

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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BARBARA FEINER INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Blanche Touhill: Would you introduce yourself?

Barbara Feiner: Yes, I'm Barbara Feiner. Most people call me Barb.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk a little bit about where you were born and your mother and father, your siblings, your cousins, your grandparents, your neighborhood, talking about who recognized that you had ability in a certain way and that you should consider going on to school or going into the world and making a mark or doing something sort of special, and if that's a grade school teacher, then talk about your grade school.

Barbara Feiner: Okay. Well, I was born in St. Louis, Missouri but my parents moved to Belleville, Illinois when I was about a year old and so I grew up in Belleville. It was a very Middle American kind of upbringing. I went to Catholic grade school. It was not very enlightened in terms of diversity in the world that I grew up in. I have three siblings. I'm the oldest of four and a sister who's a year younger than I am who's very different. She went to college in Colorado, went straight to Vermont from there and has always lived out in the country and grown her own food and things like that. I have a brother who took over my father's business. He's here in St. Louis, and then I have a sister who's over in Freeburg, Illinois who also works in that business. So my father owned a truck parts and service business. He was an entrepreneur for his day. He started it and it was a pretty successful business and successful enough that now my brother has been running it for quite a while and owns it now. My mother was a homemaker but she was not a shrinking violet kind of, stay in the background, you know, non-working woman. She didn't go to college and then married when she was 25 so she had a lot of terrific experiences, working in Washington, D.C. and working in Chicago as an executive secretary. She worked for Congressman Mel Price in Washington for a while. My grandmother, my maternal grandmother lost her husband, my

grandfather, when she was fairly young with five children, six and under and so she raised those children on her own by being a social worker and so she was ahead of her time in the fact that she was a working woman back in the early '50s. My father's family was more traditional. My grandmother on that side didn't drive a car and my grandfather...it was a more traditional family for that time. I went to Blessed Sacrament grade school which, when I was in grades 1 through 6, was a block from my house. We walked to school every day. It was a lot of nuns. I had a class of 48 until the 8th grade, so there was not...they didn't take a lot of nonsense or anything like that but I was really fortunate in that, as you said before we started, I was recognized early on as being one of the smarter...for lack of a better word...students and one summer, there was an opportunity for a small group of us to take French lessons and I think it was the summer after 5th grade and I think that's when I sort of became aware myself of some ability to maybe go pretty far. That French teacher who was Mr. Beski who was somebody, I guess, that our parents hired. I'm not sure how that worked but he wrote a letter to my mom and dad at the end of the period. It made me feel really terrific and so I think that was one of the things that really came home to me. So it was a wonderful experience. When it came time...I don't know if you want to go on to high school yet?

Blanche Touhill: Yes, go ahead, yes.

Barbara Feiner: Okay. We had a girls school and a boys school for the Catholics in Bellville at the time and so I went to the Academy of Notre Dame. That all changed a year after I started, but anyway, I had a wonderful experience in high school. I think the fact that it was all females, we could do anything and I wasn't much of an athlete. I mean, we didn't really have inter-scholastic sports. We had a lot of intramurals and those kinds of things but I was very active, I was president of the student council senior year and I was one of the page editors for the newspaper and was involved in the chorus and many other things. It was a great experience. I have really good friends from then that are friends to this day and we have a big birthday this year and so we're all going to make a trip to Mexico. We try to do that on all of our big birthday years. So, it was just a terrific experience. I had a few nuns in high school, in particular, who were terrific. At the time, I briefly considered going into the convent but then decided to go into teaching and I had worked quite a bit with

children, educable mentally handicapped children and so that was sort of the route that I decided to take in college.

Blanche Touhill: How did you happen to do that? You volunteered for this?

Barbara Feiner: I volunteered, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And it was a school nearby or a hospital?

Barbara Feiner: It was more of a home. It was a home for...and then I also worked at camps. I worked at a camp down in Southern Illinois for educable mentally handicapped children and at a day camp also prior to that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know you're mathematical. Did that surface in grade school and high school?

