is not the way to end a war. What difference does it make if you throw a rock into a professor's door, and what difference does it make if you get beat on the head by the Oakland police? That is not the way to stop the war. It became a kind of really physically violent—in Berkeley, at least on campus—a movement that I did not want to be part of, and that's a few years in. It was during that period that women who were part of the anti-war movement also recognized the violence of what was going on, and also recognized the fact that women were never the people who were asked to speak to newspapers, and when people wrote position papers, we weren't the ones who wrote it. This is true all over the country. This was happening in Boston, LA, and so forth. This is what began the sense of inferiority, like, Why are we not speaking? We have a voice. And I think the Civil Rights Movement was the real jumping start from that, because if one race was not superior to another, why was one sex superior to another? So that's important.

02-00:05:08

Gradually during that period around the country and in Berkeley, women began to form small groups of consciousness raising, where they began to talk about their lives and the way they felt treated in the women's movement and in the anti-war movement and the way their husbands treated them. Some of these people were married and had kids. I did not know about it right away. I saw a little three by five card on a bulletin board and it said, "If you want to know about women's liberation, come." I was writing for a newspaper called *Every Other Weekly*, which a number of sociologists and historian graduate students had taken over, and we were publishing every other week. I'll come back to that, because it was an important way to have really serious ways of attacking the anti-war movement, rather than throwing rocks through professors' windows. At least it spread ideas that were new and very important.

02-00:06:20

I think that women began to meet, and I went to that group, and the first thing those women said, "You can come as a press person, but you have to participate." They went around the room and said, "If you had been born a male, a boy, how would you have been treated?" Well, that was kind of mind boggling to me. As I said in this interview before, I did not have a bar mitzvah, my brother got a car when he went to college, they paid his tuition in graduate school; I got nothing.

02-00:06:59

Tewes: Yes.

02-00:07:01

Rosen: I got nothing. These are just later things, when I wanted to buy a house the first time I had a check, no one in my family gave me any money for a down payment, so all those things were given to the first-born Jewish son and none of it was given to me. Moreover, my parents didn't think I needed to go to graduate school, especially my father. They were very old-fashioned children of immigrants. As we went around that circle, I began to realize all these things I'm saying about my brother, why did that happen? Why did my brother have a train set and I couldn't play with it? Why did my brother have a BB gun, and I was so good at it, why couldn't I shoot at poles and things? Then I realized when I left, this is really profound, I hadn't even thought of that. Groups continued, and that group continued, and other groups continued all over Berkeley, and people were asking all kinds of questions from the banal to the very profound. Like, why aren't there women in the Legislature; why aren't there women professors; why do men not clean the toilets; why do women not get to speak to the press during the anti-war movement; since the sexual revolution was intersecting with the anti-war movement and the women's movement, why did these men think that women's liberation is really about just being more available for sex rather than improving their economic, social, and political status in the country? They didn't get that for a long time. People were also talking about men treating them as disposable tissues, as sexual disposable people. There was that that people talked about. It was endless, there was almost no end. Why do we feel like we need male approval about our dress, why do we feel we have to look good? What later would be called in a more elite way in the university, "the male gaze," but we didn't have that language, and we were talking about: why did we have to get dressed up and appeal to men, why couldn't we wear the same kind of clothes that they wore? A lot of women did, they started wearing boots and sort of Army fatigues and all kinds of bizarre clothing and hats. And people began to change. A lot of people began divorcing the husbands, a lot of people started

talking about how horrible it was to try to take care of a child when you're making so little money. Single mothers were particularly distressed.

02-00:09:49

Then we did some actions. I think one of the funniest ones was we went to the local Pacifica radio stations, which is KPFA in Berkeley, and one of the members in our group said, "I left my purse there, can we come back and go there?" We had been asking to have a women's hour on KPFA, and they wouldn't do it. They opened the door and we all rushed in and took over the microphones, and we said, "We need women's liberation on this radio. This is a radical radio station and it's ignoring women. You have Black activists but no women." Of course, they kicked us out, but that was a pretty brave and bizarre thing that we did.

02-00:10:40

And there's a lot of fun in the things we did, because they were—I think there's a lot of humor in the women's movement, actually. I laughed a lot, because there were a lot of serious things and we needed to laugh a lot. These were new ideas and every day we would feel a little bit more angry, and I don't think that went away. I think after a few months, each individual would get over their three-month period of realizing how they were treated and begin to figure out what can be done. But I think it was immediate anger, like, how come I didn't know this, why did men open the doors for me? So one day we had a demonstration in Oakland, we had a number of people from Berkeley, and they asked us, the police, who we were and where we lived, and we picked the most radical women who were communists and socialists in the twentieth century. We said, "Emma Goldman," and we said, "Clara Zetkin," and we just went through this. They wrote them to the FBI, which forwarded it to J. Edgar Hoover, "We cannot find these women or their address." This was hilarious. They were looking for people that were dead, very famous women, but they didn't even know they were famous. We knew they were famous, because we were starting to think about women's history.

02-00:12:08

We did things like that. I'm trying to think of any other fun things that we did. I think we did a lot of humorous things. Oh yes, I remember from one Christmas we boycotted a big toy store with signs saying, "Don't get your boys guns and don't get your girls dolls. Get them neutral—" we didn't have the word for gender—"get them neutral toys that both boys and girls would play with." So we did that. There are a lot of actions like that.

02-00:12:39

Tewes: How effective do you think those actions were?

02-00:12:42

Rosen: Probably not very effective. I think someone might have looked at it and said, "Hmm, that's true, I only get my daughter dolls." But I have people in my family who still get their kids male toys, and [their girls] very pink, little dolls, so I don't know. In fact, right now I think we're in the pinkest stage of dressing women in pink. I don't know how effective they were, but they made us feel like we were doing something non-violently and possibly educating other women who were not in the movement. Anything that drew more women into the movement was really important to us, even if they didn't agree with us, just for them to know there was something. Because after all, it started very slowly.

02-00:13:31

Now I'm saying it started very slowly, but you have to imagine that this was going on in Boston and Chicago and it was going on all over the country in college campuses. And I used to wonder, in fact, how we went to a big meeting in a big hall on the campus, how there would be an incredible number of pamphlets, just small pamphlets that became very famous. Where did they come from? One came from Buffalo. One came from Boston. These were very famous essays, and they were deep, and they were profound, and they were by people older than we were who really—way advanced graduate students, and they wrote very important essays, and they were always there on the tables. So that spread ideas, and that, I think, was what we were doing, we were trying to spread ideas.

02-00:14:19

I think the thing that I got involved with, aside from just reading these things, was a group of history graduate students and sociologists. There was a newspaper that came out that was a humor and literary newspaper; I never saw it, actually, but apparently all these people—because I was very busy in the anti-war movement and I wasn't noticing, they wanted me to be part of this. Anyway, we took over this newspaper, and it came out every other week, [the *Every Other Weekly*]. It was investigative reporting. The Regents were paying for it before they realized what we were doing, which was incredible. They were paying for sixteen pages that came out every two weeks. And what did we have? We would have investigative reporting of what the University was paying for; which were kinds of weapons that were being used in Vietnam, the labs; what they were doing on campus, off campus; radiation; we

looked at the money that was given and the inequities that were given in fellowships to students, people of color, and why were male students always given first chance at all these things.

02-00:15:36

I think that wasn't nearly as important for me, though those were very important to others, as publishing some of the first people who wrote very important essays. A woman who wrote "Goodbye to All That," Robin Morgan, in New York. It's an incredible essay, "Goodbye to this, goodbye to that," it goes on and on. Essentially that's, "Goodbye, we're not doing that anymore." It's a long essay and it's very powerful. Susan Griffin, who was at Berkeley, we published some of her poetry. I think we published essays from people in Boston who were very involved in the Boston Women's Health Collective. And I think we published from a lot of men who were doing very good investigative reporting about what was going on in the physicals, how people were essentially pretending they were ill by self-hypnotizing them and putting them in an altered state of consciousness. We published all this.

02-00:16:48

And we would rotate who was editor. I was also doing photography at the time, so I was a photographic editor sometimes, and sometimes I was the editor of the whole newspaper, and we would change who was the editor of the newspaper. I kept doing photography, and for *The Daily Cal,* because I was getting very excited about doing photography. I did one of the governor, I did it of all the people who spoke on Sproul Plaza, and then I did it for Fred Cody and his wife Pat Cody. They lived across the street from me and had a whole bunch of children, and so I just took beautiful portraits of all their children and gave them portraits of their children. Both of them have died, but they're the ones that created the fantastically important, very, very well-known Cody's Bookstore on Dwight and Telegraph. That was very important.

02-00:17:44

Sometimes I would do essays. I began to be really obsessed with how clever the posters were on campus and near the campus. The ones in San Francisco were more about the psychedelic life that was going on in San Francisco, the pictures were psychedelic. They were very beautiful, but they were about the psychedelic dancing and drugs that was going on, it was more of a hippie place. What these posters were, were about the war, about women's liberation, about Black civil rights. And there was a place that was doing them, silk screening them, and I went in to view them. I thought, My God, they have an industry here. So I said, "Can I take pictures of all of these? I can, because they're all over campus, but I'd like to take a picture of what you do." They

said, "Of course." Then I took pictures of the most beautiful posters on campus, and I wrote a whole essay about the importance of posters in social movements. That was really important to me.

02-00:18:51

Tewes: Yeah, talk about material culture and the importance in movement building, yeah.

02-00:18:57

Rosen: That was very important to me. At a certain point I had to kind of settle down and really work and really pay attention to my graduate seminars. Then Reagan also stopped the funding from the Regents, so the newspaper was without funding, and it had to be somehow self-supporting, so we all went back in some ways to our disciplines and ending up getting PhDs, or we would not have gotten them. At some point, we had to really learn all this, and we weren't paying enough attention. So we began to go back to different disciplines.

02-00:19:36

And one of the ways we knew each other was there was a historian at Berkeley named Carl Schorske, and he decided that he would teach European intellectual history, but he would have advanced graduate students, each one of whom would have a specific topic, and the students would not only go to his lectures, but they would go to that graduate student's seminar, and was in my house. I picked art, because I had been in art history, and I knew how art had been used in poster art, because I had actually written a dissertation on that—I mean, a master's thesis on that. And so I taught them about nineteenth-century art, and I taught them how posters, Soviet posters, German posters, Hitler posters. I taught them about many, many times the Stalin and Hitler posters looked the same, the artistic conventions were the same, and that was fun. Then we would go to his lectures, which were magnificent, and then we'd go to his classes. So that was very intense, but I also met all of these people from other disciplines, and we became friends, and that's where I met other people outside of the History Department, all these different graduate students, philosophy, political science, and sociology. I don't know whether there were other disciplines.

02-00:20:57

Tewes: Were there other women in these other disciplines? I know you were the only person in history for a while.

02-00:21:03

Rosen: I don't remember if there was another woman that he picked to do this. You know, there were so few women in all the graduate programs, so I just don't remember. That doesn't mean it didn't happen.

02-00:21:17

So that ended. And I think all of us started really studying, and we've done a lot of research; you could do that while you were doing politics, but to study for your exams, you really had to just really work nine hours a day for about a year. And particularly in history, it meant like getting ten books out every day; understanding what the interpretations of ten different historians were about, I don't know, FDR; and understanding what you think, so that you understand the historiography, how different people had different interpretations, and that there is no objective history, but many historians have argued about these things. And we had to learn about these debates.

02-00:22:02

It was interesting. We were being trained to know about all the historians who had written about all of American history, and in a sense, we had to know what we thought, in a way it was carving out who are you, what do you think, what would you have done, which historian would you have been. And most of these historians were modern historians, not old ones, so they were contemporary and older than we. That was very, very tiring. Then I took my exams. I had quite a wonderful group of people, and I stood out in the hall and a lot of my—this was quite common—a lot of my friends stood with me, because I was in a state of panic, as most people were, while they were discussing whether you passed or not. And I thought, They're in there for a half an hour, it's been forty-five minutes. I didn't know that what they were doing is they were so excited about the new ideas about women and sociology that they were talking about it. They were talking about the answers I had to these various questions, and they were debating these issues and talking about them. Finally the door opened, and they said, "We have decided to give you highest honors with distinction." I was just stunned, I thought I was going to fail, so that was great.

02-00:23:32

Then I had to, of course, think about my dissertation. And that's when I told you I got very burnt out from reading so much, and that's when I went to Cambridge with a fellowship to study criminology to enhance my dissertation, which was on prostitution, which I mentioned before it was a student who asked me where the archives of prostitution were, and I found them, and she

wrote a kind of an undergraduate paper, but I really wrote a national study of prostitution. But before that came *The Maimie Papers*.

02-00:24:09

Tewes: Right, which we discussed, too. I love that connection, too, a student's curiosity helped propel this.

02-00:24:17

Rosen: And while I was doing my dissertation, as I said, I was in the Schlesinger Library of Women's History, a librarian asked me why, and then she said these boxes had just been donated. And I spent the next three years with the National Endowment for the Humanities paying me to put these boxes in some kind of reasonable order and to edit them—there were 1,000 pages, and to edit them by 500 pages—and Harvard and *The Feminist Press* were going to publish them.

02-00:24:46

Interestingly enough, this was very painful. I saw the cover to the book, which was gorgeous, and it didn't have my name on it. I thought, This is incredible, I mean, that's what nineteenth-century women did, they published with a male name or they just didn't put their name, because it wasn't modest enough. Well, this was outrageous for someone who was in the women's liberation movement. I wrote to them, and they said, "Well—" I think they thought, Well, she's in California, she doesn't know anyone, she's in a second-rate University of California research university, she's not at UCLA or Berkeley, we can get away with this and pretend it's *The Feminist Press* that did this. Well, that was really painful. Fortunately, as I mentioned before, there was this Women's Historical Association that had started in the 1920s, and by the time *The Maimie Papers* were all collected and ready to be published, there were a lot of people all over the country, and the word went out what *The Feminist Press* was doing, and people wrote to them and said, "If you do this to our colleague, no one will buy any books from you." They did this with someone else who wasn't going to get tenure at Stanford, so there was a lot of smart, young women who could be organized faster than any of the discipline just because these women in the 1920s had started an organization and we did piggyback on them. That was very painful, because the idea that they would, after three years of work, not have my name. Then we compromised and said, "Well, we'll have your name and then we'll have the editor," she did do some editorial work, a woman in Seattle. So her name was put on it, I didn't care that much, but my name was—I did the epilogue, I did the introduction, I did all the annotation.

02-00:26:53

And I wish Google had existed then. I remember one thing was the Fairfax Disaster, and I thought, What's the Fairfax Disaster? I didn't know. I went into the library and pretended I was a freshman who didn't know how to use the library, I said, "Could you tell me what Canadian historical book could tell me what the Fairfax—" and they told me what happened, the explosion of the ships, and all these things that I—she was in Montreal in Canada for a while. There were things that she referred to in Chicago that I could have found these things in two seconds on Google, so these were very time-consuming annotations. When she would mention, "Well, I went to this blah, blah, blah," I had to say, "This was a settlement house that Jane Addams had founded." I knew that, but there were lots of things I didn't know.

02-00:27:43

This was a very painful period, and my mother had just died, so I was in mourning, and this first book was now being taken away from me without my name. And it was a book that was so extraordinary, I also knew lots of universities would think highly of me for having found these things, for having done the cataloging and editing, and that it would become a very notable book. I felt I was really being cruelly treated and they knew that I was suffering a lot from my mother's death, but they nevertheless did this to me. Because the women all over the country who were in women's history wrote to them and said, "We will absolutely not buy anything from you," they relented, and my name is on it.

02-00:28:37

By the way, this was done by Florence Howe, she was the editor, Florence Howe, and I've never forgiven her. I have spent my life forgiving everyone in my life. I think I'd like to die with only one person that I haven't forgiven; she is the one person. She ran *The Feminist Press* at that point, and she did this to me, so I cannot forgive her. I think she's died by now, but I have never forgiven her for that. You just don't do that to a young person.

02-00:29:08

Tewes: And within the movement.

02-00:29:09

Rosen: And within the movement, from *The Feminist Press*, no less. It was just all so bizarre.

02-00:29:16

Tewes: This story also for me, though, brings up the importance of that network that you were discussing.

02-00:29:19

Rosen: The network was really important, there's no question, the network of women historians all over the country, and how fast that news came, and it happened very quickly. A few years later, a colleague of mine, quite a few years later, didn't get tenure at Stanford, and the same thing happened. She was an extraordinary historian, and women all over the country who were historians just sent unbelievable letters. She actually got tenure from her department, but not from the person who was in charge, the chancellor. So we did, again, a very big—I don't remember any other event, but these were very early years, and we were organized. That group met and still meets in the fall, and they go somewhere in the Berkshire Hills. And the first thing they do is they try to find a trillium flower, which was the first ritual that these women in the 1920s did. And then people give papers of work in progress, and people talk about it. Usually, it's work that's pretty highly in progress, so it's really interesting and it's really fairly worthwhile hearing. That's where I met all these women from all over the country. So every year I would go to the Berkshire Women's Conference, so I met all these women historians all over, you know, every university that sent somebody went there.

02-00:30:53

Tewes: Do you remember the first year you went?

02-00:30:56

Rosen: I know it was Rutgers and it might have been 1969 or 1970, but I'm not sure.

02-00:31:03

Tewes: So you were still a student.

02-00:31:04

Rosen: Yeah. I think so, yeah. I think we were all students, actually, unless some of us were assistant professors, maybe.

