

An Interview with
Marcia Barber

at *The Historical Society of Missouri* St. Louis
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interviewed by Maureen Zegel
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Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri

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PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

6 DECEMBER 2016

MARCIA BARBER INTERVIEWED BY MAUREEN ZEGEL

Maureen Zegel: So, to begin the conversation, we're going to talk about when you were a young girl. You can talk about your youth, what happened with your family and who they were and what schools you went to. So let's start off with that.

Marcia Barber: Okay. Well, I have two sisters and I'm the middle child out of three girls and I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. My father was a surgeon and my mother was a homemaker. She never worked outside the home when I was alive, although I understand she did work prior to actually getting married. My parents both grew up in a Polish neighborhood so we grew up in a very Polish community. My parents actually, their first languages were Polish and they learned English when they went to school but when I was growing up, one of the first vivid memories I have is we moved when I was in kindergarten. And then I was already in school but when we moved to the new school district, I was behind the cut-off date so, my mother tells me, that what they said was, "Well, bring Marcia back next fall for kindergarten again" and my mother is like, "No, she's already more than halfway through kindergarten. We're going to 1st grade." What I didn't realize until an adult and having conversations with my mother, the impact that that had on me as a child. What I remember is, in 1st grade, when I went back to school the next fall I played: I was sick, I didn't like going to school, there were all kinds of issues going on. Talking to my mother about that as an adult, she said what she realized was, I felt rejected as a kindergartener because I was in school and all of a sudden I wasn't in school anymore and I couldn't go back to school. So I had some real trauma in 1st grade adjusting to school and that comes out in my memories as having been...I remember pretending being sick and pulling off anything because I wasn't happy with school at that time.

Maureen Zegel: I take it you recovered?

Marcia Barber: Right, but it was only in 1st grade. After that, I remember I must have

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grown out of it because it didn't happen anymore with that.

Maureen Zegel: Were you younger than the children?

Marcia Barber: Yeah, you're right, I was younger but that's also how I got to Catholic school which plays out a little later because I ended up having an entirely Catholic education which meant I went to an all-girls Catholic high school and I went to an all-girls Catholic college. And so, those experiences,

being in an all girl environment, had a great impact on me later. But let's come back in terms of when I was younger. One of the things I remember quite a bit about too growing up is I lived in a very strict family and I say that from...we talk about, where did we play; how did we play. My mother did not approve of any of the kids in the neighborhood and how they were being raised so we weren't allowed to play with any kids in the neighborhood. I had cousins who lived right behind me and so they were approved. I could play with my cousins. So my playmates were really my cousins and my two sisters until I got to the point where it was 4th grade and 4th grade made a difference because Girl Scouts entered my life. My mother approved of Girl Scouts. Now, she'd never let me be a Brownie. I could have joined the organization in 2nd and 3rd grade and been a Brownie Girl Scout but my mom...again, talking to her as an adult, she said to me she didn't think that a 2nd and 3rd grader could get enough out of the program. So I had to wait until 4th grade. And I remember talking to her earlier, 2nd/ 3rd grade, "I want to be a Girl Scout; I want to be a Girl Scout." She's like, "No, you have to wait until 4th grade." So 4th grade came and I said, "Mom, it's time. You said I had to wait until 4th grade. I want to be a Girl Scout."

Maureen Zegel: Did your older sister become a Girl Scout?

Marcia Barber: Yes, both of my sisters were Girl Scouts.

Maureen Zegel: But not Brownies?

Marcia Barber: I don't believe they were either. I don't have any recollection of anybody being in the organization as a Brownie. But then, because my mother trusted Girl Scouts, my playmates expanded to my Girl Scout troop. They really didn't expand to my classmates because we didn't use the public school transportation to get back and forth to school since we were going to the Catholic school and it was not right in our neighborhood. My father dropped us off on his way to work and my Aunt picked us up going home. So we really didn't have playmates through school. So Girl Scouts became very, very important because it was my social life growing up. So the influences on my early life besides my parents, would have been my Girl Scout leaders, Mrs. Shinead and Mrs. Clark and I remember their names so well...