Barbara Feiner: It did but I didn't really do anything with it. I was always good at it and when I took the ACT or SAT, whatever, my math was always far above my verbal. I guess I took all of the math you could take in high school but I didn't think about...I never even thought about going into business, frankly, at that time.

Blanche Touhill: So, you're talking about high school and you had that experience of teaching. So then you graduated...

Barbara Feiner: Yes, I graduated from high school and my parents took me to every Catholic girls school in Missouri, Illinois and Indiana just about, and it was great. I broke my mother's heart when I decided not to go to St. Mary's at Notre Dame and I went to St. Louis University. I decided that it was time to move into . . . a non-Catholic, a public school or a non-denominational school wasn't even at option at that point in time, so I decided to go to St. Louis University.

Blanche Touhill: Did you live at home?

Barbara Feiner: No, no, no, I lived in what is now Jesuit Hall which was Rogers Hall at the time. It was an old hotel, for all four years.

Blanche Touhill: The Melbourne Hotel?

Barbara Feiner: No, isn't the Melbourne the one's that farther down?

Blanche Touhill: Oh, well, I don't know.

Barbara Feiner: This is at the corner of Grand and Lindell, right across from the college. Was it the Melbourne? Okay, right across from the college church, yes. It was wonderful because we had bathrooms in our rooms. It was terrific, yes, and so I might as well have been in Chicago in terms of proximity to home because my parents weren't...back then there were no helicopter parents and we talked to them once a week and they didn't meddle much. They had three other kids at home to worry about. So I got home occasionally but probably no more often than kids who lived 300 miles away. And St. Louis U was a great experience. I majored in psychology and then became certified in both elementary and special education and I had a really good time in college. I was involved, to a certain extent, but not nearly like I was in high school and it was a lot about friends and just getting to know people who were from all over the country but really a lot like I was in terms of their background and upbringing. So, back then, SLU wasn't a very diverse environment, I think, the way that it is now.

Blanche Touhill: And did you join a sorority?

Barbara Feiner: I did join a sorority. Sororities at St. Louis University were...there were no houses so it was more like being in a club and we did a lot of activities and it was a wonderful experience and I'm still really good friends with several of those women who were in my sorority, as well as others I went to college with.

Blanche Touhill: So you graduated?

Barbara Feiner: So I graduated and I had a teaching job in the Special School District and I started at Hiram Neuwoehner School on the corner of Ballas and Clayton Road and I was there for a year and then I got married to someone I had met in college and he was a pilot in the Air Force and so, after a brief stint in Oklahoma, we ended up in New Jersey at McGuire Air Force Base and so I taught school in New Jersey then for most of nine years so I ended up being a teacher for ten years and teaching was great. I taught second grade for, I think, seven of those years, and then fourth grade for the last two. While I was doing that, I went to a community college and took just a few business classes just to see if I had interest and inclination and decided, from those, that it was probably time to make a change. I was getting divorced. I wanted to come back closer to home. My sister-in-law had gone to Washington University, the MBA program and so I thought,

well, I'll see what that's about and I took the GMAT in July and started school in August. So, decided to make that switch.

Blanche Touhill: And that's a two-year program?

Barbara Feiner: It's a two-year program.

Blanche Touhill: And people speak highly about it.

Barbara Feiner: It was the best thing...other than marrying my husband, it was the best thing I've ever done. After teaching for all that time and having a total life change personally...I didn't have any children so I didn't have to worry about providing for them or taking care of them or anything like that and it changed my life completely and there were a lot of people in my class...back then, I was 32 when I went back and that was 1981 and most of the students were quite a bit younger than I was. There were students who had come straight from undergraduate. Now, it's not anything uncommon at all, to have a 32-year-old in a first year MBA class. There were two or three of us who were at my age...one was older but to me, it was a whole new world. It was all new and different. I hadn't had any...other than these couple of junior college classes...I hadn't really had much knowledge of anything. I worked in my father's business when I was in high school but it was doing clerical work that you just looked at the clock, waiting to get out at the end of the day. I loved it. It was just all new and different and the professors were great and it was so nice to have that kind of success, after being out of school for 10 years. It really did a lot to renew my self-confidence and so it was a terrific move.