02-00:31:13

Then after I was in Cambridge, a job became available in women's history at both Davis and UC San Diego, and I really wanted to be at Berkeley. I did not want to be in Los Angeles, it wasn't my place, I didn't fit in. The people who

were so wonderful to me wrote to the search committee, because they hadn't met anyone, they hadn't interviewed anybody, and said, "She's actually coming here to visit a lot of her friends, because she's in Cambridge for the whole year. And while she is here, why don't you just invite her, just meet her?" It was pouring rain; I had no idea where Davis was or where I was supposed to go. And I found them, and they met me, and they liked me, and we talked about history in general, so that was a tremendous advantage. When the real interview started, they at least had an idea of who I was, and they liked me and I liked them, so that was a wonderful thing that my professors at Berkeley did. They said, "You would be the top candidate that we would advocate for, for this position anyway. No one in women's history at Berkeley would be considered." But that was really a wonderful thing that they did to give me the advantage of meeting these people first.

02-00:32:44

Then there was a job at UCLA, then there was a job at San Francisco State, then there was a job at Sonoma State, then there was a job at everywhere, campuses began having people in women's history. That took a few years, but the numbers increased and increased and increased. And because we didn't exactly know what we were doing, on the West Coast we had an annual seminar at UCLA where all the professors—we were all young assistant professors—would meet and try to talk about, "Okay, how do we teach this and how do we teach that, and how do we do this in a chronological way but a thematic way, how do we deal with class and gender, and what's going on with American history and where women fit in this, how do we fit all this into American history so it's not just what women did?" We spent every year finding out another group, it was a very important learning experience. That went on, and it still goes on, and now we've recruited a lot of younger women who are in women's history who are now young assistant professors.

02-00:34:03

I had a tenure track position and I had finished *The Maimie Papers*, but I had not finished my dissertation, so I had to really work very, very hard to finish my dissertation. You couldn't have more than two years without a PhD and teach at a research university, so I had two years and a quarter, and I just finished it exactly when I was supposed to, or I would have been fired. Then I began teaching and it was pretty scary. I had 400 students in a women's history class, I had a graduate seminar on comparative women's history, but I had taught already. And that's the good thing that Berkeley had given me: the opportunity to teach in this seminar that Carl Schorske had created at Sonoma State, and then this seminar for senior theses. I had had some advantages to think about: how do you treat students with respect, but also help them go

where they want to go; how do you find out what's really important to them; and how do you figure out what's too hard for them at this moment in their life, this would be difficult, and tell them that this would be too difficult? "These archives are in Chicago, you can't go there right now, so pick another subject where material would be available in California, and we can get you money to go, but we can't get you money to go all over the country."

02-00:35:42

So I had to learn a lot of things, and I learned a lot of those things already, so I became a good teacher. In 1983, I got the award for the Distinguished Teacher at UC Davis, which was probably the highlight of my life at that moment. And I even got a letter, because every two years you got a letter about whether you were still appropriate to the University, and I got a letter that basically said—these are not the exact words—but sort of, "Despite the fact that you're such a good teacher and won the Distinguished Teaching Award, we don't think you've published enough, and you really need to get that dissertation into a book or you're not going to get advanced." I understood at that moment teaching was unimportant in the University of California, it didn't matter that I got a Distinguished Teaching Award. I loved teaching, all my friends in women's history, we were intoxicated with teaching this new field, because we were teaching something we had taught for three years, we were not bored, we were truly intoxicated. I think that that's one of the most important things: we were not bored, and we were all learning lots of new things.

02-00:37:05

So I spent those years—very hard—I spent a lot of years in the Schlesinger Library; I spent three months in New York; I went to Laramie where all the archives where Laura X, a woman who had collected all the material from the women's movement, she sent it to Laramie, Wyoming, so I spent a summer going through her uncatalogued—I seem to have always gotten uncatalogued, undated material—but there was a lot of things in there. And actually, I saw a letter I wrote, and it was to a man who was in the anti-war movement about how I could have cared very much for you, but you didn't know how to treat a woman, you didn't understand what the women's movement was about, and maybe in five years you will understand, but you have not evolved. I thought, My goodness, letters like that are there. And I didn't sign it, but I saw my letter. I saw other things that I wrote, because I wrote a lot of things for the underground press, and I wrote a lot of things for the *Every Other Weekly*.

02-00:38:21

So I finally finished the book, *The Lost Sisterhood*, which I've described, which is a kind of series of essays about why prostitution became illegal in the

twentieth century and why it became reframed as a necessary evil for men to have women that they could have sexual relations with apart from their wives to a social evil. And part of that was the germ theory of disease, which occurred in the 1890s, but part of it also was the new idea of companionate marriage, women wanted people to be equal in marriage, so a lot of people were talking about that. They felt like, Well, these men should not be going to prostitutes. Then there was also something else that was going on, which I wrote about a lot. There was a feeling in America that capitalism had gotten so brutal by the early twentieth century, everything had a price, and a lot of very radical people were writing, muckrakers all over America, and they were writing about poverty, and they were writing about the fact that everything has a price, and there's great poverty and there's great wealth, but look at everything, everything has a price. Then they'd say, "And even sex has a price." That became sort of a kind of way that they talked about it, that was another reason.

02-00:39:51

A lot of feminists and socialists and suffragettes, at that time, did not really deal with the prostitutes well. The best they did was create agencies where they thought they would get women to clean wealthy women's houses, or they'd go to a mayor and say, "Abolish prostitution." And they mayor would say, "Where am I going to put them?" One interesting thing that happened, women in 1911 got to vote in California, and they weren't sure what they were going to do about that, but this issue of property versus people became very important to women who had the vote. There was a judge who would give very big amounts of money to people who hurt property and give almost nothing to men who assaulted women. This all fit into this basic feeling that assaulting women was no longer acceptable.

02-00:40:56

I finished my book, I did get tenure, and after I got tenure, I think I felt a kind of giddiness, I can now do whatever I want to do. It's not like I wanted to write comic books, but I really understood that I didn't have to write in an academic way, which I hadn't, actually, in *The Lost Sisterhood*, as I read it, but I also realized I could do other things. And that journalism from eighth grade apparently, which I didn't remember, and the journalism I did when I was a graduate student began to really become important to me. In 1988, I got breast cancer, and I took a leave of absence. And then in 1991, I think, or 1990, I got a second breast cancer, and I realized that the people who were really working well about HIV, the gay community, particularly in San Francisco, had politicized the disease, and that's the way they really got money and research and attention to their disease. So after I had had these two horrible—the first

one was the horrible one, because there was chemotherapy, radiation, my IQ went down to ten for about two years. There was an extraordinary moment where Susan Sontag was in Berkeley and someone asked me to have lunch with her, and she said, "I hear you're very depressed about all this." And I said, "Yes, because I feel like I can barely understand what's in the *New York Times*." She said, "What do you love?" I said, "Music." She said, "So listen to music!" Then she said, "I had two years of chemotherapy in France. Do you think I didn't recover?" And I thought, Uh, no, I think you recovered. "You will, too," and I did. The first thing I did is I wrote an essay about the politics of breast cancer, and I sent it to the *Los Angeles Times*. And basically, what it said is how the politicization of disease could create money for research, for drugs, for attention, for helping people, and changing the frame. At that point, people didn't talk that much about breast cancer; now there's a whole pink month that's devoted to it. So this was kind of new, although there was one president's wife who talked about it, but it was really before that something you didn't talk about.

02-00:43:42

Well, the *LA Times* published it immediately and the opinion editor said, "Is there something else you'd like to write about?" And I said, "Yes," I said, "I'd like to write about the fact that we're about to invade Kuwait." He said, "How do you know this?" I said, "Because I read all these people who are very honest journalists in various things that most people in the mainstream don't read, and we're going to invade—" it was two months before—"we are going to invade Kuwait, and I don't know whether we'll go into Iraq." So I wrote about that. Then he said, "I don't have a woman on the op-ed page, so why don't you, although you're a professor at the University, why don't you write twice a month?" So it was very interesting, if I wrote about women's working wages or I talked about how women were treated in a textile mill or how women were not allowed to be conductors, that would go on the center of the page. You have a column left and a column right. Had George Will on the right and Jean Kirkpatrick on the right, and he had me and Robert Scheer on the left. And every time I wrote about anything that had to do with women and work, he put it on the center. But if I wrote something about sexuality or I wrote about abortion or if I wrote about what the women's movement has not achieved, the three major demands we said in 1970 that we still don't have and we don't have as of today, that would go in the middle of the page. Wouldn't go on the left side, it was always in the middle of the page. Everything I wrote about, every time I wrote about any really important activity that was happening, it was always, always in the center. So I did that for quite a few years. I was teaching at Davis, living in Berkeley, and there wasn't email, so I was faxing my—you can imagine, I was faxing my op-eds to the op-ed editor.

02-00:46:02

Tewes: This was *Los Angeles Times*?

02-00:46:04

Rosen: *The Los Angeles Times*. And there was one period when I was in an artist colony, I think in 1991 or 1992, and they didn't have a fax, but I had to go to a post office that did, and I had to send my op-ed through a post office that had a [fax machine]. Very few people had faxes around, they just weren't all over the place. There was one at Berkeley, you had to go to a certain place on campus to find it. This was very interesting, because the copy editor was very good at showing me what wasn't right, what wasn't good. I mean, she just changed it enough to polish what I did, I didn't know how to do it as well as she did. The opinion editor was out of central casting, he was very gruff. He would call me up and say, "Who the hell taught you that the lead comes at the end of an opinion? You start out making someone want to read the second sentence." And he would be very gruff with me, and I didn't care, because I thought, In a sense, I'm getting a PhD in journalism from him. He is teaching me how to really think about writing really good op-ed pieces. And his copy editor, who changed things and just moved words around, she was teaching me how to be a more polished writer, and that was wonderful.

02-00:47:29

So this went on for quite a few years. At one point I came home from Davis, and there was a message on my answering machine, and it was from the opinion editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. I thought it was a male friend who was joking with me. He said, "We have a position—probably temporary, someone is leaving six months or a year—on the editorial board. Would you be interested? We've seen your work in the *LA Times*. Would you be able to take a year off of Davis?" I said, "Oh, seize this time. Of course, of course." I mean, at that point I was not intoxicated by teaching women's history anymore. I had done it, I had pioneered, it wasn't all new to me anymore. Lots of things were new, but not in the same way it had been in the beginning. I don't even know what year this was—

02-00:48:34

Tewes: I think you leave Davis in 2000, so—

02-00:48:37

Rosen: Yeah. That's right, so it was the late 1990s. I began writing about all kinds of things on the op-ed and they gave me a lot of freedom. I began to see what was happening with Iraq and I began to see what was happening in

Afghanistan after 9/11, so I was writing all these very radical pieces about: why are we invading Iraq? But I couldn't say that in a title. I'd say, "What if Iraq exported almonds instead of oil?" I wouldn't put "instead of oil," I had to be very careful, everyone had to be very careful after 9/11. Almost every journalist was very, very worried about being called unpatriotic after 9/11, as a lot of Americans were. There were about three of us who were really telling the truth to power, and then there were other people who were a little more cautious.

02-00:49:44

At that point, I left Davis for one year. And let's see, I had taught from 1974 to about 2010, and that's a long time, maybe it was twenty-four years. And I think I really felt like, I'm not thrilled by what I'm doing now. It's like the young people are filling in the broad strokes that my generation created, and more dissertations from different places about prostitution don't thrill me or people who wrote about various prostitutes in other cities didn't thrill me. All the people in my generation had done these broad strokes in labor history and urban history, and I think a lot knew what we had done, and we weren't thrilled by the idea of filling in those blanks. I think we liked having young people do the dissertations on these subjects. So for me, it was like seize the day, I couldn't believe that I had this opportunity, so I left Davis for one year. I had an editor who was extremely liberal with me, I had an editor who was not like the editor at the *LA Times*; I think she was tone-deaf, but the editor himself was very good, and some of the editorial writers were very good. But I had already learned a lot about how to write a good op-ed.

02-00:51:09

I was writing an editorial three times a week, so we would arrive at ten o'clock in the morning and he would say, "Okay, so what do you want to write about this week?" and everyone had to have something really important. I would say, "I think we have to write about blah, blah, blah," and I would come up with, "Condoleezza Rice is lying and so is [Colin] Powell. We have major people who are lying to us, and we had Condoleezza Rice—" the editorial board had all sorts of famous people who came through, and many of them were lying. We also had fantastic people who came in, and who were very much against the Iraq War and very much against what we were doing in Afghanistan. It was very exciting, the atmosphere was more bawdy and more rowdy than a gentile university, and I liked that, I liked the fun. The other thing is that there weren't these petty politics. If you and I had some argument at one o'clock in the afternoon, and we had to file our work at four o'clock, we had to work together, you just couldn't hold a grudge or you couldn't hold a grudge for the next day, you had to get it all done. So the petty politics that

stands for politics that are so petty in the university, they just couldn't happen, you had to get that paper out every day.

02-00:52:47

I enjoyed it. In the middle of that first year, the publisher, who was extremely conservative and a Republican from *The Arizona Republic*, came up to me and said, "I disagree with everything you write, but I think you do a tremendous job and you do really well, so I would like to promote you to be a political columnist." And I thought, Wow. I had taken a pay cut to be on the editorial board, because I thought it was just exciting to have a new adventure in my life. So they upped my salary to what I had been making as a professor, which wasn't much, but still it was nice not to be dropping. I then was told, "But we need your brains on the editorial board, because you're a historian and you know—you think sociologically, you put everything in context. So we want you to write one editorial a week, plus two columns." I can't tell you how tiring that was, because for every single column I did tremendous amounts of research, and sometimes I would have a bulletin board where it would say, "Three weeks from now I'm going to write about that," and I would have all the research for it, and, "Two weeks from now—and tomorrow I'm going to polish the one I did last week." So I had to figure out how to get two columns a week. If it just happened, then of course, I could just do it the next day, but I needed to actually be home, because there was too much noise. They let me be home two days a week to write, because there were people who were watching television, which wasn't appropriate, and I didn't want to snitch on them, and there were people who were being very noisy. I couldn't think as a writer.

02-00:54:34

They allowed me to come to the editorial board, and then also to write two columns at home, and then come back and polish them and edit them and file them, so that was wonderful. And that went on for quite a while. Then they said, "Do you want to stay at Davis?" And I said, "No." This was 2000 and I actually left 2002 formally from Davis, because the way you retire—because I owed them some time from leave I had taken, so there was a three-month period where I had to go teach a course at Davis and do all this at the *Chronicle*. So I was going to Davis one day a week and then going to the paper two or three days a week. I was exhausted, it was just so tiring. That was the end, and I had fulfilled my obligation to Davis. I retired and there wasn't a big retirement thing for me, as there usually is, because I was still young and I was going to a new job. There was a certain amount of jealousy, there was a certain amount of excitement, but usually when someone retires there's a big deal, but that didn't happen. A few friends took me out to lunch,

maybe about ten people, but I wasn't really retiring, I was really going somewhere else, and that caused different emotions for people.

02-00:56:02

So I left and then I continued working on the paper. I did this all through the Iraq War, and before and during and after the Iraq War. Amazingly, I found out about Iraq—about 9/11, excuse me—about 9/11 while I was hiking on the biggest glacier in Europe in Norway. The person I was hiking with, we didn't know about it, we came back to this inn, which was next to a gorgeous fjord, and the woman said, "There's been an accident in your country." And we said, "What accident?" And she showed us on a Norwegian station that we couldn't understand. She said, "Come to my house. I have BBC and I have CNN." We went to her house just as the second plane went into the second tower, so that is how I found out about 9/11. We still had about a week before the plane was going to leave and before I had to come back to the *Chronicle*, and I realized, The world will never be the same, one of those moments that you really know. And moreover, I'm going to have to write about that world that will never be the same, and what do I think about it, what does the BBC say, what does CNN say, what are Americans saying? Well, Americans were going crazy with patriotism, but it was an awful event, but what were they going to do with it that was—what was the result going to be to American political culture? I knew that it would change American political culture in all kinds of ways. That was a real turning point, and nothing ever was the same, I think, in this country after 9/11. We saw ourselves as victims. And ironically, while we want to support Ukraine right now, we invaded Afghanistan and we invaded Iraq, and we killed a lot of people in those two things. I think that some kind of invasion of people who are training people who did do 9/11 would have been appropriate, but they weren't in Afghanistan, they were in Saudi Arabia. So that didn't make sense to me, and I was the only one that voted against going into Afghanistan, because I said, "These are all people from Saudi Arabia." Well of course, we want the oil from Saudi Arabia but, you know, there I was, the only person that voted against that.

02-00:58:49

Tewes: You mean on the editorial board?

02-00:58:51

Rosen: On the editorial board, yes. Then I could write columns about Iraq before, during, I came back from Norway. And I had to write—think about how things are changing, and I really did have to write about how America was changing and the way in which we saw ourselves as victims. As a superpower,

the Cold War was ending in a way that we didn't expect. And I kept writing. That was a big part of my life.

02-00:59:25

Tewes: Ruth, that particular example makes me think about a larger question I have about this work that you're doing: how do you marry your skills as a historian with your work as a writer? What were the comparisons there?

02-00:59:40

Rosen: While I was writing for the *LA Times*, I learned how to write as a journalist, particularly this very crusty, extremely right out of central casting, really belligerent opinion editor who was fantastically great at teaching me. I already knew how to be a historian and how to put things in context. So by the time I wrote for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. I knew how to do that, and I knew how to put things in historical context, and I knew how to be a critical thinker. I had gotten a PhD in a very important discipline and in sociology, so I knew how to do that. They had seen my op-eds in the *LA Times,* and I think that's why they hired me.