Maureen Zegel: All the way through?

Marcia Barber: Well, from 4th grade through 9th grade, so for a long time they stayed as the leaders and they were very good and they gave us lots and lots of opportunities. So the sleepovers I had were part of the Girl Scouts; the activities we did on Saturday, whether it was working on the skating badge or horseback riding badge, all revolved around my Girl Scout troop.

Maureen Zegel: Going back just a little bit: Were your parents immigrants? Did they come from Poland?

Marcia Barber: No, they were first generation. All four of my grandparents were born in Poland. I understand actually when my father went to 1st grade, they sent him home because he knew no English and you weren't allowed to not know English. So it was like, "Go home, learn English and then come back to school the next year."

Maureen Zegel: So your grandparents immigrated here?

Marcia Barber: Yes. In fact, my grandparents...I never really got to know them very well because none of them ever really learned English. They stayed with Polish. My parents spoke with them. My parents didn't want to teach us Polish because they used that to talk in front of us without us understanding it. So I never learned any of the language.

Maureen Zegel: I think that happened often.

Marcia Barber: Yeah, it was a natural course of events at that time.

Maureen Zegel: And after the Girl Scouts?

Marcia Barber: Other influencers though in my early years, in elementary school, I think my 8th grade teacher, Sister Kevin, I would say was quite an influencer. In terms of...I don't ever remember conversations about, "Be all you can be" or "What do you want to do?" Actually, the first thing I wanted to do was be a teacher and very common for us in terms of, what are you going to do, be a teacher or a nurse? But I also don't remember saying "I want to be an engineer" and "No, you can't do that." In fact, my older sister was an engineer. She was an electrical engineer. So we had to be living in environment in the family that supported that because she actually was in the first class that accepted women into the Case Institute of Technology; before it was Case Western Reserve, and there were 10 of them in the class. They had their pictures in the paper because they were

the first women brought into the whole school. But she also, I remember her telling me, she had professors, particularly those first couple of years, that said to her, "You can't get more than a C in this class because women can't do better than C work."

Maureen Zegel: And what level is that?

Marcia Barber: Well, freshman/sophomore in college. This would have been in, like, '63/'64. So I remember her telling me that from her expectations of graduating from being an honors, went to "I have to graduate because I have to do A work to get a C and so I just need to make sure I get my degree."

Maureen Zegel: Now, your family must have supported that. Your parents supported your sister wanting to be an engineer (when almost...there were no female engineers). They must have supported her.

Marcia Barber: Yes, I think so too. Well, my father, I told you he was a surgeon and he was the only one of his siblings who ever even went to college. So we grew up in an educated environment. I remember conversations at the dinner table where... I was exposed to more biology and medical things at the dinner table than probably most children were and that probably plays out more to, I majored in biology. I never really thought about where did that come from, but that's probably where it did come from.

Maureen Zegel: What kind of books did you have?

Marcia Barber: Oh, I didn't read. I hated reading.

Maureen Zegel: What about your sister, she did math?

Marcia Barber: Yes, she did math. I was much more of a math and science person, all the way through school. When I would go to enrichment programs, my parents would sign me up in the summertime. The first one I really remember, it was between 8th and 9th grade and that was an advanced math kind of program. I always aced in high school my math classes and my science classes. So that's really no surprise, then, that I went into math and science, and actually from a standpoint of English and history, the only reason I even passed my college English Lit class was because of my friends because without their assistance, I probably would have flunked English Lit.