Blanche Touhill: What gave you the courage to do it? You could have stayed in teaching.

Barbara Feiner: I could have stayed in teaching but, you know, to come back and teach in this area, I think I would have needed to go back to school anyway and I thought, well, if I'm going back to school, let's try something different. I thought I would enjoy business and the fact that my sister-in-law had done the program a few years earlier gave me the confidence and they didn't know if they would accept me or not because I didn't take the GMAT until so late but I did get in and then I remember being scared to death in the math refresher class that they do, right before school starts and thought, oh, what have I gotten myself into? But, yeah, it was a terrific program.

- Blanche Touhill: And it's a two-year program, as I recall.
- Barbara Feiner: It is a two-year program and it's still a two-year program. The full-time MBA is still a two-year program and I had a great internship in the years between...you try to get an internship, I guess, everybody does, between first and second year and I worked for what became Jefferson Smurfit. It was Alton Box Board at the time. I think it had just become Jefferson Smurfit but they were in Alton.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes.
- Barbara Feiner: So I made the trek to Alton every day to work in their corporate planning department and it was an interesting summer job. They ended up offering me a job that I didn't take full-time after business school.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you know Michael Smurfit?
- Barbara Feiner: I met Michael Smurfit on a couple...
- Blanche Touhill: I know Michael Smurfit, yes.
- Barbara Feiner: ...on a couple of occasions I met him when he came in from Ireland.
- Blanche Touhill: He gave the university an endowed professorship in Irish Studies.
- Barbara Feiner: How wonderful. It was an interesting...my boss there, Ray Duffy...I don't know if you ever...
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, I knew Ray.
- Barbara Feiner: Yes.
- Blanche Touhill: I liked Ray very much.
- Barbara Feiner: Very much and, as you know, he's an Irishman and so that's who I worked for and they had just acquired a bunch of plants from Diamond International, I think it was, and so Ray and I and a team of a few more people went all over the country visiting these plants and it was in order to try to get a handle on what kinds of positions could be eliminated actually, but it was just a terrific experience.
- Blanche Touhill: The Smurfit...he built a wonderful company.
- Barbara Feiner: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: I mean, he really started from almost nothing. Wasn't it, the father had the business in Ireland.

Barbara Feiner: I think so.

Blanche Touhill: And then they just expanded.

Barbara Feiner: And made a lot of acquisitions, I believe.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, yes.

Barbara Feiner: Including Alton Box Board.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. So you graduated...

Barbara Feiner: So I graduated.

Blanche Touhill: And you got the offer from Jefferson Smurfit.

Barbara Feiner: I got an offer from Jefferson Smurfit. I had offers from a couple of banks and one from Edison Brothers stores and I took the one from Edison Brothers. I figured that, in the world of paper processing and manufacturing, there was always the engineering aspect that would be something I wouldn't totally understand and I figured retailing was more understandable. Retailing was also...not that this was a problem but more female-friendly in terms of the type of business and everything that it is and Edison had a program at the time where they would bring in two, three, four MBA students, freshly minted MBAs from Harvard, Northwestern, University of Virginia and Washington University and so they brought us in to work pretty closely with senior management but alongside the people who had come from the stores and they had very talented merchants and store operations people who had grown up selling on the floors of the shoe and apparel stores. So it was an interesting way that they used us. I don't think there were very many retailers who hired MBAs and so I worked in corporate development and I was really fortunate in that Bernard Edison mentored me and I was sort of charged with being liaison. We had a chain of home improvement stores...this is the days before Home Depot and Lowes, they were more like Central Hardware and we had a chain of those that was headquartered out in San Diego and they were primarily on the West Coast, a few in Texas and Chicago. So I was the liaison between the home office and that chain out in San Diego. So that was a great experience. I

went to San Diego about every other month to work with the chain and then the company, a few years later, decided to spin that chain off to the shareholders and so that was a very interesting experience, one like you would learn if you were in investment banking, I think. Then I ended up going into the chains. I was in our menswear group for a while, in merchandise administration and...