02-01:00:29

And I think that being a historian was a very big asset, because there was no one else—one day I heard someone on the editorial board say, "Well, didn't Robert Kennedy die in 1963?" And I said, "Oh my God, does anyone here know any history?" It really made me think, Yeah, it's good I'm on the editorial board, they were right. But that didn't happen all the time, but there was enough lack of history that I think I was a tremendous asset. I think having any good historian on an editorial board would be a very—or someone who just read a lot of history. So it wasn't new, I'd been doing it for the *LA Times* twice a month while I taught.

02-01:1:19

And when I wrote *The Lost Sisterhood*, I was already becoming more of a journalist, because I was writing for the *LA Times*. And then I was starting my next book, which was called *The World Split Open* and I decided I would write that book completely as accessible to a twenty-two-year-old woman who would understand what happened during the women's movement ten years from now, twenty years from now. That book, I had a great editor. And the first four chapters he read, he said, "You're still an academic there. Throw them out." I threw them out and he said, "Go back to what you really have learned." And I wrote it as a journalist, and it's a very well-written book because of that. He told me what's wrong and he was right. Maybe I should

stop there, because—or maybe I should stop when I actually left Davis and I also left the *Chronicle*.

02-01:02:21

Tewes: Yeah, why don't we finish with the *Chronicle*?

02-01:02:24

Rosen: Well, I left the *Chronicle* under really bad—a bad time. I was very honest, I had a lot of integrity, and one of the women who did occasional columns came to me and said that there's a man, whose name I now can't remember, who runs these franchises that are called—I can't remember any of this. It was about middle-aged women who didn't want mirrors and didn't want men, and you probably remember, they were all over the country. He was a friend of George Bush and a very big contributor to George Bush, and he gave a huge amount of money from his personal money and from the corporation—it will come to me. Huge corporation, it was one of the fastest-growing corporations in the world, that's how big it was. He said it was coming from the corporation. He was also giving money to places that were pretending to be abortion places with fake [clinics], and also telling women how they could avoid getting an abortion, and look at this fetus, and you can have an adoption. And I thought, That's horrible. Women are going, they're paying money, and they don't know this.

02-01:04:00

I wrote a column saying that this idea is a great idea. I went to the hour workout, it was a good idea, it was nice not to have men and mirrors, and I could see why it was really good for middle-aged women. And in a moment I'm going to remember everything, but for now I can't. I called the head of the international headquarters of this organization. Now the man who started it had been in jail for quite a few years, because he had not paid child support, but he came out and he lived right next door to George Bush in Waco, Texas. I called the international headquarters and I said, "Where does the money come from that supports all these organization/franchises all over the country that are not about exercise but are about trying to convince women that they shouldn't have an abortion? Where does that money come from?" And she said, "Oh that comes from his personal fortune." "Oh," I said, "his personal fortune?" She said, "Yes, he's gotten very rich." And I knew that he did have a huge franchise all over the world, so I wrote a column.

02-01:05:26

The next day, he decided to sue the *Chronicle*. He said I lied, he said that the money came from his corporation, not from him personally. And Fox News and I think NBC News all filmed me the next day. This became, I think, an opportunity for some of the conservative people in the Hearst Corporation to get rid of me. I had never done anything that—so I went to librarian, who knew how to follow the money, almost like right out of Watergate, and she helped me follow the money. And I found out that the person I had talked to that day was his niece, who had just graduated from college, and she didn't know what she was talking about. She wasn't the person who was the head of international headquarters, she was just his niece who said it was his money. Well, she had lied about that to all the press. And I had gone to my editor—not opinion editor—and said, "I have never talked to someone who doesn't spin something and tell me what I don't want to hear. Why is she telling me the truth, why is she telling me it's his personal money? That's really a very grave thing to say." And she said, "Well, you should just write about it. You asked and you really wrote about it." She said, "Just write about it."

02-01:07:00

And then I was suspended from the *Chronicle* for about three weeks, then human resources came, and all kinds of things happened. They said, "You can come back to the *Chronicle*, but you might not be able to write a column anymore, and you'll have to be here from eight to five, no matter the fact that you wrote a lot of your columns at home." And this woman, who was tone deaf, will now be your editor. I just said, "I won't do it, it's a no starter." I said, "No, listen. You told me when I said, 'What do I do when someone doesn't spin something,' you said, 'Write about it.' Well, I did." And she said, "I don't remember that." So she lied. The opinion editor, whose job was probably on the line from the higher ups, said, "You'll have to come here from eight to five, this was a terrible thing that you did." It wasn't a terrible thing that I did.

02-01:08:04

Moreover, the librarian who taught me how to follow the money the way Watergate did, we found all the IRS money, we went to a meeting with all the senior editors at the *Chronicle* and showed them that this came from the corporation, and it went to these various places that were, in fact, anti-abortion places, mostly in the Southwest. They listened, and then one of the women—unfortunately, it was a woman—said, "Ruth, you just don't get it, it doesn't matter. You just don't get it." In other words, "You don't get it, you've got the facts here, you've got the money, you've followed the money, you know what the truth is, and it doesn't matter." That's true, that editor said I lied, I never told her that. My editor said, "You've done a terrible thing, you've never done

anything like this, what a terrible—" mostly for something like that you write a little correction; they wrote on the front page an apology that I had made this error. Newspapers don't do that, they put a little correction, and this was because the Hearst Corporation decided—and Fox—to sue the paper, and they caved.

02-01:09:29

I said, "That's it, I resign." I said, "I will not work that way. You hired me because I'm an intellectual, I'm a historian, I knew how to write op-eds, but I am not going to work like that. I tell the truth, and I asked everyone here how to do it, what to do, I asked for advice, and I got it. And I got the librarian." And the union supported me tremendously. The union was really behind me, and I just resigned. There was an institute of various people at Berkeley, which was the next story, that they incorporated me, but I basically just left. The union got them to give me severance pay, and also to make sure that I was vested. Now all of this I am sworn not to tell, but I think it's time to tell. I wrote on a piece of paper, "I will never talk about this, but who's going to see this video before I die?" So it's a truth. What happened was, since I knew it was a truth, I sent all the papers to Catherine Pollard at *The Nation*, and I said to Catherine, "Do you know someone who's really important at *The New York Times* who could look at all this and write something?" She said, "Yes, I know the ethicist at the magazine."

02-01:10:57

She sent all of my papers, including all the money, all the IRS material, and he wrote an incredible—it was about maybe five or six months later. I remember it was a Jewish holiday and I was in New York visiting someone, and I was in Central Park, and I thought—it was a Saturday, they always get the paper a day early in New York—and I thought, Oh my God, look at this article, it's all about what I did. He described all the lying, he described the fact that everything I said was true, and I had not been really hostile at the end of my thing. I said, "There are other things you can do besides go to one of his things: you can take a walk, you can go to other gyms." He said, "No one should ever go there. If you consider yourself a feminist, don't go." He was quite, I would say, determined to really say, "This man is a real—he really was ham-handed about it."

02-01:12:04

When I read that I thought, This is a nice thing on a Jewish holiday to have this come out. That was nice, because I then took that column from *The New York Times* and sent it to every senior editor at the *Chronicle* and said, "Have you seen this? Ruth." That's all.

02-01:12:26

Tewes: That was about 2004 that you left?

02-01:12:29

Rosen: Yeah, maybe 2004 or 2005, I can't remember. Then I continued writing op-eds for—I wrote a lot for I think an English newspaper that's called *Open Society*.

02-01:12:45

Tewes: I saw something on the *History News Network*.

02-01:12:48

Rosen: Oh yeah, I wrote for the *History News Network*, I wrote for an awful lot of places. Meanwhile, there were a lot of colleagues of mine at Davis who were very intellectual academics who wanted to create a thinktank that was like the Right-Wing thinktanks, to get better messaging to Democrats. The problem was they were too much academics. I could do that with other people, but they were still thinking about writing the next article that would be peer reviewed. I was thinking about really creating some important information for the Democratic Party. Working with them was very nice, because we all became friends, and we met, but they for the most part really were stuck in thinking about writing: the article will be in this book, and the next book will be this. Only one person there really got into doing social activism through their writing and not caring about academic writing, but the rest mostly didn't. But some of those people were quite wonderful activists, really wonderful. So we lasted for a little while.

02-01:14:05

Tewes: Is this the Rockridge Institute?

02-01:14:06

Rosen: Yes, the Rockridge Institute. Then that fell apart and I gave the name to the people who continued. I said, "Let's call it the Longview Institute." George Lakoff was then, at the moment very, very famous, because he had written this book *Don't Think of an Elephant*, because the minute you do, you think of an elephant. And he was in linguistics and rhetorical things, and he was very good about that kind of stuff. At one point I went to, I can't say who, a donor organization, and they said that they would give the women in the group a million dollars for us to do all kinds of feminist things, but not academic things. I went to Chicago to a women's foundation, and George Lakoff was so awful to a number of Black women who were asking him questions like, "What does this have to do with us," and "How would you deal with these

messages to us, how would they reach us," and those one million dollars disappeared. I sat next to the woman, I said, "I understand the money disappeared just now. I would disappear." So that's it, so I left.

02-01:15:28

Tewes: I think before we—

02-01:15:32

Rosen: And now of course, I was writing my book. I haven't really talked about all the years that I was still at Davis writing my book, all the years while I was writing in the *Chronicle*. My book came out in 2000, so there's a lot of time while I was working at the *Chronicle* when I would take leaves for three months and do research for it, then I was rewriting it two times. I would give it to my step kids, who at that point, were twenty-two and twenty-four, and I said, "Please read this. Tell me what word you don't know; tell me what event doesn't make sense to you that you just don't even know about, you never heard about; tell me about a person you never heard about, I need to have a parenthetical statement." They were great, because I wanted young people to be able to not figure out like, What was that? What was Port Huron Statement from SDS? I really wanted things to be accessible, and at the same time sophisticated, but I needed young people to know these names and various things. How could they? They didn't live through them.

02-01:16:46

They were readers. Then of course, a few friends of mine around the country were readers. And my editor was a brilliant editor, amazing, and we would do everything by fax. Unbelievable that we did everything by fax, because it wasn't 1994, which is when I got my first computer and learned how to do DOS commands. Can you imagine an editor sending back something and you see all these changes: put this paragraph here, that's too wordy, all these things? He was a great editor, it would never have been as good a book without him, he was just terrific. That's a wonderful thing that doesn't happen anymore. Most of the books you see now, editors do not put the time into really polish something and make it gorgeous, and I had the luck of having that.

02-01:17:40

My book came out, *The World Split Open*, and the reason I wanted to write that book was because I felt at the end of the 1970s, that a lot of pundits and a lot of newspaper people were saying, "Oh, the 1970s were just a narcissistic time. Everyone became yuppies, everyone just went into their hot tubs," and I

knew so many people around the country who were, in fact, just starting new activities and new activism. Yes, there were people who were very narcissistic, yes, but there was also a huge amount of activism among Native Americans, among Black women who created their own organizations, among 9to5, among working women, among so many women. And that's just women; that didn't include all the men's groups and all the things that men were doing, and men were including feminist things in their union. There was just an enormous change in the 1970s. So I thought, This is really important, and this is going to disappear, because if historians would look at this, they would say, "Oh, the 1970s were just a time when people were narcissistic and bathed in their hot tubs."

02-01:18:54

When I realized that, I thought, I have to write not a definitive, but a really honest statement about what was the political culture from which the women's movement came, and then how did the women's movement change American culture? That was sort of the arc of my argument. I wanted people to understand where it came from, the anti-war movement, also parents who had been communists and liberals and so forth, and then how during the 1970s and 1980s laws changed, we got new words to describe things that we had no words for, and most of those happened in the 1970s. For example, the "sexual harassment" or "marital rape" or no one talked about "wife beating" and suddenly there was "domestic violence." And it was feminists who were creating the battered women shelters for women and gave them some place to go, then there were women's health clinics. All of these now are really municipal things, but then it was all volunteers from the women's movement who were doing that all during the 1970s. So I knew this was not true, and I wanted to talk about that. And all of the organizations that proliferated out of the women's movement, different—I didn't even mention all of the Chicanas who really were organized, one of the most organized groups of feminists. So I thought so many things were named during the 1970s. Not everyone knew about it, but there were really important words that were coming into—eventually they would come into the national language. "Sexual harassment" basically came in in 1991 when Anita Hill was being interrogated. There was another one, one of the Kennedy sons, he was charged with "sexual harassment." Then there was a man, who I can't remember his name, who beat his wife, and it was called "domestic violence."

02-01:21:09

Then also the laws about rape changed. When I was a young girl, I remember asking my father what's necessary for rape to actually be viewed as legitimate in a court. And he said, "There has to be two witnesses." And I said, "Where

are there going to be two witnesses that are going to stand there while someone's being raped?" And he said, "That's the law." And things changed, things really changed about how you bring evidence. For example, you can't talk about women's past sexual activities, you can't talk about what she was wearing, you can't shame her. There was so much going on in the 1970s and I felt that was so important. Even the word "marital rape," I had never heard that word, I didn't know what it meant until it happened and someone coined it. So I wrote a lot about that, and I called it in a chapter "hidden injuries of sex," that there were so many things going on for which we had no language, and these were hidden. And many of these things were how doctors treated women or the way in which the medical establishment treated women. "Well, that's nice, lady. Fine, you're just stressed out." The impossible ways that legal people treated women in divorce cases; the law changed about divorce, especially in California and other places. I think sexual harassment and rape and domestic violence were really big ones. The reason why I say sexual harassment and domestic violence are probably the two most important, is because women need to be safe in their homes and they need to not be battered and not beaten, so domestic violence covers that, it makes it illegal.

02-01:23:04

Remember two decades before that, the police thought that it was a private matter and that they weren't supposed to come in someone's house if a woman was screaming. Sexual harassment, we had no language for that. I remember my mother telling me, "If you work, and men put their hands all over you, just stay away from them and try to get another job." She had no word for it, this had happened to her. She said, "Just stay away from them, don't encourage them, don't go out with people where you're working." There was no language for this. But suddenly, where were the two places that women lived? They lived in workplaces, where there was sexual harassment, they lived at home, where they were beaten; not all women experience this, but a lot did. So I thought that all those hidden injuries now had languages and I felt that was very, very important. I guess there are other things that I wrote about, but I think that was the most important, giving language to—I think the women's movement did a tremendous thing, and this was done by a lot of academic people who coined these terms, "sexual harassment" or "domestic violence," these were coming from a lot of feminist academics.

02-01:24:17

I forgot to mention, in 1973 when Gloria Steinem came out with the magazine in 1973, *Ms.*, everybody thought that it would just flop. Also, the idea that women would not be called Miss or Mrs., no one could imagine that that would happen. But actually, *Ms.* became an incredible bulletin board. All over

the country women were getting *Ms.* and then giving it to a neighbor or a friend, and they were reading the letters, and the letters would say, "Oh my God, this is happening to me." So the letters were actually, in some ways, to me more interesting than what was in the text, because they were identifying with what was in the text. And in the magazine, they were really talking about all these hidden injuries and what was happening to women. It was a good magazine, it followed what was happening with women. And it actually made it possible for business, and it was business who realized they had every reason to accept *Ms.,* because how were they going to send something to a woman that's in an envelope, how are they going to know whether to send to Miss or Mrs.? But by having Ms., it was great, so businesses really liked that. It took a long time for newspapers to do that. I can't remember the date, but it was a long time before the *New York Times* did that. In the 1950s, there was a moment where all hurricanes and all violent—

02-01:26:07

Tewes: Natural events.

02-01:26:08

Rosen: Not natural events, but hurricanes—

02-01:26:11

Tewes: Tornadoes.

02-01:26:12

Rosen: Tornadoes and what is the big thing that comes from the—not tsunami, but when there's a huge amount of water?

02-01:26:27

Tewes: I would have said hurricane. [laughs]

02-01:26:29

Rosen: Okay, whatever it is, you and I know this word, it's in the newspaper every day.

02-01:26:36

Tewes: Tropical storms.

02-01:26:37

Rosen: No, it's not tropical storms. It's a word so common. Anyway, in the 1950s they had named all of those [after] women, and they called them all women, because they thought women created chaos and bad things, and all these hurricanes and all these tornadoes and all these tropical storms and tsunamis were reflective of women. During that period in the 1970s, there was a change. There were lots of changes in peer culture, there was a lot of change in law, there was a lot of change in the evidence that you could or could not present in law, there were changes in doctors. Doctors began to feel really anxious about whether they were leaving their door open, professors became a little more concerned about leaving their door open and not sexually harassing their students. So men were learning about all these things, because they were being discussed and they didn't want to be accused of these things, so they were trying to protect themselves. And into the 1980s, that happened. More and more men began to realize, Oh, I should make sure that door's open so some—I better do this, I better do that, because they really were afraid of being really pointed at and they would be seen as predators or something.

02-01:28:03

So those hidden injuries became public injuries, and men started knowing about that, and women had a language for them. Interestingly enough, almost no one I know knows this, but the *Special Victims Unit*, which is part of the *Law & Order* franchise from Dick—

02-01:28:27

Tewes: Wolf?

02-01:28:28

Rosen: —Wolf. It started twenty-three years ago, and I started watching it. And it was exactly about sexual abuse, abuse of children, abuse of men, men being raped in prisons, and it's still on NBC. And it occurs to me, since none of my friends seem to know about it, there must be a niche of women—why would NBC keep paying for it to have it weekly? They would have eight episodes and they'd have another eight, but it's still on, twenty-three years, something that I don't have any friends who know about it. Who are the people who are watching this? Clearly enough that NBC thinks it's worthwhile, and that's not unimportant. There are people who really were learning about it through that program.