- Maureen Zegel: Were you recognized as a leader going through grade school?
- Marcia Barber: I would say from a variety of aspects and I go back to the Girl Scout movement. I was often elected the patrol leader. When I went to summer camp, I was often given an award at the end for being the outstanding camper of the week. So, yes, and then I also had an experience of going to one of the Girl Scout National Roundups.
- Maureen Zegel: How old were you?
- Marcia Barber: It was between junior and senior year of high school, 10,000 Girl Scouts from all over the United States camping for two weeks and we were in Idaho, what is now Farragut State Park and I was elected my patrol leader for that group too. So I would say, yes, I had leadership tendencies from the beginning.
- Maureen Zegel: And people recognized it.
- Marcia Barber: They must have because...
- Maureen Zegel: You got to play them out.
- Marcia Barber: Right, I did and not only from the adults but from my peers.
- Maureen Zegel: So what about high school? So you were smart in science and... math.
- Marcia Barber: Yeah, the science and math. I struggled a little bit my freshman and sophomore year and actually I ended up changing schools between sophomore and junior year and still, from one Catholic girls school to another Catholic girls school but I think it was a good move. I asked for it and my parents supported it and it gave me a chance to sort of start over again. The one thing I really didn't like in my first school is we were in...I forget what they call it...when you're put in a class with everybody at the same level. All the smart kids are put in one group...
- Maureen Zegel: Tracking.
- Marcia Barber: Tracking, yeah. Everybody in that school was tracked and I didn't like the tracking and the school I went to was a non-tracked school. But the school I chose to go to was a long commute away. I took public transportation to get to it. My parents would drop me off, I would take a bus to downtown Cleveland, I would get on their Rapid Transit and then

after the Rapid Transit, I'd have to get on another bus. So you knew I wanted to go to this school.

Maureen Zegel: Wow. How long did that take?

Marcia Barber: An hour-and-a-half commute each way. So you learned to do your homework on the bus when you're not standing, at least when you have a seat and you're not carrying too many books with it.

Maureen Zegel: Did you meet people on the bus?

Marcia Barber: I would say no because the people traveling on the bus were generally people going to work and not other school kids. So, not that much, although then, my senior year, when I got my driver's license, my parents let me use one of the cars and so that was awesome ability, to be able to have some wheels. Something else that was very important to me growing up was my music. I took classical piano from probably about 2nd or 3rd grade all the way through my high school years. In fact, for a while, I considered going into music, particularly from the teaching end because teaching music, I didn't have to really be a performer, I didn't have to be an accompanist, I didn't have to make it in the world of competing to be in a symphony kind of thing. But I never really started that. My music teacher wasn't very happy about that. She thought I'd be a great music teacher and I think my mother would have liked me to have done that.

Maureen Zegel: Does she play music?

Marcia Barber: Yes, she played the piano and she sang. She sang opera and did a lot of operettas.

Maureen Zegel: Did she ever do it professionally?

Marcia Barber: She never did opera professionally. She did operetta on not a super professional level but more of a community kind of level. But she did love to sing and so she shared that.

Maureen Zegel: Did you have a piano at home?

Marcia Barber: Yes, we did, we had a Baby Grand piano at home.

Maureen Zegel: So you played, your mom played?

Marcia Barber: Yes.

- Maureen Zegel: What about your sisters?
- Marcia Barber: Yes, we all took piano lessons all the way through high school. It was very important. But the connection between math and music is very strong. We know that a whole lot more today than we did before.
- Maureen Zegel: At UMSL, the chancellor, he's a mathematician, a physicist and a jazz pianist.
- Marcia Barber: Ah, that's right. I have heard that.
- Maureen Zegel: Did either of your sisters continue beyond?
- Marcia Barber: No. As I said, my older sister's an electrical engineer; my younger sister went into forestry but she actually...and I share this because I think it's important that you know, we all three had quite interesting careers and even though, for many years, I was executive director of a Girl Scout council, more than just here in Eastern Missouri, I also was in Pittsburgh and suburban Chicago but I used to say to people, "I have the least important career of the three of us" and people would look at me and go, "What do your sisters do?" and I said, "Well, my older sister is an electrical engineer and she currently supervises 500 electrical engineers for the City of Seattle and is responsible for all the dams and all the electrical production for the entire city," I said, "so I consider that more important or more demanding." My younger sister started in forestry, worked for the forest service for a while but ended up having a presidential appointment position under Clinton and she supervised the forest service. She wasn't the head of the forest service; she was the presidential appointee who supervised the head of the forest service.
- Maureen Zegel: Of the country?
- Marcia Barber: Of the country, yes. So you can see why you put things in perspective, yes, my last executive director job, I was responsible for 62,000 girls and I used to explain to people that that was more like being a superintendent of a school district serving 62,000 families. It was a way to get people to understand. You explain to somebody you work for the Girl Scouts and they say, "Oh, do you bake cookies?"; "No, I don't bake cookies. I'm responsible for a ten million dollar corporation serving 62,000 girls"; "Oh," and then all of a sudden they think a little differently about what you're doing.