Blanche Touhill: What did you do in those jobs, in the going to San Diego? When you went out, did you...you obviously looking at the books or...

Barbara Feiner: Right, worked with them primarily on the financial aspects of the business and they were doing a lot of things because at that time, it was just when Home Depot had opened their first few stores and they were huge boxes and of course we went and looked at the competition and everything and Handyman being more like a Central Hardware, was larger than your corner Ace Hardware but definitely not as big as a Home Depot. It was making a difference, for sure. They had terrific real estate in a lot of areas, some real estate in Northern California and so there was the spin-off a year or so earlier but I continued because of the shareholders overlapped completely in the early days and ultimately Handyman ended up getting liquidated and it was primarily for the real estate value but the shareholders ended up doing very well. But I would work with them on their financials and, as they were trying and testing different things, helping to evaluate that. It was different store remodels and what kind of merchandise arrangements made more sense than others and drove the business and those kinds of things. Then I also worked on...we acquired some chains while I was in corporate development and worked on those acquisitions: J Riggings out in Atlanta was one of the biggest of those.

Blanche Touhill: When you were working on those, did you have to bring in consultants to help or did you figure it out yourselves?

Barbara Feiner: We did most of the work ourselves. Of course when we did the Handyman spin-off and then, years later, the liquidation, we definitely had investment bankers involved, but on the acquisitions, they were chains that were similar to the chains that we had, mall-based, most overseas buying. One of the things that we could do very well back in the early days was source merchandise at very good prices and what ultimately ended up hurting the Edison Brothers' apparel business was

that others got into it and did it better and we were in 1500 square foot stores, a lot of them, and then The Limited and The Gap came along and had 15,000 square foot stores and we no longer had that competitive advantage of strategic sourcing because everyone was importing.

Blanche Touhill: But it was interesting that Edison was one of the first.

Barbara Feiner: Yes, Edison was one of the first. There were some other chains out there in the menswear world. We had Jeans West, Oak Tree and then J Riggings and a couple of other smaller things and there was Merry-Go-Round and Chess King.

Blanche Touhill: What was the financial package for Edison at its height?

Barbara Feiner: I think the sales were a little over a billion dollars in total. We had a lot of small stores that were doing under \$400,000 so that's a lot of payroll for not a whole lot of business compared with The Gap and Limited who would have a couple of million dollars at the very least.

Blanche Touhill: So you worked for them.

Barbara Feiner: So I worked for Edison Brothers for 12 years actually. I started there in '83, right after business school...actually, it was 13 years...and I left Edison Brothers after the first bankruptcy. I met my current husband at Edison Brothers. He's an attorney and he worked in the legal department at Edison and so Edison had filed for Chapter 11. We had two jobs that were there and so I think we thought, well, let me go first and see what I can do, and fortunately, the previous CFO to me at Washington University was a man named Lee Weeks and he had been the CFO at Edison Brothers and he left Edison and went to the university and he didn't stay at the university very long, only about three years. He went as the CFO and he ended up bringing in a lot of people from Edison Brothers, myself included and so he sort of rejuvenated the financial staff, I would say, at the university with quite a few people from Edison Brothers. Most of them are still there in one capacity or another. There are probably seven of us, six or seven, maybe eight, and so fortunately, Lee had brought me in and he kind of groomed me a little bit. So when he left three years later...not even three years later, it was only a year later. He had been there three years. It was only a little over a year later, I became the CFO and so that was just really fortunate. I had been very involved when I graduated from business school. I was very involved as an alum, still am

very involved in alumni activities, first for the business school, and then for the university. I had been one of the alumni representatives to the board of trustees so I was the vice-chair of the Alumni Board of Governors, last year Bill Danforth and then I was the chair of the Alumni Board of Governors the first year of Mark Wrighton.

Blanche Touhill: So the board knew you?

Barbara Feiner: So the board knew me; the administration knew me and so I think that that probably helped. Yeah, it helped a lot. Lee was the one who hired me but it was Dick Roloff who knew me from being there and the chancellor and Bill Danforth.

Blanche Touhill: Now, what position did you hold at Edison as you worked your way up?