02-01:29:20

And then there were films. At the end of the 1970s, there were very important films like *9 to 5* with Dolly Parton and Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda, and of course, *The Graduate*. And what's the one? Mrs. Robinson? Oh, that's *The Graduate*. Yeah, I'm thinking about another one, I can't remember. But about three films that were very feminist films or brought up feminist issues came out in the early 1970s; two of them came out right in 1970. When *9 to 5* came out, that was hilarious, because they really were showing working women how bizarre it was, and if they would run a place, it would be very different. And these were three great actresses who could really do it and they were hilarious; Dolly Parton was amazing. And the public liked these three people for the most part, they were very popular. So there were a lot of things.

02-01:30:27

As you go into the 1970s and 1980s, more and more you see the television programs turn on issues that had been raised in the 1960s or 1970s. Like Archie Bunker, he hates everything that his children approve of; or other programs where the issue would become was this person raped, or how we can—what kind of evidence can we give the court? All kinds of serial programs, a lot of it started turning on what happened in that workplace. And also, were people fake accusing people to get revenge? That was a big issue. Was a woman accusing a man to get revenge, because he dropped her, dumped her? These were all parts of plots in a lot of the films on television and in films way into the 1980s and into the 1990s.

02-01:31:26

Tewes: You make an important point here about, again, the impact on culture.

02-01:31:31

Rosen: I think it had a tremendous impact on culture, because people were seeing this on television, on some of their most favorite programs, like Archie Bunker, and gradually people were also talking or making fun of feminism, so it was still putting it into the culture. Some host would be talking about, "Was that a feminist faux pas?" Well, that puts it into the public culture just by saying, "Oh, was that wrong?" And the popular culture was changing. Now when did the political culture change? Also during the 1970s and 1980s, gradually all these issues rose to be part of the Democratic and Republican platforms when they ran for president and vice president. Only in 1980 when Ronald Reagan ran did abortion get erased from the Republican platform, up until then they had legal abortion was fine with them. I want to remind everyone that the three big demands in 1970 were: childcare, equal pay, and legal abortion. We

don't have those things yet, and I'm talking 2022. [laughs] So remember, those are three demands that 50,000 women said they wanted when they rode up Fifth Avenue and said, "These are our central demands." They had many others, but that's what they agreed on. Now it's 2022 and abortion is—the Supreme Court may over[turn] it, *Roe v. Wade* may, in fact—that was a legal change—may be overturned. Lots of states are making it impossible for women to get an abortion, and they have to go hundreds of miles and thousands. Which is like when I was in college, people had to go to Mexico or Japan, or find doctors who would do this.

02-01:33:42

But the really important issues here were legal abortion—childcare never got mentioned, except once. Childcare got mentioned when Richard Nixon was president. He talked about childcare, because he understood that the—he was talking to Khrushchev, and Khrushchev was talking about how the women had childcare, and he was talking about, "Well, our women stay home," and they take care of their women. But there was also a move among the—in the Congress for comprehensive childcare. That passed; it would never pass today. Comprehensive childcare everywhere in the United States, 1971, Nixon vetoed it. It never got brought up again until Biden brought it up. Obama somewhat, yes, but Biden brought it up as a really serious issue as part of the legislative package. So we have abortion that's been possible overturned; childcare never got into the big package, the Build [Back] Better package that Biden wanted, and I don't know whether it will ever go in, I doubt it. I said the first day when I heard it, "That's the one that's going to be exed out." And equal pay for women, that's a difficult one, because we do have laws that if you and I do the same job, for the most part we will have equal pay. But if I have children and I have to take a leave, or I have to have a flexible work schedule, at the end of my life I will have several hundred thousand dollars less than you. So we have to find an equality that deals with parental leaves and what happens when people take care of children, if they want to, and big incentives for childcare. So these things haven't happened yet.

02-01:35:45

What's very important is that the women's movement not only changed popular culture, but it also changed political culture. Look at Obama, very feminist; his wife, very feminist, not afraid to talk about that; very important that his daughters be feminist, that they be really important girls. Biden, very much a feminist; he wasn't when he was younger, but he evolved. His wife, clearly. And he did put childcare [on his agenda], and he doesn't want abortion to be overturned, but he doesn't have really—unless he gets a different Supreme Court, he doesn't have power over that, or a different Congress. But

he wanted to do that. So now we have three things: we don't have legal abortion; we don't have childcare, that was mentioned once in 1970 and then didn't mention until Obama and then Biden; then we have equal pay, which has to do with what kind of work situations women and men are going to have so that we actually end up, at the end of our lives, not poorer than men. And how do we get men to be part of the equality of taking care of women's housework and children? I once went to Cuba and I was really shocked. I wasn't a communist, but I was interested in a law that had been passed. And it was a law that required men to take half time of their lives to take children to childcare and to hang up laundry and to pick up their children. And I was there while this was happening, and I don't know how long it lasted, but I thought, Well, would there ever be a law like that in the United States? That was very interesting. But we don't have anything like that. We know that men just help a little bit, and they do more now, and young men do more than older men, but we don't have an equality in work. So we have it at the top of the political agenda, but we don't have those things yet.

02-01:38:11

Tewes: It's a good reminder of what was accomplished and what's left to be done. I want to be aware of the time here, Ruth. There is plenty of follow ups I want to keep for next time, but before we leave this conversation today, is there anything you want to follow up on?

02-01:38:36

Rosen: I was afraid when I wrote the book *The World Split Open* that maybe a lot of feminists would attack me, because they'd say, "That wasn't my movement, that wasn't what I thought." Amazingly there were no attacks, and I got tremendous support from women all over the country, wonderful reviews in magazines and newspapers, and it got a lot of attention. That was important to me, because I was afraid. You write a book about feminism, and feminists might possibly attack you. And that meant a lot to me. I also knew that I was never going to probably write another book that required basically about ten years of work, and that I was going to write things that had more delayed—not delayed gratification, but more instant gratification.

02-01:39:29

And also, eventually I did retire from Berkeley. After this Rockridge Institute and the Longview Institute ended, I went to Berkeley. All the people knew me there, and I said, "I'm available as a full professor—" at the UC campus you can do this—"to teach at Berkeley." The public policy people knew I had gotten a PhD by being an editorial writer. I had written on everything: do we want another Walmart here, or Condoleezza Rice. I had written on everything,

so they wanted me to teach, and the History Department wanted me to teach, because they didn't have a women's history course, and they didn't have a history of immigration, both of which I had at Davis.

02-01:40:16

Tewes: This was in the 2000s?

02-01:40:17

Rosen: Yes. And in fact, when I left, they still didn't have a women's history course. I started it and I ended it. I worked at Berkeley and it was nice, because it was close to home, but there were a lot of things that bothered me, because a lot of the young women were very involved with other activities, but that's fine, that didn't bother me. But what bothered me is some of the women were just involved in looking at their texts and social media, and not understanding the ways in which they were being shamed or in which they were being treated badly, and they were ways that I felt that they should know better. But in fact, they gradually did know better, because there was a third wave of feminism, and more and more these women would not call themselves feminists—my stepdaughter would not call herself a feminist, and she is such a feminist, she's the executive editor of a major magazine—because that word got so tarred by the right in the 1980s that it wasn't—I mean, to say you're a feminist in the 1980s and 1990s made people think that you were wearing boots and that you were angry at all men and that you hated the world. It had no soft quality to it, had nothing about loving things, loving families, caring about the world, caring about children, it didn't. So feminism wasn't a good word anymore. I think that's important to remember. I think that's it.

02-01:42:03

I think the two most important things for me is that the women's movement came out of a particular political culture and eventually came to the top, the very top, of the political agenda of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. And if you look at the way that they're divided right now, they are divided by issues that the women's movement brought up. Who would have thought that? I would have never thought that in 1970, but gradually as I got older—I didn't put this in my book, even, because Congress was not so divided then—but if you look now at what issues the Right and the Left—Congress does not really have a Left—but the Democrats and Republicans are divided on, all of those issues were issues that came up in the 1960s, either through social activism, Black Lives Matter, the women's movement, environmentalism, climate change, all of the movements that I was part of and that was part of the late 1960s, are all now at the top of the political agenda:

climate change, Black Lives Matter, and especially environmental change, since that's really terrifying.

02-01:43:26

And there are a lot of young people who are working very hard on that and doing tremendous work. I don't care if they call themselves feminists; it would be silly, because that word has been tarnished. I would not call myself a feminist if I were living right now as a young woman; I would call myself a social activist for social justice, and I'm working on climate change, or I'm working on equity for the number of students of color that get admitted into various universities. I would be working on social justice issues, and I would probably call myself a social justice activist rather than a feminist. Or I'd call myself an activist for Black Lives Matter or whatever. But there are really big movements both on the ground and at the highest level in Congress that came from the 1960s. I think we had a tremendous impact on the political culture, and there's nothing more I can really say about that. I think that that's how we changed American political culture.

02-01:44:35

Tewes: That's a great point. Thank you, Ruth, for your time today, I appreciate it.

Interview 3: March 30, 2022

03-00:00:05

Tewes: This is a third interview with Ruth Rosen for the Bay Area Women in Politics Oral History Project, [in association with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley]. The interview is being conducted by Amanda Tewes on April—sorry, March 30, 2022, and we are in Berkeley, California. So thank you, Ruth, for another session here as we round out our time together.

03-00:00:25

Last time we spoke, we had a really great discussion about your book, *The World Split Open*, and the larger connections in the women's movement. But I wanted to back up to the particulars of your experience in that moment. Just for some context, again, you joined Berkeley Women's Liberation in fall 1967.

03-00:00:48

Rosen: No, probably a little bit later, it probably would have been 1969 or 1970, I think. I think I was in a consciousness-raising group, but I wasn't really part of a movement yet, it was just scattered people all over the country.

03-00:01:01

Tewes: Okay, that's a good distinction to make, because one of the questions I had is where you met folks and how often you were meeting.

03-00:01:11

Rosen: That's really interesting. I think I mentioned. I saw a three by five card on a bulletin board in the Student Union and it said, "If you're interested in women's liberation, come to this meeting." And I did, and I thought, I don't need it, I'm a graduate student, a woman, I've done okay. And in an hour my head was upside down, because of that question of, "If you've been born a boy, how would your life be different?" And it kind of staggered me to think of how different it would have been.

03-00:01:40

Tewes: Yeah, that was really interesting to hear you speak about. I'm curious, though, what the meeting places were. Were you going to homes?

03-00:01:48

Rosen: When we first started, this group was really in the Student Union in some building in the Student Union. But after that somehow that morphed, and I

can't quite remember how, and we were always in someone's house. And usually the people had children, people had babies, because they couldn't leave, and they didn't have babysitters or the money for them. Many of them were getting divorced and they really had become single mothers. Those were the people who are pretty famous writers, in fact, and quite important activists. At the time, I think it's important to say that none of us understood that we were even clever, smart, or had any talent. And yet when I look back at the people in that group, about four of those people were amazing, who did incredible things, wrote thirteen books, or creating the first printing press in the women's liberation movement, published pamphlets. There were just so many people that brought—it was also interracial and it was class—that was what was interesting. Later people would say, "Oh, the women's movement was always just white, middle-class women." And I kept trying to say that in my book that it seemed that way, because many of us had come from working-class families, as did Betty Friedan, as did Gloria Steinem. But when you go through a university experience, which we had, you come out with the language and the poise of a middle-class person, even if you didn't have any before. So we looked white and middle class, but that wasn't exactly true.

03-00:03:27

I looked at that really carefully when I interviewed people for my book. The number of people who the first person to go to college, the first person who really had any idea about what the achievements could be for an education or a career, all of this happened because they went to college. College is like the common denominator of all these theoretically white, middle-class girls, but we looked very white and middle class. But the majority of people in my group, we all grew up in poor families, working-class families, often the first person to go to college, maybe had one parent who went to high school, one parent who started college, but there were no rich people in that group. I remember going to Dayton, Ohio—I did remember the city that I was so impressed with—I remembered seeing those women, they were so incredible. They hadn't been part of any particular movement, they just created a women's movement, because it spread so fast through *Ms.* Magazine. And I interviewed a lot of those women, and a lot of those women were first-time graduate students or college students, and their energy was incredible. They created all these volunteer organizations in Dayton, which now are municipal, but battered women's shelters, women's clinics, free universities for women.

03-00:04:51

We had that at Berkeley, too. I remember there was a whole educational sort of alternative place, we could learn how to fix a bike, learn how to fix a car, learn how to press a book and print a book. There were many, many classes

that we gave to each other what we knew, and a lot of people went to those classes, and they had nothing to do with the University. Nothing. That lasted for a few years. I just think it's really wrong, because at the same time, for example, at Berkeley, there was a huge movement of African American women who were really dealing with health issues in Oakland. At the same time all throughout California and the Southwest, Chicanas were more advanced than almost anybody, they were talking about the machismo of the men in their world, they were talking about the tremendous conflict they felt about being treated as nobodies in the Chicano movement, and yet they felt a loyalty, of course, to the Chicano and Mexican experience in California. So they would talk about being doubly colonized, first by the Spanish, then by America, but then they'd say the third is by men. [laughs] And they came up with some very radical pamphlets and books, and more importantly they had these incredibly large conferences that took place in the Southwest or Southern California, so it's not quite true.

03-00:06:14

Just as a parenthetical statement, a former student of mine who I didn't remember, but she just wrote to me, she said, "I was in your class in 1970 and it absolutely—your first Women's History class, and it totally changed my life." She said, "I'm just coming with a book from the University of Chicago Press—" she's already written six books—and she said, "It's about 9to5, and I started it, I cofounded it in Boston." And she said, "Would you be willing to blurb it?" I said, "Of course, send me just a proposal of what it's about." She said, "You have no idea how many of your students just don't write to you and tell you how you changed their life." Maybe ten have, but this is big. Some are very well-known authors now and can get university presses to publish them. I think that was really important to me that I was influencing people and didn't quite yet know it.

03-00:07:11

Tewes: I've been thinking about that. Have you seen your teaching as activism?

03-00:07:17

Rosen: Yes, I always saw it as a political act. I didn't see it as something that I should push on people or that I should use as propaganda. What I felt I should do is teach them to think about race and class and gender—not using the word "intersectionality," because nobody knew that word—and to let them then read things that would influence them. So if they read something by Miss Jane Pittman or they read something by Sojourner Truth or they read about Eleanor Roosevelt or Billie Jean King, I was teaching them about the world in which women talked about their problems and were activists. And never, ever were

any exams or anything about being political right, but they were really influenced, because this was all new. So it resonated, and they would think about it. A few people would come and say, "I don't know about this." I said, "Tell me about your life." Suddenly they'd be talking about things, and it was their ideas about how their lives had been influenced.

03-00:08:27

As almost all the people, I think, in my graduate class and my cohort at Berkeley, I think we all saw the fields we chose as political action, because the people who were in urban history cared about the fact that urban history was very important. Labor history, Black history, Chicano history, Native American history, women's history, all of us were taking these whole new fields and discovering not armies and kings and queens, but rather ordinary people. A lot of our professors were teaching us how to find sources for those people who didn't write things, like using humor and folklore and all kinds of unusual things to figure out how people really expressed themselves through dance, through song. So we were all learning that from our professors, and it was very big all throughout the United States, too. I don't think you could have graduated and left without seeing our work as being political without acting in a politically activist way. We knew were doing something new, and that it was important.

03-00:09:38

Tewes: These days I think we talk about a political action of giving people a history, and this feels very similar.

03-00:09:46

Rosen: Yes, I think that really says the right words, I just didn't have them. [laughs]

03-00:09:52

Tewes: Okay, we're connecting here. [laughs] I want to back up a minute, as you made a really great point about class in the Berkeley area, the Berkeley women's groups. Were you aware of these other women's groups that were mainly women of color?

03-00:10:09

Rosen: Yes.

03-00:10:10

Tewes: How connected were you?

03-00:10:11

Rosen: We weren't that connected, because every woman of color felt conflict. Like the women in the Black Panther Party, for example, years later—I don't know how many, five years later—many of those people wrote quite extraordinary autobiographies about how they didn't feel that they could ever talk about the way that had to take submissive roles in the Black Panther Party. But there were a whole bunch of very powerful books by women who were not convinced by women's liberation, sure it was white and middle class, but they also felt like they were being disloyal to their brothers. That was true for Chicanos, it was true for some Native American women, it was true for almost all women of color. By the middle 1970s, all of those groups had actually formed national associations, but in the early years, no, they didn't want to be associated with women's liberation. I knew of them, but I also knew that they were tremendously conflicted, and they really did feel like they were being disloyal. But on the other hand, they also felt the men were being disloyal to them.

03-00:11:22

Tewes: Yeah, there's that push and pull, you see the intersectionality. Something you've written very wonderfully about are the divisions and coalitions with the movement. We've talked about race being one, and class, but another is sexuality.

03-00:11:43

Rosen: Oh yes.

03-00:11:44

Tewes: I'd be curious to know what you saw on the ground in this movement about these conversations around sexuality.

03-00:11:52

Rosen: Well, there were two really main themes that I think kept happening. One was that the sexual revolution intersected with the women's movement in the Bay Area. For a lot of men, they thought, Oh, the women's liberation movement is about women wanting to have more sex, and we'll just treat them as disposable tissues. I think I wrote that men saw women as people on their revolving beds. There was a lot of hostility and confusion among women in the women's movement, because on the one hand, they did like the idea of exploring their sexuality and being less prudish than they had taught to be in the 1950s and early 1960s, and so they would criticize male sexism as sexual acts. At the same time, they also felt that they wanted to know about their own

sexuality. That was one big thing, which I think has remained a tension, that a lot of people didn't understand that women's liberation and the sexual revolution intersected and had lots of tension in it. A good part of the women's movement, there are many, many articles, famous Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," all kinds of articles that would come out about we're not going to take this anymore. Moreover, many of these women talked about how unsatisfied they were with all this sex, and they would say, to sort of put it bluntly, that these men learned how to make love in tenth grade—and they didn't call it making love—and they just screwed women as tenth graders, they had no idea what satisfied women. A few older women began to write about that, but men weren't reading about it, and women were starting to read about it. But there was that tension between, I want more sex, but it's not very good. So there was a lot of accusatory statements, a lot of divorces around that.