Maureen Zegel: When I first met you, I heard you make that statement and I thought, Blanche Touhill.

Marcia Barber: We've talked enough about leadership and things, but I think it's important to go back to my comment about the single sex education. I think the opportunity or the experience and exposure of being in an all girls high school and an all girls college, I didn't have to compete with the boys and there wasn't the whole issue, as now I understand it, a whole lot more looking back, that girls often step aside and let the boys take the leadership roles. Well, when you know nothing different than that, it is normal and natural to step up into that natural leadership role because you're not stepping back and letting the boys do it because they're not there.

Maureen Zegel: There's always a girl or two that will push you over the edge.

Marcia Barber: Well, that could be. In school, I was never in student council and I was never an officer in school, so my leadership roles really weren't in school. They were in Girl Scouts.

Maureen Zegel: Did you play athletics at all?

Marcia Barber: No, we didn't have athletics, just intramurals. It didn't exist beyond that, pre-Title Nine and all of that. But you can see the thread of Girl Scouts through my life as being very, very important. What's interesting is, though, when I first graduated from college, I did not think about going and working for the Girl Scouts. I ended up there by a circuitous route. The reason I didn't start off is because I had made a conscious decision I did not want to do what I knew was the entry level work working for a Girl Scout council in the membership. That had no interest to me at all.

Maureen Zegel: What kind of work was that?

Marcia Barber: Recruiting members, membership work, recruiting girls, getting girls in troops, recruiting adult volunteers, making sure they get trained. For some reason that just didn't have any interest to me and maybe that's the math/science, that that was too right-brained type of work versus the left-brained type of work. I did end up, right after college, though, teaching.

Maureen Zegel: What did you teach?

Marcia Barber: I taught...guess what?

Maureen Zegel: Math?

Marcia Barber: No, science. I went back and taught where I graduated high school but after I was really in the classroom and experiencing that on a daily basis, I decided that I liked the education field but I didn't like being in the classroom, having to do all the prep work with that. It's an extremely physically demanding job and mentally demanding job. And I just knew that that wasn't going to make it for the rest of my career. So I had to think about what was going to happen next and how was my life going to take a turn, and I was actually volunteering on a Girl Scout weekend and somebody said to me, "You love the out of doors; you love your Girl Scout work. You know, there's this college in Chicago where you can get a degree in camping" and we laughed about it and said, "Oh, yeah, we're going to get a degree in putting up tents and cooking over the fire." But it stuck in my brain. So I researched it. Certainly, there it was, George Williams College, named after the founder of the YMCA and the program was very administration-oriented. It was not skill-oriented. So my master's degree is in the administration of organized camping and environmental education programs. So it was a great blend of the education and the out of doors and really was a perfect fit for me.

Maureen Zegel: Who was that person who mentioned it because I want to get back to some of the people who have influenced you and that sounds, like to me, a person that...was that just an aside?

Marcia Barber: It was a volunteer that I was doing this volunteer weekend with and it was just in a side conversation about, "What do you do?"; "Well, I'm a teacher," and "Do you like it?"; "Well, I'm probably not going to stay in it"; "Well, what do you think you're going to do?" and "Well, you know, I really like the out of doors so I'm thinking about wildlife biology," because I thought that would be a great segue, and then she said, "Well, there's this place" and so I thought, well, that really would fit the bill and it did.

Maureen Zegel: What about people who influenced you in college?

Marcia Barber: In college...