Barbara Feiner: I was all over the place. I was corporate development associate or whatever and I was in menswear as a merchandise administrator and then as, like, director of administration. I was in our teens chain, 579, I was actually the president of that for a while. I worked on new ventures which was for a while. I was mainly working on bankruptcy-related things though, as were a lot of us when we filed.

Blanche Touhill: You were very entrepreneurial then?

Barbara Feiner: Within a bureaucracy, yes. Yeah, I would say that I've always...since I've been in business, I've had a lot of support in terms of people and systems and so I've not had to figure out how to do everything on my own or anything like that like a lot of entrepreneurs did.

Blanche Touhill: What I'm getting at is when Mr. Weeks moved to Washington U, did he say to you, "Come to Washington U with me"?

Barbara Feiner: No, he didn't but he reached out, he reached back. I don't think...at the time he went, he didn't really know what he was going to experience there and, frankly, I think he thought that this would be a nice not-for-profit job to have prior to retiring. So he retired from Edison and went to the university and I think he discovered that that wasn't the case at all and ultimately he decided to retire and move away.

Blanche Touhill: What I'm getting at is when he went to work for Washington U, then he realized you would be a good CFO?

- Barbara Feiner: I think he realized that I would be good to bring into his organization. I don't, at the time, if he thought the CFO or whatever and he brought the person who works for me as controller right now, worked at Edison. The prior controller who resigned years ago to stay with her kids had worked at Edison. The director of financial planning came from Edison and then we have people who came into the accounting organization under Lee Weeks who have since gone out and worked in the various schools at Wash U.
- Blanche Touhill: Was your MBA...did you have, like, an accounting focus?
- Barbara Feiner: My focus was more finance but I took a lot of accounting also.
- Blanche Touhill: So you understood the broader...
- Barbara Feiner: Right. I don't have a CPA but there are a lot of CPAs or people who have accounting degrees and have CPAs who work in our organization.
- Blanche Touhill: How long have you been there?
- Barbara Feiner: I've been with the university now since the fall of '96 so, what is that? Almost 18 years, 17½ years and it's been wonderful.
- Blanche Touhill: Talk about that. Have you traveled with them?
- Barbara Feiner: I have traveled some. In the early years when I was there, we didn't have a professional investment office so I had one staff member actually ended up being three ultimately and we worked with consultants in terms of the investments of the endowment and so I traveled a lot then because we were going all over the country, meeting with managers and all of that. I don't travel so much anymore, a conference here or there or go to another university, something like that but we ultimately decided, which was a great move, about six or seven years ago, to form a professional investment office. We call it a management company but it's part and parcel of the legal structure of the university and have a group who are real professional investment folks who have come from other endowments and pension plans and then we have a small board for the endowment now. It used to be an investment committee of 20 members of the board of trustees who oversaw everything. So we've become more like our big endowment peer universities in that way.

Blanche Touhill: How does the relationship between Washington U and the medical school, and BJC work?

Barbara Feiner: Well, the university doesn't own the hospitals. We have an affiliation agreement with BJH, Barnes Jewish Hospital and St. Louis Children's Hospital and part of that is Barnes Jewish West County and various satellite operations around the area and how that works is, the faculty members are the doctors for those hospitals and we share in a portion of the net operating revenue, we call it the bottom line split, with them and so Wash U staffs the hospitals. The interns, the residents are the hospital's residents but they're supervised by our faculty members and so we have a very close working relationship with the hospital and it's been a terrific relationship. I mean, that affiliation agreement goes back, I don't know how many years, back to the days, I guess when Barnes Jewish merged or maybe even before that. I'm not really sure but I know it's been in place much longer than I've been there. So it works very well.

Blanche Touhill: What is your relationship with Cortex?