03-00:13:49

The other thing that happened—and this happened in my group—is that so many of these women got so mad at the men that they lived with, and why they didn't clean the toilets, and why they didn't do childcare, and why they expected them to take care of life as a traditional wife when they didn't feel traditional at all? And they were authors and poets, and a lot of those women just started coming out as lesbians, but not particularly saying that. They just started loving other women and becoming comfortable being sexual with other women. A lot of the people I remember around Berkeley just wanted to show solidarity, because in other parts of the country, there was some hostility and big splits among quote, unquote straight and lesbian women, which Betty Friedan really didn't help. She said that lesbians were the lavender menace, that it would make everyone think that women's liberation was just filled with lesbians who wore heavy Army boots and cut their hair short and didn't like men and hated marriage.

03-00:14:55

I don't know, it just happens to be in my world, amazingly, the women who became involved in other women. I still remained friends with them. Although I was living with a man, they became friends with straight women, and we've had lifelong friendships, forty years. So that straight split didn't happen in the most intimate areas of my life, I didn't experience it. All the people I'd ever been friends with, as they changed, they remained friends. And they're all over the country. When the Berkshire Women's History Conferences began in the very early, I think 1969 or 1970, there were a lot of women who were already couples and living in—sharing a room, but as lovers, not just as two colleagues, so things had really changed. But there was somewhere in

different places a straight and a lesbian split where lesbians felt these women were disloyal to the movement, and how could you live with me, you just absolutely—how could you call yourself a feminist or a women's liberationist and have anything to do with me? They had just been so awful. They were very hostile and angry at the way men treated them as husbands or as men in the movement, both/and.

03-00:16:23

I think it happened at more of a national level at conferences. I think that Betty Friedan, who was such a powerful force, by 1970 had really used the words that lesbians were a "lavender menace." And it took until 1977 at the Houston Conference for Women, which Jimmy Carter had allowed and paid for, for Betty Friedan for the first time to say she took that back. That's a lot of years. [phone rings] It's oaky.

03-00:17:03

Tewes: [laughs] It's all good. Um, did it—let's pause. [break in audio] Okay, Ruth we're back from a break and you were talking about Betty Friedan finally acknowledging that maybe she was not correct. [laughs]

03-00:17:19

Rosen: We'll go back to that Houston conference, because what happened at the Houston conference was a real healing of a lot of splits, all kinds of splits. It was an important event that there are some books on. I used a big catalog that was published right after it, and it was really important. So a lot of the splits we're talking about now, in some ways, were healed by resolutions being passed in 1977 at Houston.

03-00:17:47

But to go back to the early years, there were certainly conferences when lesbians wouldn't talk to straight women and vice versa, and there were straight women who felt like, I'm just not going to be in the women's movement if this is the way—and so they left. It was also true, absolutely numerically true, that the women who created this volunteer women's health movements, clinics, battered women's shelters, a lot of the newspapers, almost all of them were women-centered and they were mostly lesbians. They had the time without being concerned about men or babies to really create these what were volunteer, incredibly important offices, places where women could go that now a city would normally have. But the fact is that most of those women were lesbians, and they for a very long time—

03-00:18:49

They also, I think, did something very powerful by creating a women's music festival and culture. So women like Holly Near and other women who sang songs that resonated so powerfully, both straight and lesbian women went to those musical festivals and really felt love for women, however they expressed it. I think that was not unimportant, and that went on from the very late 1960s on into the 1970s. There were lots of parties that I remember going to where there were lesbians and straight women all dancing together. I also remember people walking down Telegraph Ave. or other places in Berkeley, one woman straight, one woman a lesbian, and them holding hands and just showing women could be whatever they wanted to be. There was a certain amount of cockiness and showing love, we didn't have to be split. I'm not sure that happened anywhere else; I just saw it and experienced it, and it was nice.

03-00:19:48

I think what is unusual for me, when I interviewed a lot of people for my book, they talked about how women really treat them terribly, how they were hurt, they never recovered, they were traumatized by the women's movement. Jo Freeman wrote a very fabulous article about how the women's movement, by insisting that there be no leadership, just pounced on any woman who got any attention, because none of us got the attention. Some women just got so jealous and envious when women did get attention, and then crucified them, and talked about them as male-dominated, blah, blah, blah. A lot of women, particularly in big cities, were really treated quite badly, not just in a consciousness-raising group, but in a larger urban environment. And they left, and they felt like the women's movement had tortured them. That was also part of the truth. Amazingly, I don't know why that didn't happen to me, but it didn't. Maybe because I was the only woman in the History Department, but no, I don't think so. The men who were part of the movement in general kind of respected me and they respected new fields, and so it was more professors who didn't get it than men my age. I never actually experienced, at least to my face, anyone putting me down or saying something hostile to me. Yet, I was a token woman in a lot of places. And I know I spoke out on Sproul Plaza with Tom Hayden and other famous men, and no one ever said, "Why are you there?" I just didn't get any kind of pain from that, I was never traumatized by the women's movement, which I—[phone rings]

03-00:21:38

Tewes: [laughs] Let's pause. [break in audio] We are back from a break. We were talking about leadership challenges in the women's movement.

03-00:21:44

Rosen: Right. They were many women who were treated very badly by other women, and I think Jo Freeman really nailed the problem that women really felt like, well, now we can be leaders, but why is she a leader, and why is her book published but no one published mine, or why is her article considered like the article of the women's movement, but no one pays attention to what I write? I don't know why I didn't experience that, but I can tell you that when I interviewed so many women for my book, there were people who accused Gloria Steinem of being a CIA agent. There were people who accused all kinds of women in New York of being either FBI agents, and they weren't; there were FBI agents, but they were not the ones. And there were people who just attacked women who were leaders who spoke out. I think Phyllis Chesler is one of them and has become very bitter about that, and there were other people who became very bitter, and I won't mention their names, but I know them and I'm friendly with them and they did say it really traumatized them. This was going to be the safe place and it was for me. Why? I don't know. Maybe because I never made a big fuss about myself? I don't know. I just did what I did, and I was friendly with other women, and I was very inclusive. If people wanted to be part of the women's movement, I encouraged them. Maybe because I was teaching women's history already? I don't know. Also, most of my leadership after maybe the late 1960s was really in the classroom, not any more standing and giving speeches at Ho Chi Minh Park or on Sproul Plaza. Fortunately, I just didn't get attacked. I never saw myself being attacked in print or personally, and maybe it happened, but other people seemed to really know it happened, but I don't and I never felt like I had to heal from that.

03-00:23:46

People have asked me that, "Didn't people get angry at you getting a PhD and they were working for the telephone company?" No. There was a woman working for the telephone company in our group, and she thought it was thrilling that there was a poet and an author and a potential professor in that group. She was thrilled and wanted to do more with her life, and she also saw the possibility through us. I don't know, I just don't know. The only people I saw at Berkeley who I didn't like that much, and I didn't respect, though they didn't attack me, because I avoided them, were women who tried to simulate and emulate the real male heavies who were leaders in the New Left.

03-00:24:33

They called themselves Socialist Union, Feminist or Women's Liberation Socialist Unions, and they met in Oakland. I was interested in that, because I was interested in what was socialism, really, not communism, but what could

socialism really offer in a good way to women? When I went to that meeting, if I closed my eyes, I felt like those women were just parroting what they heard from these male heavies in the movement, as they were called, and many of them were married to those men, and so they wanted to impress those men that they knew the language. I sat there bored out of my mind. It didn't have anything to do with really the problems of women's experiences, it was rhetoric, it was polemic, it was socialist polemic, it was communist polemic. And how many times can you hear about America being a running dog imperialist and all that? It was just all kinds of things that were not talking about, whereas the women in Dayton were really talking about women's lives. So in many ways, I came to think that in big cities, particularly like Berkeley or San Francisco, maybe New York, LA, there was a very heavy influence of New Left men influencing a certain number of women to act like they did, and I think in some ways that's where some of the tension was for those women. They felt that they were socialist feminists, they were not radical feminists.

03-00:26:04

Well, no one knew exactly what a radical feminist was. There was the idea that radical feminists were all lesbians, but that wasn't true, or that radical feminists only cared about women's issues and didn't care about race or class; that wasn't true either. What they were, they were radical about everything. So these women at these meetings were just tedious and boring and really I felt like, I'm never going again, this has nothing to do with women's liberation. And eventually they just disappeared. I think they took that feminism with them and actually did some wonderful things in their lives later, but for those years I think that they were constrained by being attached to or very involved with these male heavies who were used to speaking in a particular rhetorical and polemical way. Some of those women really do some wonderful things in their lives and used feminism as a really important part of whatever occupation they did, whether they became part of a council in a city or became an author, everything that they had kind of not paid attention to when they were speaking this way. It really became part of their lives later. This was very annoying to me, but they didn't attack me. I just left, I just didn't go there, and I didn't say anything, I just listened and wanted to know what they were doing.

03-00:27:34

So I think I was very lucky. I think I felt, like a lot of women, that men were treating me like tissue paper that could be just turned around and that I wasn't important, that a commitment wasn't important, that love wasn't important, that they really misunderstood what women's liberation was. Yes, I wanted to know more about sex, but they weren't the ones who were going to teach me,

because they knew so much less. And they were really, in many ways, like tenth graders, and they learned something in tenth grade and they never stopped doing it. I think some of them have never stopped doing it, in my opinion.

03-00:28:15

Then there was the tension between lesbians and straight women, and that happened in a lot of cities. I think the more you go into the Midwest and outside of these big cities where there had been a big Civil Rights or anti-war movement, I think the women cooperated and colluded. I told you I saw this in Kansas, and I saw this in Dayton, Ohio, I was just very impressed. I came back and I said, "I saw what seems to me the purest kind of women's liberation, where they were really taking care of families—" or not taking care of families, but they were also creating a world in which women could survive better with all of these places that they had created.

03-00:28:58

I feel very lucky for not having been trashed, and that was the word that was being used, that women were being "trashed." And when I interviewed people, there were a lot of women who said that about having been trashed, and they were, this wasn't something that they made up. Some of it was just thin skin, because people weren't paying attention to them, and they did feel that they should be leaders and they weren't for some reason, or they didn't have the articulate ability to speak, or they didn't have the writing ability to write these incredible pamphlets that people just wrote. I don't know where they got the ideas, but they were brilliant, and came out like two months later and would appear one week later on the Berkeley table, which I never understood how that happened, who mailed them. It was a very wild and turbulent and intoxicating time, and complicated. And I think everyone had to choose where's their place, and I think for me it was within the movement. Then when I had to sit down and decide: am I going to become a photojournalist, which is what I was doing in graduate school? Which I decided was not a good idea, because every time I tried to take a photograph—which I did, I took hundreds of photographs of very famous people who spoke on the Berkeley campus—the men were five, six inches taller than I, and I couldn't necessarily get around them. I realized that this is going to be a lifelong problem, and so I just did portraits of some of the wonderful women at Berkeley and their children, and I didn't do as much photojournalism after a while.

03-00:30:38

Then I decided if I want security—and I certainly had learned from my mother that I should really have economic security, and not from a man—I

should continue with graduate school. And that's when I sat down and really stopped procrastinating. The movement was disintegrating, I think it was 1972, and I just sat and I learned everything I needed to learn that I should have learned a few years earlier. But those were good things I did. Then I was stunned that they decided I should get a distinguished high honors [for my oral examinations] when they never gave that. I still think it was because the subject was so new and they were so excited by their own conversation, not by any brilliance I brought to the orals.

03-00:31:24

Tewes: You mentioned that. That's pretty exciting for any grad student, least of all, I should say, someone in a new field. Ruth, you had also talked last time about this concept you developed in *World Split Open* called the "hidden injuries of sex." We were just speaking about how that relates to your life, and I'd like to hear you talk about that just a little bit more.

03-00:31:48

Rosen: I didn't realize this, actually, until last night, but better now than not. I said to you that I really didn't understand, but it's taken me a while: how did I come from Right-Wing children of immigrants who had no culture, records, music, books in the house; and how by high school I caught up with the people in my very, very prestigious public high school? And it was because I learned the language of those students. There was this thing called the Political Forum, and I would sit in and hear what the Right-Wing students were saying, and that didn't sound very nice; they were stone racists, and really not very good people, John Birch advocates. Then there were these people who were very involved in Civil Rights Movements, and very concerned with what was going on in the counterculture and the bohemian culture in New York City. So I kind of slid over to their side, and I listened to the language and I learned their language.

03-00:32:50

Also, boys and girls in that high school gave me books and papers and things to read, because I was curious. I do remember in high school I did get I.F. Stone's *Weekly*, which absolutely was a radicalizing experience, because he was the great honest opinionator of that whole period with that *Weekly.* He and his wife just put it out every week, and there was never an error in it, it was just all the lies that the government was telling us. It was amazing how much by the time I graduated from high school and then went on experiment in international living in Mexico, where I learned about how most of Latin America and most of Mexicans hated Americans and thought we were an

imperialist country, I never thought about that, so that was another piece of language.

03-00:33:43

Then of course, when I got to college there were so many intellectual people, and the first person I met is still one of my best friends, a man who was a brilliant intellectual, way ahead of me as a European, and from him I learned so many things, and from other people, and our professors were great. So I was learning a language. I never thought about it while I was writing *The World Split Open* that I kept thinking that it's so important that the women's movement created all these new words for expressing experiences for which women had no language. And I still think today, as I look back at how I kind of figured that out, is I think somewhere in my life I understood that's how I changed, how the arc of my life went from being someone who knew nothing about the world to being quite sophisticated culturally and intellectually, that was because other people taught me a language that made sense to me. I think that's maybe why I understood as I was reading and thinking about women that there were a lot of—because I was looking at the books of the 1970s, and every one of those books, practically, introduced all of us to a new word, like "domestic violence"; well, that had been called "wife beating." Or "sexual harassment"; well, that had been called "preying." [laughs] There just was no word for sexual harassment, and most people didn't know that until 1991 with Anita Hill's [testimony], but it was already out there in a book by Catharine MacKinnon. Or the language of "marital rape." Or the fact that the laws changed about evidence about when you were raped, how you had a sex shield, your prior sexually activity or what you were wearing could not be used against you; it was the evidence of what really happened, forensic evidence, and whether they went to a hospital, told people about it, but not their past. So they couldn't be blamed, which they had been. And that's a big change, that's a very big change. I began to notice that there were all these hidden injuries. These were things for which my mother didn't have a language, and most women of her generation didn't. All my mother said is, "If you ever get a job, keep away from the men in your office, because they'll prey upon you and they'll grope you." She didn't have the word "sexual harassment," but she was teaching me something. So I think that whole chapter came out as kind of a new feminist assessment of what we all learned in a new language, which I did as a person by myself with other peoples' help, with lots of peoples' help. I don't know if I would have seen it that way, because I still see it that way, I still think those words are very important. People can sue people.

03-00:36:49

And parenthetically, this is a weird thing, there is a—I think it's NBC has had an extraordinary series, I think it's the longest-running series on American television, and it's called *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, and I began watching it very early. The woman who was a rookie then and now the captain of the unit, everything was about men raping men in prisons, people harming or abusing their children sexually, pornography, and of course about assault and sexual harassment, and especially about rape. I watched that and I still watch it, because it occurred to me: why do they—though I don't have any other friend who has ever watched it, I can't figure out who is watching if I'm just—why would they keep paying to have these people, an ensemble cast, who are very good, why would they keep having these people if there's not a niche of women who are clearly devoted to that series? I mean, lots of us were passionate about *Star Trek*, but that didn't keep that from going off the television. But that's still on! I don't even know what decade it is; it's been on forever. And she's a great Hungarian actress who was American, I think, Hungarian. And it taught me a lot, because they were figuring out within their —this was created in New York City, this Special Victims Unit. Not every city has that, but they sited it in New York City so that they could have one place with one set of laws, one set of judges, one set of appeals, and that was a good idea to have it as a one place even with one unit. I don't know if it's all over the country, but I'm sure it's in lots of places. I think that's still interesting: who are the people who are watching it? Clearly enough people for an ordinary NBC producer to think this was worthwhile to continue year after year.

03-00:39:01

I think the hidden injuries of sex, I learned it from that series, but I learned it from my own life, too. It's a mixture of those things, reading all those books that people in the 1970s were writing, teaching me these new languages, but I think underneath I understood I had become who I am today by learning a new language.

03-00:39:24

Tewes: I love that personal connection to your academic work. I think that's a good transition to think about something else we've already discussed, which is men's influence on not only your life, but also on women in the women's movement.

03-00:39:44

Rosen: Right. Well, it was mixed, [laughs] it was certainly mixed. There were men in the movement, all those movements, who were quite awful to women. There are lots of FBI papers about that, which I saw when I looked at FBI papers. I saw with my own eyes, I experienced. So there were men that were not particularly supportive of "gender equality," which wasn't a bunch of words we knew at that time; I think we talked about "sexual equality," but they really did think it was just about more sex, so they weren't great. On the other hand, there were people, as I mentioned before, a few professors who thought what a great idea, let's learn it together. And there were people who were real supporters in very important ways. And then there were men who I lived with and other friends I lived with, who said they were very supportive of the women's movement, but if you looked at their actions, they didn't clean the toilets, they didn't take care of the children, they didn't do this, they didn't do that. And that's one of the reasons the divorce rate just skyrocketed during the women's movement, because the contrast between what they said they were and then how they behaved was a problem.