Maureen Zegel: You talked a little bit about those two Girl Scout leaders when you were in grade school.

- Marcia Barber: When I was younger...
- Maureen Zegel: Where did you go to college?
- Marcia Barber: I went to Ursuline College in Cleveland, Ohio.
- Maureen Zegel: Did you live at home?
- Marcia Barber: Yes, I did. There really weren't any strong influencers in the college environment so that's why I'm struggling because I'm trying to think...
- Maureen Zegel: Were you active in the Girl Scouts when you were in college?
- Marcia Barber: Yes.
- Maureen Zegel: Were you a leader?
- Marcia Barber: Yes, I was a leader.
- Maureen Zegel: So you were the influence.
- Marcia Barber: Well, and it was the influence from the younger years, I think, that just carried me through until I sort of found my real niche. I had a strong influencer once I got my first job in environmental education so as a young adult, in my early 20's...mid 20's...
- Maureen Zegel: You got your master's?
- Marcia Barber: I got my master's and then I was offered a job I never applied for. I was finishing my master's and the Environmental Ed Center that was run by the college asked me if I wanted to come and work for them and so I said, "Yes, but the job you're offering me is really what I call a menial schlepping job. It's definitely entry-level. I'm not planning on staying very long but I have to write my thesis and so I understand, the farther you get away from academia, sometimes you don't get the thesis done so," I said, "I'll commit to you a year if you allow me the flexibility of getting my thesis done." And so we made that agreement and I did do that for a year.
- Maureen Zegel: That's nice.
- Marcia Barber: Right, it gave me a year of experience in the field. It was great. I left about two months...not even two months, maybe about a month after I left, I got a call from my boss. I was back at home looking for a job, getting ready actually to move to Seattle to live with my sister and I wanted to

find a more permanent job out there and my boss called me and offered me another job that I never applied for. He said, "I couldn't tell you when you were here but we're doing a big reorganization of the whole facility here and I'm getting a promotion and that's now public and we need a director of outdoor education and would you come back and be the director?" I'm like, "I'll come back and be the director."

Maureen Zegel: No schlepping.

Marcia Barber: No schlepping, yeah. So actually, the opportunity that I took for the one year and made that commitment I'm sure put me in the position then to be offered the director's job the next year.

Maureen Zegel: Then they got to see you.

Marcia Barber: Right, because they could see my work ethic and what I could do. It was interesting that I actually moved up into management rather quickly because I was running this program for 6,000 children when I was 26 years old and I think back now to looking at 26-year-olds, thinking, giving them the responsibility of 6,000 children...because the program was an overnight program so it was really like the kids would come from school, from the Milwaukee area and the Chicago area and they came with their teachers and sometimes not...well, with their teachers and chaperones, sometimes just with their teachers and we augmented the staff.

Maureen Zegel: How big a staff did you have?

Marcia Barber: Actually, I only had two full-time people. The rest was all college interns. So there was a lot of recruitment of interns and making connections with colleges and universities so that we would have interns and sometimes we would also get the interns after they finished school and they didn't quite know what to do yet so they would come and work for us for a year and make a year-long commitment. They lived at the facility. We fed them, we housed them and they got a year under their belt.

Maureen Zegel: So children came to your facility overnight?

Marcia Barber: Correct, right, during the school year.

Maureen Zegel: Chicago...

Marcia Barber: Right, Chicago and Milwaukee areas.