Barbara Feiner: We are a member of Cortex, the university's a member, BJC is, the Botanical Garden and I believe UMSL is maybe through the Center for Emerging Technologies. I'm not exactly sure how that works but we're a member so we're an investor in Cortex. So that was the first relationship that goes back very far. So it enabled Cortex to start to buy land in that area in order to sell it off to various folks in order to be redeveloped for start-ups and different kinds of entrepreneurial activities. In more recent times...and we have occupied, we've been one of the major occupants, folks at the medical school have occupied a fairly substantial number of square feet in Cortex 1. The building is on the Parkway. Then we have been working very closely with them as they develop more of the property there. So there's a building that was the old Heritage Building that we've taken some square footage in that but that's also attracted that Cambridge Innovation Center from Boston and, I can't remember, I read something the other day that somebody else was...one of the law firms is actually taking space in that building and I think it's to be close to the entrepreneurial activity that's going on down there. So I think we've been a partner with Cortex and one of the things that the medical school and BJC did was contribute to the ramp off of 40 that will be closer to

Cortex and so that will assist the hospitals and the medical school as well as the Cortex area.

Blanche Touhill: Let me change the subject a little bit and then we can come back to this: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would you be doing today? It's a guess but...

Barbara Feiner: It is, it's a real guess. I probably would be a teacher. I really liked teaching. Had I stayed with it longer, I probably would have gone older in terms of the age of the kids. You can only read the stories so many years in a row, because there probably wouldn't have been an opportunity for business school but just...

Blanche Touhill: How many women were in the MBA?

Barbara Feiner: I think it was probably around 30% and, frankly, it's not that different today. I think business school, MBA programs are about a third and, I think, one of the challenges with full-time MBA programs is they want people to have work experience and yet, if somebody has four or five years work experience and is married, they may be thinking of starting a family and the timing, I think, could be somewhat difficult for a lot of women to go full-time. I think our executive...I don't know how our executive MBA program does. I know of a lot of women who have gone through that program and, of course, they're already in careers.

Blanche Touhill: Is there some award or several awards that you're really proud of?

Barbara Feiner: I received the only award of any note, I did receive a Distinguished Alumni Award from the business school about seven or eight years ago.

Blanche Touhill: Those are very hard to come by.

Barbara Feiner: Yes. I've actually been on the committee that decides who gets those awards and I'm still amazed that I was chosen.

Blanche Touhill: That's a very prestigious award.

Barbara Feiner: That was a very special event.

Blanche Touhill: Did you make a speech?

Barbara Feiner: A short speech.

Blanche Touhill: And what did you say?

Barbara Feiner: My father was there and so I think that I gave him a lot of credit. I also gave the business school a lot of credit because, as I said earlier, I think they really changed my life completely.

Blanche Touhill: Who was the dean of the business school when you were there?

Barbara Feiner: Bob Virgil, and Bob Virgil, he remains very special.

Blanche Touhill: The other question I wanted to ask was how did you get into the International Women's Forum or how do you like the Forum?

Barbara Feiner: I love the Forum. I didn't even know about the Forum until Joanne Griffin called me in 2008 and I had no idea what it was, who was in it and I was hesitant at first because I was very busy. I was on a board out of town at the time, the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research and I had to travel a bit for that and I was just concerned about the time commitment and taking on something and Joanne convinced me that, "No, no, you don't have to do anything," and it has been terrific and I've met a lot of people I didn't know before. I did know quite a few of the women and just like the business school award, I'm still kind of in awe of the fact that I was chosen to become a member. It's been terrific. This is the second year that I'm on the board and that's a good experience too because...not that there's very much work to do being a board member but just getting involved at a little bit different level. I really think knowing all these people who are just from very different walks of life but all prestigious and at the peaks of what they did or have done, it just gives you this list of people that you can call on, like if you know someone who is looking to find out something in some type of industry or whatever, you feel like you can call somebody up and they're always happy to meet with them and I've done that on a couple of occasions for other members of IWF and the dine-arounds are a lot of fun. I have a 94½-year-old father who takes a lot of my time. I go see him at least once a week and so I feel like I don't have as much time as I would like to be able to attend all the dine-arounds but they're really special and it's a special group.

Blanche Touhill: Looking over your life, it seems to me you've done a lot of different things and is that part of your social skills? Is it that you're easy with people?