03-00:41:08

Since the sexual revolution was intersecting with the women's liberation, lots of men, and some women, were cheating on each other all the time, so it was a complicated time. And I'm not talking now about the counterculture, which was wild and turbulent in San Francisco in the counterculture, I'm just talking about just the general movements in the country in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. I don't think all women had the opportunity, but I was lucky to have the opportunity to pick men who seemed to really respect me, and think that it was really important to help me with things that I didn't know how to do. The first person I lived with I lived with, actually, off campus in college and we both came to Berkeley and went to different graduate disciplines. One of the things we learned together, but I don't think I would have done it just by myself, is we learned how to become photojournalists; we learned to make our own films and develop them, we learned how to crop them; we learned how to create sixteen by twenty beautiful, passionate photographs of the movement, but I don't think if I hadn't been with him in the darkroom learning these skills, I would have had the knowledge to do that. Moreover, he was an incredibly great writer, so he would look at my papers and give me good suggestions about how to write better. He was one of those people who got 800s on all the SATs or LSATs before he went to college. He was smart and respectful, and in that way that's one person who taught me a very important skill to become a photojournalist and to become a better writer.

03-00:42:59

I would say the next person I lived with, there's really not much to say that I learned about. I lived for ten years with Todd Gitlin, who was quite brilliant, a major writer, a big activist, a president of Students for a Democratic Society in its second year. And a couple of ours match-made us and told us we were looking for someone that was compatible with us. We got together and we talked for about four hours, and then he said, "Would you like to have breakfast tomorrow morning?" And the next morning we met for breakfast. I already had a sabbatical in Paris, because I had just gotten tenure, and here I met someone who I really cared about, but I decided, I'm going to go to Paris anyway. I wanted to go to Paris by myself all my life, and I'd gotten tenure and I thought, "This is my opportunity." I had a colleague in Paris who had a graduate student with a wonderful little studio on the Left Bank near the Sorbonne. And so I was away for six months, but he came several times to Paris to see me, so that continued, and it continued for ten years. He was very brilliant. I learned a great deal about writing; I learned a great deal about sociology, since he was a sociologist and a journalist; and he knew a lot of people who were quite extraordinary at Berkeley, since I was at Davis, and I met most of those people because of him. I also went to New York many times with him and met lots of editors. Should we stop?

03-00:44:49

Tewes: Sorry, we're good, go ahead. You met lots of editors in New York.

03-00:44:53

Rosen: We'd go to New York, and we'd be on the street and he would bump into someone he knew who would say, "I hope you're going to the Brooklyn Academy of Music tonight, there's a great thing, *The Five Blind Boys of Alabama*." I don't know that anyone would have stopped me on the street and told me that. And that night we went to that incredible performance in Brooklyn. Things like that always happened when we went to New York. I would meet people and these people liked me, and I don't think if I had just sent them articles that I wrote and they didn't know me I would have gotten anywhere, but these people got to know me, they liked me, they respected me, so I had a lot of advantages of being with someone who was willing to introduce me to so many people. We also, during the year, since he taught at Berkeley and I taught at Davis, we had pretty similar schedules, and he just wrote all the time and somehow managed to teach all the time. I could not do that; when I taught, I could not write. Every summer when I could write, that was his time to go travel for eight weeks, and I just did that. I caved in, because it was wonderful, so I wrote a lot less, and I spent a lot less time

writing, because I couldn't do it during the academic year, because I was a much more engaged teacher, I spent much more time with my students.

03-00:46:16

And we went so many places. There were people that I got to know who invited both of us to international peace conferences about six times in Ireland. And so I met people from India and all over Europe and Eastern Europe. These are people I still know. There were times when we went to, I think, Eastern Europe before the collapse of communism. We met all of the opposition people in these cafés where they were sending samizdat literature to England. And through him, ironically, I met a woman who became a very close friend. She was a sociologist, and he knew of her, so he thought I should definitely meet her. We met, and this was before the collapse, and she talked about how she had been writing all throughout that time with a male name and initials, and her stuff was being sent to England with male names, and how she would sit with Václav Havel and other people in cafés. And the way they would get this samizdat literature out was so feminine. Two women would meet at a café and say you and I would have baskets full of fruit, and when we left you would take mine and I would take yours, and you would send my things to England, where they would be translated and they would be put into the English language. I met her before, and she also told me how after the 1968 invasion by Russia, she was imprisoned. Because she was a famous sociologist, she wasn't imprisoned that long, for about a year, and a lot of international activity, as with Václav Havel, tried to get her out of prison, she did.

03-00:48:07

What was really interesting about her was that I saw her then two years later, after 1991, after the collapse of communism. She was already thinking about: what would women's role be in a post-communist society? From her, I got invited to a lot of conferences in Eastern Europe, where I met all these women from post-communist countries who coined the term "male democracies," because they said under communism, which they all hated and felt terribly constrained by and they were in jail, many of them, but they did have childcare and they had healthcare and they had all these things that were important to women, and those things disappeared in the post-communists cultures. So she and I talked about lots of things when I came back, and she said that "The really terrible thing was the things that were most important to women have disappeared, and no women have any interest in feminism or women's liberation, because they were forced to go to these political meetings all their lives, so they have no interest in doing that." She said, "There's no way that's going to happen soon." Then she said, "But I've read everything

you've written, and you've now read everything I had translated, so why don't we keep up a dialog? And I will translate everything into various Eastern European languages, and you will write about: what were the accomplishments and the failures of the women's movement, and how can we avoid them in Eastern Europe?" We did this for years. Now that would not have happened if Todd had not introduced me to someone else who knew her.

03-00:49:44

Tewes: What was her name?

03-00:49:45

Rosen: Her name was Jiřina Šiklová, I can't remember how to spell it exactly. She also came to Berkeley when there was a conference on post-communist culture: what was good, what was bad. It was at Berkeley, and I was invited, and I took her all around San Francisco and Marin and introduced her to Berkeley, and it was quite wonderful, and for years we communicated. Her partner died and she became very involved with the rights of the Roma people who were being treated extremely badly in the Czech Republic? That's an example of an incredible friendship, an incredible intellectual dialog I had with a wonderful woman, and we just liked each other so much, that I don't think that would have happened. So that's a door that was opened. And it was opened to a woman that was really very strongly feminist, but wanted to understand what had gone wrong, what had gone right in the United States, so if ever there was a chance—

03-00:50:51

—and there was a chance, because during that period—and I can't remember exactly the years—but there were a number of people that created what was called the East-West Network, and they collected enough money to bring women who were journalists, academics, and intellectuals of all sorts from Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, and particularly Yugoslavia. We met in Yugoslavia. We were the very last international conference that took place in Dubrovnik before Yugoslavia broke up.

03-00:51:35

A funny story that is worth telling is that I was invited to be part of this, and all these women from all over Yugoslavia and every place were invited, so there were about fifty of those women, maybe less than fifty of us. I got on a plane and I went to Paris, and I was supposed to then take a plane to Croatia to get to Dubrovnik. But while I was on the plane, Yugoslavia split up, literally, and so I ended up in Serbia and I had no way to get to Croatia. Meanwhile,

people were saying, "What's happened to her? She's coming from California, it's not the moon. It's two o'clock in the morning, why is she not here?" I didn't know what to do. I could speak French, Spanish, Italian, but I didn't know how to speak anything that was Serbian. I kept going up and trying to get a ticket, change my ticket. Hours and hours went by, and finally I found myself just crying, because I didn't want to miss this and I felt like, I'm going to be stuck in Serbia forever. Somebody helped me exchange my ticket and got me a ticket from Serbia to somewhere close to Croatia, and then I somehow got a ride to Dubrovnik.

03-00:52:54

Then when we sat around the big table—this was quite shocking—so I did get there about six in the morning. What was really amazing is when we identified ourselves, all the American women talked about themselves as journalists, academics, intellectuals, but they all called themselves feminists of one sort or another. No big collision with the women there. But the women in Yugoslavia, which was not Yugoslavia anymore, described themselves in the most absolutely stunningly bizarre ways. Some of them would say, "I'm a lesbian from Ljubljana," "I'm a Serbian and I'm a European," "I'm a Croatian and I'm part of Yugoslavia, which doesn't exist anymore." This went on for hours listening to these separate identifications. That was quite amazing, it was an amazing experience to realize the fact that when Tito left, that that could happen, the country would just fall apart. I talked to a lot of these women like, "What happened?" You were friends with people in your neighborhoods. They talked about how the television and the radio from Milosevic had completely alienated all these different ethnic groups that had gotten along and been glued together by Tito, which is some ways presaged what would happen in post-communism cultures.

03-00:54:19

Another thing that I think was very important, that happened because I knew a lot of feminist scholars in New York, but another thing that happened that was probably very important after that was—no, we should go back to America and go to the Houston, I think, conference.

03-00:54:39

Tewes: Yeah, that was 1977?

03-00:54:40

Rosen: Nineteen seventy-seven. By 1975, the anti-war movement and the women's movement had all disintegrated into various factions, there was a lot of

conflict, and that was also when I was spending my time writing my dissertation and working at Harvard, and not really being part of the movement, but actually trying to do what I was supposed to do for the first time. I got my first job in 1974 at Davis, and I hadn't finished my dissertation. I talked about *The Maimie Papers* before, and then I talked about the book I wrote from my dissertation, which was about half my dissertation, half all-new stuff, new material. What happened in 1977 is there was a lot of women in Jimmy Carter's administration who pushed him to have a national conference for women, and he agreed, and it was paid for by Congress and women were elected in each state—I think just a few people, maybe it was two in each state—to go to Houston. At Houston, right before Houston began, the conference began, all these women left Seneca Falls with a torch that was lit, and they ran all the way from New York and Seneca Falls, where the women's movement began in 1848, they ran all through the Eastern seaboard, one woman to another. I don't know how many miles each one worked, but there are pictures of it that are astonishing. They ran and they ran and they ran. And the last one was Billie Jean King, and she brought the torch to, I think, Bella Abzug and to Jimmy Carter's wife. There were a bunch of president's wives that were at this platform.

03-00:56:29

Then what happened is a lot of bickering, discussion, but actually what emerged was fantastic: resolutions about poverty in women, about working-class women, about lesbians, about the rights of women, about sexual rights. I don't think people talked about transwomen yet, but they talked just about everything I'd ever thought of. And there were a lot of them, there were twenty-five resolutions, and they all passed. Then they sent them to Jimmy Carter, and he did nothing with him, there was no support for them, and they just went into the wastebin.

03-00:57:09

What it did do is it introduced a lot of women to a lot of women all over the country, and that is exactly what JFK's On the Status of Women did in 1961 and then finally in 1963. So they got to know a lot of people, and there were a lot of people that felt kind of healed, because they saw support from other women. That's when Betty Friedan said, "Lesbians have not hurt the women's movement, you have to support all women," and a lot of effort to do with working-class women and the problems of conditions of working women. When you read all the literature that's been written about it, it's an amazing thing that nothing really happened, that it just was an event that women experienced, and then went to Jimmy Carter. But because he was under such siege, and he did lose his election, he wasn't going to do anything about it. The

last thing Americans wanted in 1978, and this was in his wastepaper basket, was for him to spend his time making women's lives better, so nothing happened. Remember this was very close to Ronald Reagan becoming president and the new moral majority, so it was a growing conservative period while he was in his last few years as president. But that was an amazing thing.

03-00:58:36

I think it's important to just talk about the 1980s a little bit, because there are a few facts that most people don't necessarily know. One is that the women's magazines, which all throughout the late 1960s and 1970s would talk about, "Oh, here's a woman flying an airplane," "Here's the first woman conductor," "Here's the first woman who ran her own business," the first, the first, the first. And they were all celebratory, and the women's magazines were all filled with this stuff. In the early 1980s, the whole mood with Reagan changed. All the women's magazines talked about how women were sick and tired of working and taking care of children, and they were leaving their positions as lawyers or professors, going home to buy fine china. And that was a big issue: buying fine china and leaving their professions. And the ads and the articles were all about how women were sick of the women's movement, and they were all leaving very professional jobs and they were all going home, so that had been a big failure. That happened for quite a while in the 1980s.

03-00:59:42

But ironically, there was a poll done in the late 1980s and something like 80 percent of women—and mostly Black women, which explains the gender gap very well—supported the goals of the women's movement. When I found that out, I thought, wow, the women's magazines were really just reflecting the conservative atmosphere of the early 1980s, but the polls show that Black women, in particular, and working women really understood that the goals were equal pay and all the things that women had talked about. So the 1980s were kind of an interesting period of change.

03-01:00:19

Then of course, when we get to the 1990s, so much is happening in the 1990s, but I think the most significant thing was the Anita Hill [testimony]. I can't forget that. In 1991, I was at an artist's colony writing a book, and we had no television there and we all lived in little cottages, and we ate together. It was in upper New York State in the Adirondacks, which was gorgeous. In the late afternoon with one or another person I would hike for several miles up mountains in these gorgeous blue mountains, lakes in these gorgeous Adirondacks—I can't say the word—Mountains. It was just a wonderful experience. But then all of the sudden we heard about what was going on with

Anita Hill. Someone found a black and white little ten-inch television, all of us were glued to that during the entire hearings, we all dropped whatever we were doing. Everyone there who applied, who did get in, was someone who had been an activist and cared about social justice in one way or another: in health, women's things, environmentalism. But this was not just for writers, it was for people who wrote about things that mattered about social justice. So the people there could not take their eyes away, I never could stop watching.

03-01:01:38

It was really painful. And it is still painful today for me to watch an extraordinarily qualified woman, [Ketanji Brown Jackson], who was also African American, maybe won't be supported and confirmed as a Supreme Court Justice. But I know lots of people from that summer are writing to each other and saying, "Do you remember that summer in 1991—" it was the fall of 1991 actually—"do you remember how we couldn't stop watching that? How are you feeling now?" And we're also not watching it all the time, because we're busy, but it's like we've seen it and it's so painful we can't bear to watch it again, because what if she's really not confirmed? And a lot of my emails lately have been about that. I would say that in the 1990s, the thing that was really identifiable to me is that I was writing a book, I was thinking that it was really important to write this book, *The World Split Open*, which I didn't call that—when I gave the editors that name in the beginning they said, "That sounds like the atomic bomb blast, this doesn't sound about women." I said, That's the last line of Muriel Rukeyser's poem in the 1950s." They said, "Well, no one knows that but you." And I said, "What if there's a subtitle?" "No." But when I finished the book, my editor and the marketing people thought it was a great title and so they kept it, which was surprising, *The World Split Open*. Then they thought that's good.

03-01:03:10

At that time of course, there was another generation, and they did different things, so feminism took many, many different directions. It was really a third wave, but not completely coherent, in different places people did different things. Some of it was really exhibitionists, we're not going to be like the prude women of the early second wave, which is exactly what women in the twentieth century said about the suffragists. They said, "These women wear dowdy clothes, and they wear these stupid shoes. We're going to have short skirts and we're going to do the Charleston." And there's a similarity there, people wanted to have personal freedom. They weren't thinking that much, as we had, about structural freedom or equality in payment, and they did make fun of a lot of us.

03-01:04:00

It struck me that this had to happen, that each generation has to find what—I remember going to a bookstore at that point for my book. Sometime in the 1990s, I was invited to a bookstore that young women went to, and the women asked me, "What do you think is still lacking, what do you think hasn't happened?" I said, "That's not for me to say, it's for you to figure out, because every generation has to figure out what are their grievances and act upon those grievances. From what I see, I see another generation looking at personal freedoms that we, in fact, didn't allow ourselves, because we thought we had to be very conscious of being respectable in the new professions we entered. But there are a lot of women in the third wave who are doing it through music, through sexuality, through sexual exhibitionism, and they are doing things like women did in the 1920s. They don't care about being respectable, and that strikes me as perfectly appropriate." They said, "Do you think that's bad?" I said, "It's predictable and it's what should happen, each generation should find what's missing in their lives. We didn't do everything, we couldn't. We couldn't go into becoming lawyers and professors just like that, we had to look very respectable."

03-01:05:23

I even remember my father, who was a lawyer, telling me in the 1970s that a woman in a pantsuit came into the courtroom and a judge kicked her out, because she wasn't wearing stockings and heels and a women's suit. We all knew that. So while I didn't get very dressed up, I certainly looked inconspicuous as a professor, and so did all my friends. We didn't want to be exhibitionists, we just wanted to look straight forward and serious, and to be taken seriously and to be taken seriously was what we wanted. I said, "It's not clear that people in your generation need that anymore. You may need other grievances." They said, "Is there anything else that you really, really feel is important?" I said, "I feel like the thing that has really never—and may never ever get dealt with in America—is childcare." That was one of our three demands in 1970. And in 1972, it was passed by Congress, but Nixon vetoed it. And now look at the Biden administration put childcare in the Build [Back] Better package, and it's not there. I remember the day I looked at the legislation, I said to all my friends, "That will never pass, infrastructure, but Americans believe women should take care of their own children, and they still do. Even if they make less money, that's fine, they don't belong in the world."

03-01:06:58

I just think there's a strong individualistic streak in America. And something had changed, too, with the young feminists. When we imagined childcare, we

had images that were glorious of Denmark and Norway and Sweden, with gorgeous childcare centers with very well-trained childcare teachers. So it looked really good, and it looked like something you could leave your child and it would be nice and you could go to work, and you could pick up. That was our dream, it was a Nordic dream. We weren't communists, but we were social democrats. But the women I talked to that night, it was fascinating to realize that their image of childcare was going to the DMV, which was just about the last place I'd want to leave a child: a dirty, filthy, completely incompetent place.