- Maureen Zegel: A lot of kids?
- Marcia Barber: Yes.
- Maureen Zegel: Over and over again.
- Marcia Barber: Yeah, and I did that for nine years and during that time, then I met my husband and he ended up losing his job...
- Maureen Zegel: Where did you meet him?
- Marcia Barber: At a singles club, at a Valentine's party. He tells me...this is funny but he says, "What attracted me was..."...what attracted me to him was my brain. We were playing the game Mastermind...I don't know if you know that but it is a real thinking of game. So it was an interesting thing, as we talked about it.
- Maureen Zegel: At the singles club?
- Marcia Barber: Yes, at the singles club. So we were living in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and then, when he lost his job, I had to pick him up on my health insurance and then he finally found something but it wasn't as much as the job before and we didn't have enough money to make the mortgage payment so we looked at each other and went, "We can't stay in Lake Geneva." It's a small town, 5,000 people. He worked for the largest employer. He was in the third of three layoffs and it was like, "Okay, what are we going to do?" He was in sales and I said, "I'm going to look to the Girl Scouts."
- Maureen Zegel: So what were you doing? You had quit your job?
- Marcia Barber: No, I hadn't quit my job. I was working until we could figure out where we could go but in the meantime, we didn't have enough cash flow to make all of our expenses for the month. We'd only been married for two years. We didn't have much in savings until it was like, "We have to get this going here." So we decided we'd both look for work. I got the first job offer and so I looked at my husband and said, "Will you follow my career? Will you let me take this all the way and if we have to move, that means you be the trailing spouse instead of me being the trailing spouse?" and he said, "Yes." That, I think, is what made our marriage work and we've been married for 35 years.
- Maureen Zegel: Good for you.

Marcia Barber: If you're both trying to have a career, you better be in a big city where you can move up in your career or one of you has to be the trailing spouse and pick up a second job, the second person, the second income provider.

Maureen Zegel: So where did you go?

Marcia Barber: Philadelphia area and we didn't care for Philadelphia. I liked the job but it was Eastern culture more than Midwest culture and I didn't know that I was that much more of a Midwestern person versus an Eastern type of culture person until we experienced it. But we lived there for seven years. I worked for the Girl Scouts for four years and then I was ready...that was in a program director position. Then I was ready to move into an executive director position but my husband wasn't in a position to be able to geographically move. It just wasn't good timing so I said, "Okay, I'm going to make a conscious decision to leave the Girl Scouts, but still look in the not-for-profit world for an executive director position," keeping in mind that it will be a short-term kind of position, build my resume so that I am more valuable to be able to go back into the Girl Scouts as an executive director, and that's what I did and I worked for the Easter Seals of Berks County for three years and I was their executive director.

Maureen Zegel: Now, why not-for-profit?

Marcia Barber: My whole life was not-for-profit and I think that's because I think about making the world a better place and pretty much everything I do in life or think about is trying to make something better for somebody else.

Maureen Zegel: Where does that come from?

Marcia Barber: Well, my mother, I told you she was a stay-at-home mom but she was a professional volunteer. She was head of the Women's Auxiliary for the hospital that my dad was at. That I remember her doing a lot of, and then she was also active in the church. So I think the volunteerism came from that and from my Girl Scout experience because of course teaching the Girl Scouts to help to give back to the community is a real part of the Girl Scout program. So we did a lot of that.

Maureen Zegel: So you worked for Easter Seals did you say?

Marcia Barber: Mm-hmm, it was suburban Philadelphia. It was Berks County, which is one of the collar counties there in the Philadelphia area. I learned a lot

more about fundraising, which I didn't have the opportunity to do when I was running programs...well, more than just the Easter Seals...telethons, working with other groups to do golf outings and different kinds of special event fundraisers for the organization, but that particular Easter Seals Society, 95% of the clients were children because children is also a theme in my career, whether it was the teaching, the environmental ed center which served school children, Girl Scouts was always for kids, and the Easter Seals Society I was at was for kids. So I've touched hundreds of thousands of lives of kids which is a little overwhelming if you really think about it, the influence that I had directly or indirectly, with boys and girls.

Maureen Zegel: Boys with the Easter Seals?