Barbara Feiner: Possibly. I think one of the things I learned in business school, and it was with this summer experience at Smurfit and it didn't take any particular skill to travel with the group and go out and visit all these plants and there was a man in my class who was also an intern there and he may have even outranked me in business school; he was very smart; he had gone to Yale for undergraduate and he ended up with an internship working in the accounting department, helping them put the general ledger on the computer and I got to do this and part of it was I think I was older, more mature and also could deal with aspects of people who, of course, were very nervous about folks from this new home office coming in and speaking with them. So, I've learned that it never hurts to be nice.

Blanche Touhill: Did you hold offices in high school and college in your classes, in your grade school?

Barbara Feiner: Yes, not so much in grade school. I don't think we really had offices. In high school, I was president of the student council; I was class officer various years; I think I was vice president or secretary of our CYO organization in our parish. I was very involved in a lot of different things like that. In college, I was an officer in our sorority. I think that was probably about it but generally, the things I was involved with, I was involved at a leadership level.

Blanche Touhill: And your father's proud of you?

Barbara Feiner: Oh, my father is proud of me, he is. He's very forgetful these days but, yeah, I think going to business school and going into business, we developed a more special bond than we had in the past. So, yes, he is proud of me.

Blanche Touhill: Why don't you talk then about your role as a woman with a lot of male colleagues.

Barbara Feiner: Okay. Well, of course, when I was a grade school teacher, I was in the majority but then, when I went to Edison Brothers, of the MBAs that were hired my year, I was the only one from Washington University and I was the only woman. When I was promoted, I was probably the highest among that peer group, the highest woman among that peer group. Behind me, there were a few who were terrific and also rose. So, I was a chain president for a while and in that role, I was the first woman chain president. Then there was one that came along shortly after I did. At the

university, it's interesting, higher education I think is a pretty female-friendly business to be in. When I got to the university, I became an officer a few years after I got there, I became vice chancellor for finance. I was CFO without the vice chancellor role for the first few years and I was one of three women officers and deans and now there are nine of us among about twenty-five, I would say, officers and deans. So, that's changed quite a bit. I've not felt like being a woman has held me back at all. In fact, I probably was at the right place at the right time, going to business school a little bit later and being more mature than many of the colleagues I graduated with I think gave me a little bit of a leg up on getting a job. I think part of it is getting your foot in the door and then going from there. So I think that, yes, I was definitely in the minority at various times but I don't think it held me back.

Blanche Touhill: What is the difference between...I know it's a much broader role to be vice chancellor than to be the CFO, so you play a role in the entire...

Barbara Feiner: Yes, and I did as CFO also but...

Blanche Touhill: But it's a different level.

Barbara Feiner: Well, as vice chancellor, you sit on the university council which is more like the chancellor's cabinet and so you're a colleague among the other vice chancellors and executive vice chancellors and deans. So, I think it's a more visible role. I took on a little bit more responsibility in the role as vice chancellor. Later on, I had the purchasing area, the resource management area. So it's just a little bit broader.

Blanche Touhill: But you have a say, really, in the academic matters?

Barbara Feiner: I have a say in the financial aspects of one of the academic matters. Washington University is a very de-centralized organization and so each one of our schools is a separate financial entity.

Blanche Touhill: It's a chain.

Barbara Feiner: It is a chain. It's just like a chain but it's different from a chain though. At the end of the day, the chains, corporate operating results are not theirs to do with as they please whereas in our schools, the deans have a lot of say over what happens to the net results that they accumulate.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and that takes tact, to handle.

Barbara Feiner: It does and we work closely, particularly with the business people in the schools and so that all of their reporting is done the same way in terms of reporting up to the provost and the chancellor and the board. So we work very closely with them to keep them on the...

Blanche Touhill: So you've been able to keep everybody happy?

Barbara Feiner: Not always. We have an allocation system that, of course, no one is happy with so that must mean it's okay.

Blanche Touhill: They live with it.

Barbara Feiner: They live with it and...

Blanche Touhill: And you're flexible?

Barbara Feiner: And I think they see it as rough justice and we are very transparent in terms of what we charge them for and how it's allocated.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about some of your volunteer activities.