03-01:07:45

Tewes: What an interesting connection there. To bring this back to the Bay Area, I'm curious: it feels like the Bay Area looms large in this history of this movement, and I'm wondering what was so unique about the Bay Area that that movement shaped itself here as it did?

03-01:08:06

Rosen: Berkeley had a long reputation of various radical generations. There was, during the McCarthy period, a lot of professors who I had later in New York, who refused to sign their Loyalty Oath, because McCarthy required that. Then there were people in the 1930s who had been not communist, but fellow travelers, because the Party didn't want them to be known as members. So Berkeley already had a somewhat liberal—at the University, not in the city, but at the University—a history of various periods where there were radical professors and students who acted for various social justice issues. It was something that makes me think when you ask this question—this didn't happen only at Berkeley, but I think it was very big in Berkeley, maybe it happened a lot of other places—a lot of people were beginning to live in communes in the 1970s, because they couldn't afford apartments and they liked the idea of communal living. I lived in a commune one year in Cambridge while I was working on a book, and a lot of people did, because people couldn't afford houses, and people were sharing the rent of these big, gorgeous, Victorian houses.

03-01:09:16

What happened where I lived in North Oakland, a lot of people had young children at that moment, and what they did is they had essentially collectives, one day a week one family would take care of the children. A woman across the street created a childcare, basically, movement in the city, and I thought she was terrific in identifying that as essential. Of course, it had been essential in 1970 through demands, but the fact that she did it in such a powerful political way. That was North Oakland and South Berkeley, where young

people with very little money were living, and I think that was very big. But there were so many collectives of people taking care of other peoples' children, because they couldn't afford—the idea of a nanny was kind of alien to people in the movement. They couldn't afford it anyway, but just the idea that it wasn't neighbors or people in the movement sort of seemed strange to people. So they managed to figure out how to get childcare, continued being teachers or whatever they were in graduate school, but one day a week take responsibility for everybody's children.

03-01:10:26

On the block I lived on, there were just childcare communal places behind everyone's yard. One day a week they were somewhere else, and you hear the kids screaming and playing. Sometimes the men would stay at home if they could, because they had an occupation like a professor and they could stay home, they had some time; or people who worked nine to five couldn't, and some women did jobs that they could stay home for a day or two. Anyway, it was a very big thing. I don't think I could say that only happened at Berkeley, but I was so impressed with how quickly that happened. That happened when I was—what year might that have been? Probably 1968 and '69, already childcare was being dealt with in a serious way. And when Biden put his legislation out, I just sat there and thought—[laughs] my friends thought, Oh, you are really cynical. I said, "No, it's just not going to happen. Maybe we'll have infrastructure, yes, because people like bridges, but they don't like the idea of women not taking care of their own children." And people would ask me: why did I feel that way? And I said, "For the same reason that Nixon vetoed it in '71 and '72, because they felt underneath our liberal, somewhat society, there was such a nano, I don't know, like a nanosecond of anti-communism. And women had always brought their children to childcare." And the French, who are not communists, the minute you had a baby you brought them to crèches and nurses would come and take care of your children with you and show you how to be a mother.

03-01:12:09

So it happened in the Nordic countries, it happened in communist countries, it happened in France, so the individualism of America was rather unique. There were a lot of countries in Western Europe and communist countries and Nordic countries, France, where people were—not in Italy, which was much more identified with the mom has to stay home, at that time—but a lot of countries, but not in this country. And I really thought that we'll never have childcare in this country, and women will always be burdened and figure out how they're going to juggle things. And so now they're doing it with nannies. The other day, I was walking down the street in Berkeley and I saw three

women of color with beautiful, gorgeous strollers that looked like they cost thousands of dollars each, all talking to each other in various languages, mostly Spanish, and I wondered, Where were the mothers of those children? I wasn't feeling negative about it, I just felt—and you see that on the Upper West Side in New York, just endless numbers of people speaking Puerto Rican, Spanish, other languages, strollers, and the women are basically working. So this idea that you have an au pair or you have a nanny has taken root, and the idea that you actually would take care of other peoples' children and you'd have a collective, that just disappeared, but that was very big in Berkeley for quite a while.

03-01:13:40

Tewes: That's interesting, I hadn't run across that one yet. I do want to switch in the time we have left and acknowledge that you continued your activism after leaving the women's movement. I don't know you truly ever felt you left, actually, I shouldn't say that.

03-01:14:03

Rosen: I felt there wasn't a movement, and I wrote that in a chapter of my book, I said, "The movement proliferated, it didn't disintegrate. Nurses took it over, people who were in unions took over demands for better working conditions and better pay for women like 9to5, that this former student wrote to me. There were caucuses in every discipline in the university; there was one in sociology, there was one in science for women, integrated biology. So it proliferated, it didn't—it was no longer one coherent movement of young women, it was all over. And moreover, every single profession—I don't know about occupation, but certain every profession had these new organization called National Women's Lawyer something or National Journalist Women's blah, blah, blah, or National Native American Women. It just moved throughout the 1970s into every area of the country. Which is why I still argue that in many ways the women's movement became part of our culture in this way of proliferation, it didn't stay on one subject, and it didn't become one movement, it moved into a new generation, and it moved into lots of occupations. A lot of working women joined unions and insisted, like the UAW [United Auto Workers], 9to5, that women had to be incorporated into the union movement and they had to be leaders, and they did, and they became leaders.

03-01:15:36

So you think about by the end of the 1970s and by the end of the 1980s, there's no women's movement. Did I feel like I belonged to a movement? No. I felt like I was one part of a very proliferating movement that was still

moving into new ground, now into a younger generation, sometimes older women. For example, there were the Gray Panthers, women who were old, in their eighties—this was early, this was early in the 1970s—they formed a women's liberation group and they called themselves the Gray Panthers. During anti-war activities, I had some friends who were already grandparents, and they called themselves Grannies for Peace, and they would march all through San Francisco with those signs. So here were people in every part of life—not everyone agreed, of course, but there were enough people so that you could probably find that there was some influence of feminism in almost whatever you did. If you were a journalist, you'd find there was a women's journalist association; if you were a photographer, you'd find that women were helping each other with photography and getting assignments; if you were an editor, you would find that women who were editors were really seeking feminist books, because they thought they would really sell and they were important. So it proliferated, and you can't say that it was a movement anymore.

03-01:17:00

And that would have been terrible, actually, if it would have been a movement. I think the success of the women's movement, as I said, was naming injuries and then proliferating into every corner. One good example, for example, was Native American women. They got very influenced by the women's movement and they did two things that the men didn't do. They went into the cities where women had moved off of reservations and tried to help Native American women who were working in Downtown Oakland and various places. But another thing they did that was probably more missed than anything, is they went up to reservations where they were not living anymore, and they recognized that alcoholism and wife beating were the problems of women on reservations. They publicized that and they promoted that, and they tried to teach the men that this was not acceptable and that the women had to be equal partners in the Native American movement. I can't think of a place where it didn't go; not that everyone agreed, but it did go everywhere. The place where I remember feeling like I was part of a real movement again was the anti-apartheid movement.

03-01:18:12

Tewes: Yes, I want to talk about that. Great transition. How did you become involved with that?

03-01:18:18

Rosen: Todd and I were living together, and he was at Berkeley, I was at Davis, and Mario Savio, I think, was probably one of the big organizers. He got together

all the faculty who were interested from all over the Bay Area—there were a lot of people, probably a few hundred. We met together and he said, "We have the power as faculty to show the country that the universities and the state universities and the community colleges have no right to put our pensions into a country that discriminates so badly and segregates so badly against people of color and people of mixed color and mixed race, and that this is our right to do with our money what we want. We don't have the money now, but it is going to be our money. And the university collects it and puts it in a thing for us, well we have the right to say where it should go." It's like people are doing the same thing who had money with stocks, they would go to stock meetings. I remember one of the things Todd did is he created a group of people where they invaded the Harvard Board of Trustees and said, "You have to stop putting our money into South Africa," and they did.

03-01:19:37

So in Berkeley, I think Mario Savio might have started it, but I know Todd knew about it, I knew about it, and Mario had gotten in touch with me. And that's where I got to know what a great leader he was. He just made you feel you were necessary; not important, not the most extraordinary person in the world, but just necessary. He got all these people together, and we did things at different campuses, and then we would move together. Every once in a while, there would be several hundred faculty all over community colleges up and down the peninsula, all over the Bay Area, and we'd talk about what we were doing. And they had to be different things because of what the student body was and how our money was being treated by the university. But we knew in the UC system all of our money was being put in—all of our money was our pension money, and it was going into South Africa.

03-01:20:31

What we did is rather dramatic, and I'm really proud of this, because it was very theatrical and it was fun, because life wasn't so much fun anymore; we didn't have the kind of antics that we did in the women's movement. And what we did is we created a huge demonstration of faculty who were interested from all nine campuses—there weren't ten then—and we had them all come to Berkeley, and each of us did one thing. Arlie Hochschild, I think, got all our robes for us from wherever you get academic robes, and we all wore academic robes, and we had our hats, so we were going to do this demonstration with all of our black fancy stuff. A person who was in environmental design had huge banners, I mean, like the length of a living room, that would say, "Riverside Against Apartheid," "UCLA Against Apartheid," Berkeley, and Davis. And I was part of the Davis [group]. We marched all over the Berkeley campus singing and with these incredible banners. Other people did other things and

there were a lot of things to be done for such an incredibly complicated demonstration. Then we went one person from each campus into the [University of California] President's Office, and we said very clearly and politely, "We are here to ask that our money, which is ours and will be ours, not be put into South Africa, because it's immoral. And that's being done by a lot of corporations, and people who are attacking stock options and all kinds of places, and this is—how immoral is it for a university that's so liberal to be putting money into South Africa?"

03-01:22:20

Well, the president said, "You know, you're just a bunch of riff raff;" that's what he called us. He said, "If you wanted to change this, you should have gone to nine different academic senates and had them vote for this." We said, "What would have happened?" Of course, the president of the entire nine campuses would have—I think we went to the Chancellor's Office or maybe the president's, I can't remember, maybe the president—then the president would have to agree, and then all nine campuses would have to do it. You couldn't have one or another, and some of those campuses weren't as liberal as Berkeley or UCLA. So they just kind of shooed us out of the—and I was there as the Davis representative, I think Todd was there as the Berkeley representative. We then in our gowns sat-in in front of the President's Office on the ground, on pavement. There we were, hundreds of people in black robes and hats with our special ones. Especially if people had gone to Harvard had their red ones, and people who had gone to East schools had these special colors, so it looked very, very colorful. Most people just had black things.

03-01:23:25

Then the police were called, probably by the Regents or the president, and they said, "If you don't get up, we're going to arrest you." So we sat there, and we sang all civil rights songs, and we said, [sings] "We won't get up," [laughs], "We shall overcome," all kinds of songs. We just sang, clapped, and we just sat there and ignored them. Then they started arresting us, and the way they arrested us just tells you how really careful they were not to make this a scene. I remember the person who arrested me and everyone else would say, "Excuse me, would you please—" put his hand out—"would you please get up? I need to arrest you." [laughs] And he said, "I'm going to take you to the UC Berkeley Police Office on campus and you will be cited." The fact is nothing ever happened, they just got us out of there. But it was a good opportunity, because many of us were very media savvy after working in the late sixties and early seventies. You put on a theatrical thing like that, you get every paper in the Bay Area and maybe around the country looking at this.

Oh, faculty are sitting down in front of the president of Berkeley and all of [the University] of California? So that was what happened.

03-01:24:47

At the end of the year, a number of really smart, thoughtful people went up to the Regents, to Sacramento, and really pleaded with them to make our money disappear from South Africa and to put it to more important things. But we failed, and we all felt very sad. Ironically, there was a new governor; I think it was someone that we didn't expect to do this. It wasn't a Democrat, as I remember, he actually did it in the fall. We thought we had failed in the spring and in the fall our pension money was taking out of South Africa.

03-01:25:32

Tewes: Is it possible it was [George] Deukmejian?

03-01:25:34

Rosen: Yes, that's right, thank you. I knew it was a Republican. Because actually, Schwarzenegger is the person that got out the woman I was trying to get out of prison and when he became governor, he did it, even though the other governors wouldn't do it for three years. So I've got that confused.

03-01:25:51

Tewes: So this is like the eighties.

03-01:25:53

Rosen: Yeah.

03-01:25:54

Tewes: Wow.

03-01:25:55

Rosen: And that was a really important event. It was very important for the students to see that many faculty and understand—it was really important for the ethnic studies people to see that the faculty were on their side.

03-01:26:08

Then of course, there were other things that happened. I probably was on strike at least half the time I was a teaching assistant, because of one thing or another. And what were those strikes about? I have to say, though it doesn't rain anymore, I remember during one strike it rained for three months, and I

just was on strike walking with other people across the place where strikers could walk, and all of those people could simply have umbrellas, and we just walked, and we got soaked.

03-01:26:48

Tewes: Let's pause. [break in audio] All right, we are back from a break. Ruth, we are talking about more of your activism and strikes you were on.

03-01:26:55

Rosen: I was on so many strikes and all my friends were on strikes. I can't exactly remember what all the strikes were about, but one was whether there should be an Ethnic Studies Program on the Berkeley campus. There was a very famous historian who had picked one person from each discipline to have satellite seminars at home, in addition to his lectures. We all went out on strike; he taught in a church, we all taught in our homes, and we were on strike for months. Then there was another time we were on strike, because of the way teaching assistants were being underpaid and we were on strike. And then I remember just being soaked all the time and being wet and just thinking, I'm never going to survive months after months of rain. And we don't have that anymore. Then I remember vividly that we were on strike, and we'd have signs, and we'd have umbrellas, and there were a lot of faculty that joined us. And the Third World Strike, in fact, was successful, but other people in other disciplines, faculty, were not as supportive. Some of the historians, for example, thought, Why should there be Black history and an ethnic studies? We have people in Black history, why should there be people who do this? We do that. Well, they didn't necessarily do it exactly the way it was done in ethnic studies. They also saw it as real separatism and identity politics, and there were lots of arguments both ways, but it started in San Francisco State where it was such a big deal, and it just crossed over the Bay immediately.

03-01:28:30

Tewes: So were your strikes on Berkeley's campus then?

03-01:28:32

Rosen: Yes.

03-01:28:33

Tewes: For the Third World Strike?

03-01:28:34

Rosen: We knew people that were being really hit by the police, that it was a very violent event in San Francisco State. That didn't happen at Berkeley, but there were lots of arguments and there were a lot of people—I think I was on strike at least two or three times when I was a teaching assistant. And what I would do is I would always continue teaching, have my students—since I was a TA, I didn't have a lot of students—I would teach them at home once a week, the professors would teach in these big churches, and so that was quite common [laughs] to have strikes about various issues. That was, I think, my activity. And when I went to Davis, I would say the only really political thing I did there that was part of a movement was, again, the anti-apartheid movement. When I was on campus, a lot of faculty, we organized big talks by very famous people in the state to talk about the meaning of anti-apartheid and why it was so important. We had various Black legislators, various Black faculty, and I would introduce some of them and I was part of it, and that's, I think, the biggest thing I did as a professor, in terms of activism.

03-01:29:44

Tewes: Wow, I love these connections to your earlier work and how they all come back together. I do want to just say that while you were teaching at Davis, you still lived in Berkeley, so you had this community here, and you had those connections.

03-01:29:59

Rosen: And of course, because I was living with someone who was a Berkeley professor, I knew everyone in the Sociology Department and all the friends that he had. Plus, a lot of the men I went to graduate school, once their draft deferment number was low, they left the History Department and went to the Law School. And so I have a lot of friends who are now labor lawyers who were graduate students with me. I just had an email from someone, "When do you want to get together next week?" These were people who were going to be historians if they were going to be drafted, but the draft ended or they got very low numbers, and they just quit and they went to law school.

03-01:30:37

Tewes: Is that because history programs are longer?

03-01:30:41

Rosen: Because it's longer, because they actually didn't necessarily want to be a historian, they just wanted to avoid going to Vietnam. And some of them really did like the idea of becoming radical lawyers. There was a radical

lawyers movement, there was the Lawyers Guild on Berkeley campus and all over the Bay Area. These were radical people that had the best dancing parties in the whole Bay Area. Boalt was a great law school, and some of these people—I would say some of the women went to deal with women's issues in courts. Some of the men that I knew went to deal with agricultural working conditions with César Chavez, some of the other men wanted to work as labor lawyers, because they came from working-class families and that's what they wanted to do; it was a little bit too genteel to be a historian for them. And the other thing that is important to mention is that they knew, which I didn't, that even if they dropped out for a year, as a man with their smarts and their intelligence, they could get into something else. If I ever thought about quitting graduate school, it never occurred to me that I would do anything but sell candy. [laughs] They had a confidence which was appropriate for who they were. So a lot of those men really didn't stay a graduate student after the war was almost over.

03-01:32:01

Tewes: What an interesting observation.

03-01:32:04

Rosen: And I know this just because I knew all the guys.

03-01:32:08

Tewes: Wow.

03-01:32:09

Rosen: And remember how many people my age were being drafted, and you only didn't get drafted if you were married and have a child, or you were in a graduate program or a law school. So you had to have a reason not to go to [war]. The people who went to Vietnam were working-class, uneducated men.