Barbara Feiner: One of my favorite volunteer activities was that I was on the board for the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research which is a research organization largely funded by NSF, National Science Foundation. They're located out in Boulder, Colorado and they have scientists, similar to faculty except that they don't teach, and they have a lot of scientists. They work under a cooperative agreement with NSF and then they also receive other funding from NSF as well as other agencies and so I was their financial expert when I was on the board and one of our investment bankers at the university had worked on some of their bond issues and so he was how I made the connection with them. The whole rest of the board at the time, almost the entire rest of the board was...they were all scientists and so I didn't know what they were talking about half the time in terms of the science that was going on and even when they were doing a lot of their strategic plans, it had a very scientific focus to it but they also have a pretty sophisticated financial staff, their CFO and their treasury person in particular and they've done a lot of borrowing for buildings that they've built with the ultimate funding to come later from the NSF research funds and so it was great to be involved in that.

Blanche Touhill: So you became important.

- Barbara Feiner: I became important and the other thing was that I didn't know what they were talking about in terms of the science and they didn't have a clue what I was talking about in terms of interest rate swaps and various other financial terms. So, I thoroughly enjoyed it. In fact, I just saw that Erick Baron who was on the board with me out there, he became the director of NCAR, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and then when to Florida State. He's the president of Penn State, the rising president for Penn State. He actually served at the same time that I did out there. I met fabulous people. The other members of the board were top-notch faculty and some administrators at terrific...
- Blanche Touhill: And were you the only woman?
- Barbara Feiner: No, I wasn't the only woman. In fact, they made a big effort in terms of getting women and minorities on the board and they did a really good job of that.
- Blanche Touhill: In situations like that, do they worry that the government might not come up with the money?
- Barbara Feiner: Well, yes, they worry a lot and at times, they do have to gear down somewhat in terms of staffing. I mean, it's similar to what our researchers have to do when the funding on a particular project dries up. But it was a terrific experience and actually, the terms are two three-year terms but I had fulfilled a term of someone who left after a year and so I ended up being on the board for eight years. So it was great.
- Blanche Touhill: Any other activity outside of...
- Barbara Feiner: Well, I'm currently on the board of the Black Rep which is very challenged financially. I think they have fabulous...they do fabulous programs and performances and Ron Heim is the founding director and the head artistic person is a faculty member at the university and so I really enjoy that. My hope is that the community, at some point in time, can get more on board with the Black Rep the same way that they have with some of the other arts institutions.
- Blanche Touhill: Where does he get his actors and actresses?

- Barbara Feiner: All over. A lot of them are local. Some of them were actually interns for him at some point in time but they will bring in people from elsewhere: New York, Chicago.
- Blanche Touhill: And will they use the new Sun or they're going to keep their building?
- Barbara Feiner: Well, they are no longer in the old church, the Grandel Theater. They were more or less ousted from there with this season and right now, this season, they're at Harris Stowe for most of it. They did their last performance or their current performance is at the History Museum but then they'll go back to Harris Stow for a performance in April.
- Blanche Touhill: And they have a nice little auditorium. It's about 400 or 500?
- Barbara Feiner: They do have a nice auditorium. I don't think it's quite that big. It's not quite that big but it's plenty of space for them.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, there is space, yeah, okay. Well, I've known Ron for years and he's very creative.
- Barbara Feiner: Ron is very creative. He gets a lot out of those performances. They're really well done.
- Blanche Touhill: And did you surprise any of your life-long friends when you became the vice chancellor and CFO of Washington University?
- Barbara Feiner: I think so. I think so. My life-long friends are my friends from high school and a few of them were in grade school with me also. The last one, except for myself, recently retired. They were mostly teachers. A couple were nurses and so several of them have been retired for quite a while. Yeah, I think they were somewhat surprised.
- Blanche Touhill: But congratulatory?
- Barbara Feiner: Oh, yes, definitely.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, I think we had a wonderful conversation and is there anything else you just want to add at the last moment?
- Barbara Feiner: No, thank you, Blanche, but I think we covered just about everything.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.
- Barbara Feiner: Thank you.