03-01:32:27

Tewes: Yes, that is—

03-01:32:30

Rosen: And that's who we sent to Iraq, too, so that doesn't change. I'm glad these people didn't go to Vietnam. They were all part of the anti-war movement, they did everything they could to stop other people, but they didn't want to go. And many of the women, including me, spent hours and hours in the Student Union teaching people how to avoid the draft. We had ten different modalities of what you could do when you go to your physical to avoid being in the draft,

including having your eyes crossed, hypnotizing yourself, all kinds of crazy things. The anti-war movement, until it really wasn't a movement anymore, then people changed their lives and did what they wanted to do. I know a few women that actually left the Berkeley History Department and got married and had children. But there weren't that many women to begin with; it was the men who left more than anyone.

03-01:33:28

Tewes: Right, and at the beginning it was just you.

03-01:33:31

Rosen: That's in American history; there probably were women in European history, and I didn't know them. There were about 300 graduate students, there were so many graduate students. But I know in American history, I was the only person in all my seminars. But I know a woman who lives just a few blocks away who came the next year, and another woman I know that came the next year. That wasn't a crowd, but it was one after another.

03-01:33:58

Tewes: I want to move us towards closing out today. And something I do want to mention, the last time we talked about the fact that you received the University of California Distinguished Teaching Award in 1983, but you've had many other pieces of recognition over the years, including two Rockefeller Foundation fellowships.

03-01:34:19

Rosen: Those were wonderful, because they gave me a salary for the whole year, each one of those Rockefeller Foundation fellowships gave me a full—you know, not a big salary, but enough to live on. It was less than my salary, but my salary was never big anyways. But they gave me enough to work on. That's the only way I could work on that book since the summers were always these great travels.

03-01:34:42

Tewes: Never underestimate that assistance. But you've also won awards for journalism.

03-01:34:47

Rosen: Actually, more than for anything else. I think *The Maimie Papers* was a notable book, I think *The World Split Open* got just unbelievable fantastic reviews. I consider those kind of awards—a person in the *LA Times* said,

"This is the most, blah, blah, blah," wonderful things in all the newspapers. That's not true of most historians, but every major newspaper in the country reviewed my book very positively. And that was really quite wonderful for me, because I was afraid I was going to be attacked. *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *LA Times*, Midwest papers, the California papers, so that was my reward for that book.

03-01:35:34

Tewes: And I know it took you a while to research and write, so that's meaningful.

03-01:35:39

Rosen: It took me a long time, because of the research and interviewing people. I also had two major health problems that took me out of commission for two years during that time. So all those years, two years, I was not doing anything except just trying to survive. So the journalism awards really surprised me, and maybe it was because I was a historian and I knew how to think about things better than journalists that didn't, I don't know. Certainly, I was a little shocked when I heard someone in the Opinion Section say that—I think I mentioned this—that John F. Kennedy died in 1968. And I thought, Oh my God, how young is she? So there were people maybe who didn't know as much. But I was very pleased—my editor asked me to write a series on mentally ill homeless people, and I did, and the *LA Times* literally used my language, and they got an award for it, but I got an award from the National Mental Health Association for it. I was actually in Washington, D.C., talking about my book when my editor called me and said, "Listen to the first sentence of the *LA Times*," and it was literally all my words they had plagiarized. [laughs] You don't do that in history.

03-01:37:05

And then I'm trying to remember what other ones there were. Oh, the Hearst Corporation, I think, gave me one, which was the people who really didn't want me there later, but they really thought I was fine.

03-01:37:17

Tewes: You had California Public Health Association.

03-01:37:20

Rosen: That's right.

03-01:37:21

Tewes: Society of Professional Journalists, the East Bay Press Club, National Federation of Women Lawyers, and I'm sure there are others.

03-01:37:29

Rosen: I don't have any others on my walls, but maybe there were. I think everything is on my wall. I didn't get an award for this, but it is the greatest accomplishment of my life, I think. There was a woman when I was a columnist who had some friends in the Roman Catholic Church who were nuns, and they came to me and said, "There's a woman who is not guilty, but no one has tried to help her get out of prison, and she's there for twenty-five years to life. Would you just look into it?" I asked my editor and he said, "Well, that's really tricky. You're going have to trust her, she's going to have to trust you, and how do you know it's right?" Then the nuns gave me this incredible stack of things; the judge said he had made a mistake; the parole board that had been actually identified by Pete Wilson, he refused to—he vetoed his own board's agreement that she should be released. There were endless letters by the warden of the women's prison that she's the most rehabilitated person in the world. Then gradually we had to get to know each other; I had to know that she was really telling me the truth, she had to know that I wasn't an opportunist, that I truly cared about her.

03-01:38:45

We spoke on the phone from here, from there. She would call, "Would you take a phone call from blah, blah, blah correction prison somewhere in Southern California?" I'd say, "Yes," and we would talk. I began to trust her, because when she would write me these long, handwritten letters she would say, "For Christmas I did this." And she would say, "No, no, scratch that out. My friend so and so actually did that," and she would constantly qualify anything she did that was incorrect that wasn't exactly what was right. She'd say, "I started a Zen meditation group." She'd say, "Well actually, my roommate started it and we both founded it, but I didn't really do it myself." That happened enough times and talking to her. The parole board kept saying she should get out; the governor was saying no year after year. My editor, to his great credit, allowed me to write full page editorials about why should be released, with all this information from the warden, from everyone in the correctional system, the judges.

03-01:39:44

What had happened was she had run away from home and joined her brother in a very druggy Sausalito boat culture, and she was hooked on heroin. She

had a boyfriend, and they went to someone's boat, some ship, where they were going to pick up some heroin. She didn't know that her boyfriend had a gun, and the two men ended up fighting, a gun went off, and her boyfriend killed the drug dealer. She was horrified, she was completely drugged out on heroin, she had no money for a defense attorney. It was in Marin, and they were really sick of all of these people who were living in this boat counterculture, and the judge just said, "You're an accessory to the crime, you went with him," and he gave her the same exact sentence, twenty-five to life. She had already been there for about eighteen years when these nuns approached me, and I thought this was outrageous. When a parole board is chosen by a governor, the governor should accept that [recommendation]; it's his choices who are on that parole board.

03-01:40:56

Three years went by and constantly being vetoed, and then finally I wrote—and it's in my study, beautiful reprinted—it says something about the freedom that's deserved, and it talks about her whole life and everything. And it was Deukmejian who, in fact, his parole board said, "Yes, she should be released," and she was.

03-01:41:25

Then I got to really know her. In the years that she got out of prison, for about five years, she had to be somewhere in the Sonoma County area. So she had an outing party, which I went to, and all the people that supported there went there, and she talked about all the things she wanted to do. It turned out she was a great artist and she showed me some paintings she had done before all this, before she got drugged when she was young. And I got to know her fairly well. Then at one point, I was going on a trip with someone along the Russian River, and every once in a while, we would email, and she would tell me where she was, and I went to see her. And it was in this kind of on the other side of the Russian River, not the gay, wealthy area where you think you go to in the Russian River, but where very poor, white, almost working class lived almost in shacks. It was really quite invisible. I'd never seen that before. And that's where she was living with almost no money, with a man who wasn't very good, but she later married him.

03-01:42:32

Then she moved somewhere, when she was allowed to, to a place that then got burned out in Northern California. Then she went to UCLA—not UCLA, but somewhere in LA, and every once in a while, she would write me and say, "I really need money," which is how I learned how to use PayPal, and I would just give her some money. She'd say, "We just need like $20 to find any place,

a hostel," and I would give her these minor amounts. I'd say, "I'm not going to support you. I really helped you, I'm glad, and I respect you, but you really have to be on your own, but I'll help you when it's an emergency." And that has continued. For the last few years, she hasn't gotten in touch with me, but I see—I don't look at my Facebook page, I think one of my kids decided to do it, she often will comment on any article I've written and say, "Beautiful, brilliant." She's still watching what I'm doing. [laughs] That was, for me, I think, the great accomplishment of my life: to get someone out of prison, to be persistent, to do it in a dignified way, even though it was constantly being ignored. I feel very proud of that. No award for that, nothing.

03-01:43:45

In fact, two years later, the Hearst Foundation wanted to get rid of everyone who was against the Iraq War, and they did. One way or another, they made the requirements of what we had to do so odious that people—Bob Scheer left the *LA Times*; I left the *[San Francisco] Chronicle*; I forget who left, someone at the *LA Times*, some of the *Mail*, and others. There were four journalists who were writing about the Iraq War. All of us in one way or another were not fired, because we were all members of the union, which was really exciting for me, I'd never been in a union before. The union supported me amazingly, but what they were asking me to do was unacceptable. They were saying, "Write about the PTA in San Francisco." And I would say, "Look, you hired me because you said I was an intellectual, I was a historian, I would give real depth and gravitas to the Opinion. Then the publisher asked me to be a columnist, and now you want me to write about the PTA in San Francisco? I don't want to do that. If that's what you want me to do, I'll be an editorial writer, but I'm not going to write a column about that." They said, "You have to also come here for five days a week and be here by eight." And I said, "But I need to stay home two days and I need to write those original columns at home, because there is a person who is next to me, who I don't want to mention, who watches television all day, and it drives me crazy, and I can't write." He said, "You can't do that anymore." I said, "I resign, I'm not going to stay here anymore." Then I was unemployed for a year, and I went back to Berkeley, where people knew me as a colleague from Davis.

03-01:45:22

And I basically had gotten a PhD in public policy by being on the editorial board, because one day Condoleezza Rice would be there, another day there would be major, major political figures that would come, and then neighborhoods that didn't want another Walmart or another Ikea. So it was everything: Russ Feingold, really major political people; but also neighborhoods that were just angry at the way the street was potholed; all kind

of things. The person who was the head of the Public Policy School said, "I've been reading you. Why don't you teach something on gender and public policy?" I went there, and I went to the History Department, and as a UC professor, since I was a full professor, you can teach at another UC campus if they don't have what you teach. Well, I was teaching women's history, which shame on Berkeley, they did not have. I was teaching the history of immigration, shame on Berkeley, that they did not have. I was teaching in the Public Policy School, which was the only Public Policy School in the whole country; when I looked through all major public policy schools, that did not have something on gender and public policy. We ought to mention the fact that Berkeley is not as radical as many people think.

03-01:46:43

Tewes: Yes. And we fortunately did spend some time talking about your position there, but I think that is important to reiterate.

03-01:46:51

Rosen: Then I kept teaching until I began to feel—what's the right word—that something had changed among the students, that they were more involved in texting and looking up sports and looking up cosmetics, and they were so engaged in their telephones. It was so shocking to me, because I'd been out of academic life for so long. They didn't do that in my lecture classes, because my TAs were walking around and making sure they didn't, but I saw it even in my seminars where they loved it, they were all immigrant students. And I'd say, "Let's talk a break after an hour-and-a-half, go to the bathroom, get coffee." What used to happen is they would talk with me, they would talk with each other, they'd go have coffee, they'd go to the bathroom. Now they just sat there, they didn't talk to each other, they didn't talk to me; they would see who had texted them, who had emailed them, what the price of this cosmetic was, who was winning this sport. And I thought, God, this is really—it was kind of demoralizing. And one day, a friend of mine, who had also taught a Davis, was a physicist, I went to his class, which had about 400 students in a huge, huge auditorium. And I said, "I'm going to sit in the back, where I've never sat, and I'm going to look and see how many students are really paying attention, because what you're teaching is so over my head, I won't know what you're doing." And from where I was sitting, I could count twenty-five people who were not taking notes and who were texting. The girl next to me was texting her boyfriend outside, and it was a gorgeous sunny day. Someone next to me was looking for sports, someone else was buying cosmetics, someone else was texting. And then I went up to him later and said, "Do you put your notes somewhere on bSpace or something where they can see your lecture?" He looked at me and said, "But, Ruth, this is a research university, we don't do

that." Maybe some faculty do, but I didn't, and neither did he. I said, "How will they pass?" he said, "I don't know." I said, "I didn't understand a word you said, but that's because I don't understand anything about physics. But these students are advanced physics students, and they weren't paying attention." He said, "This is my ongoing research, there's no place they can find this." And that's kind of when I decided, I think I'm done teaching.

03-01:49:11

Tewes: Was this around 2014, you would say?

03-01:49:13

Rosen: About 2014, I think I was really demoralized. Then I started writing for various magazines in England for several years and various journals in New York, and I just kept writing. I had also taken up the flute after I left the *Chronicle*, then I was so depressed and angry at them, so I was also playing—now I've learned each note separately, and now I was playing serious music with other people, and I was doing a lot of things that I didn't have time to do. But it was demoralizing, it left a sour note to me about: how could a phone have changed the whole experience that I had as a teacher at a good university?

03-01:50:03

Tewes: I'm also reminded that Harvard has your professional papers. Your intellectual legacy does live on in another space.

03-01:50:16

Rosen: They take papers in the Schlesinger Library at Harvard, not just because you're a brilliant historian. There are a lot of brilliant historians, much more brilliant, more accomplished than I was. They were fascinated by the fact that I was so strange, that I had been an activist, and then a pioneer in women's history, and then a journalist, and an activist at all those positions. And they found that very fascinating, and so they asked me. And they gave me an assistant, and I spent a whole summer—we sent fifty boxes of my papers and all my op-eds, my lecture notes, and everything. They had a "finder" place where people can find things, but I have yet to send my personal papers, which is one file, because it has so many personal things in it. I will get to that and then give it to them and say, "It's sealed until I die."

03-01:51:10

Tewes: I think that will be a really interesting archive to understand the different assets of your life. Aspects, I should say. Ruth, we've spent a lot of time

together, and spoken about all of your accomplishments, and some of the challenges you've faced over the years, but I'm curious, what would you like to be your legacy, be it personal or professional?

03-01:51:36

Rosen: In a way, I didn't do what was always expected of me, and that's my legacy, in a way. My parents disapproved of everything I did as an activist in the Civil Rights and anti-war movement. I was very much involved, a very early organizer in the women's movement, and then I taught the first course in women's history at Berkeley, and then continued being part of the whole national network of people in women's history, which grew and grew enormously and exponentially. And then I started writing. This was after I had very serious health problems. I wrote some things for the *LA Times,* and they didn't have any women on their op-ed page, and they said, "Is there something else you want to write about? This is so extraordinary." I said, "Yes, George H. Bush is going to invade Kuwait." They said, "How do you know that?" I said, "I read everything." And they said, "Do you want to write about that?" I said, "Yes." And of course, one month later he invaded Kuwait. They didn't know that at the *LA Times*.

03-01:52:42

A bunch of years later, it was the *Chronicle* that had been watching, I wrote twice a month, because I was teaching full-time at Davis. They watched these pieces in the *LA Times*, and when they had a position that was open, because someone was leaving, they called me up and said, "Would you consider giving up a year of your teaching and coming to the *Chronicle* as an editorial writer?" I thought, Now, that's kind of something, that's a legacy in a way that I would say, "Seize the day. If I dreamt this would happen, it would never happen," but it did. And so I knew if I left for two years, I would lose tenure and I had to find out if I really wanted that. But one year? I mean, how could I refuse? It was so exciting. The Iraq War was going to start, George Bush was president, it was just, how could I say no? I think they liked me, because when they interviewed me, they said, "What if we asked you to write an editorial and you didn't agree with that at all?" I said, "I would not be the right person to ask, because I can't write something with conviction and write it well if I don't believe in it, so you should give me things that I can write with conviction. So no, I would say, no, I'm not the right person." He said, "You're hired."

03-01:54:02

Those were glorious years, because they were rowdy, they were more bawdy than university life, and that was fun, we had more fun. The other thing about working in a newspaper is the petty sandbox politics of a university doesn't

happen where people keep grudges for years. You have to file at four o'clock, and the next day you have to put out a paper again by four o'clock, you have to file. So whatever happens, you have to just get over it and just work together the next day. And that was a real difference, it was really a serious political thing that you had to do and so you did. I did enjoy the bawdiness and the rowdiness. We cracked a lot of jokes, it wasn't the genteelness of university life, so I liked that. I think that in some ways, the fact that I kept doing unexpected things, people at Davis thought, what, you're going to leave for a year? I said, "I've been a journalist—" I don't know that I told you this. I think I told you I found a certificate in the eighth grade that gave me an award for being such a great journalist. I cannot remember that I did this. And then I was a journalist during graduate school, and now I'm a journalist again. For me it was like, Oh my, I've always wanted to do both these things, but now I'm old enough and mature enough for them to—and there won't be someone 6'5" in front of me, I'll just be at my computer. And I have the intellectual maturity to do this now and to say it well.

03-01:55:30

I think that as a legacy, to really be true to one's self. I remember my father, as bad as he could be, would say, "To thine own self be true," and all the things that appears in so much of literature always affected me. What's the authentic me? Is the authentic me to be a crappy historian or to do what everyone else is doing? What is really important for me? And I always listen to myself, and even if it wasn't the predictable thing to do, I did it. And even though I might have problems as it happened at the *Chronicle* eventually, it was not acceptable; or even the problems I had teaching women's history, some people didn't like, I just did what I thought was right. I think that's a legacy: to be moral to yourself and to be true to yourself.

03-01:56:23

Tewes: I like that. Is there anything else you want to add that we have not discussed or discussed to your satisfaction? [laughs]

03-01:56:30

Rosen: I think there are some things that I'm not talking about that were really hard in my life, that were really painful, and the persistence I had to get over those things and to go on even, through really difficult times, is something that was hard—not that I didn't whine like everyone else, but I do look back and say, "I was a survivor, and that's important." Because there were terrible things that happened in my family, terrible things that happened to my health. I look back and I think, I'm proud of those things. And they are in my personal papers, and they will be available.

03-01:57:13

Tewes: I love that, that's beautiful. Thank you, Ruth, for your time, I so appreciate it.

03-01:57:17

Rosen: Thank you, this was—

[End of Interview]