Marcia Barber: Boys with the Easter Seals and with my teaching...well, it wasn't because I taught all girls. Really, the only time I really had boys that I had any overseeing was with Easter Seals. But Easter Seals also prepared me a little bit because I didn't know much about people with disabilities so it gave me that experience. When I did land my first executive director job with the Girl Scouts which was in Naperville, Illinois, my board chair used a seeing eye dog so I also sort of see little bit of a thread or God getting me ready and helping me get one experience to be better prepared for the next experience. You were asking me about influences too and I want to go back, I didn't mention about Carolyn Granley. Carolyn was the overall site director at George Williams College. She was the campus director where the outdoor education center was housed. We were not at the main college campus for George Williams. That was in Illinois. We were up in the Lake Geneva area. They ran a conference center on weekends at the school environmental ed center, kept the facility going on a year-round basis during the winter so that staff could have full-time jobs instead of part-time jobs, so it really kept the staffing stable so it had some real benefits, both for the community and for the college. But Carolyn was my boss's boss and I think about my boss who was male. Bill was great but he also allowed and was not threatened by me spending time or stopping in and talking with Carolyn. She was the one who really urged me and told me I could do more and I could handle more. It was more just through casual conversation that we would chat about what I was currently doing, what I maybe wanted to do or where that could take me. But I credit Bill for not feeling threatened by me talking with his boss.

- Maureen Zegel: Oh, yeah, I've had bosses tell me I can't talk with their boss.
- Marcia Barber: Right, never, ever saying to me I couldn't do that or what am I doing. Now, maybe he and Carolyn had those conversations so that Carolyn said to him, "Don't worry about it. We're just doing some mentoring. Don't feel threatened at all by this."
- Maureen Zegel: Do you think that was part of his nature?
- Marcia Barber: Yes, I do think it was part of his nature. So I think moving beyond where I was at the outdoor ed center was probably Carolyn's doing. The fact that I looked to Girl Scouts was because I knew I could make a career of it and I could move up in the organization, had the opportunity to have more leadership experiences and to use my leadership skills and that it would allow us to be able to retire. We all have that as a goal at some point and I'm very grateful for the career that I had with the Girl Scouts.
- Maureen Zegel: So you were outside of Philadelphia, you worked for Easter Seals...then you got the job in Naperville?
- Marcia Barber: Right, then I got the job in Naperville, Illinois. It was the Girl Scouts of Dupage County. Dupage County is a collar county for Cook County in Chicago, about 25 miles due west of downtown Chicago. That council at that time, I think we were serving about 12 or 13,000 girls and our office was right on one of our camp properties, perfect.
- Maureen Zegel: So, what position were you?
- Marcia Barber: I was the executive director.
- Maureen Zegel: Was that your first executive director...
- Marcia Barber: For Girl Scouts, yes. I was there for seven years and I made a conscious decision to leave at a time when I felt the organization needed a change in leadership and I say that from the aspect that we went through some very traumatic decisions. We had to sell one of our camps and one of the most traumatic things a Girl Scout council can do is close a camp.
- Maureen Zegel: It's like closing a school.
- Marcia Barber: Right, so I led the organization through that. It was the right decision to make from a financial standpoint. The camp was an hour-and-a-half north

of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, was only used for 500 girls in the summertime, was costing us an arm and a leg to do that.

Maureen Zegel: What was that procedure like? I think of people who are going to object to it and let you know in no uncertain terms and what was that procedure like and here's where your leadership skills...

Marcia Barber: Well, the board of directors were the decision-makers. The board at first said, "Let's try to see what we can do from a marketing standpoint and how can we get the subsidy reduced and how much reduction can we get in it and will that make sense?" and we tried that for a couple of years and it didn't really make sense. We also had other places that we could send the girls, other Girl Scout camps because there were other councils that were neighboring to us who ran camps and it wasn't that we were going to deny that experience from the girls and we would support them with that and we actually developed some cooperative programs to try to help some of the bridging of that so that the girls got some exposure to what those camps were and those councils accepted our girls. The problem, though, is you're still going to have your objectors who want to do anything and everything to keep the camp. They picketed board meetings and we had some open town hall "Come and voice your opinion" meetings that the board chair and I co-led. What I remember being the most challenging part of those was the negativism that was publicly voiced. As the leader, of course, the negativism was voiced directly against me and sitting there and sort of biting your tongue when you know what you're hearing isn't really what happened but they don't understand all of the details and all the aspects of it.

Maureen Zegel: Was that the first time you were ever challenged?

Marcia Barber: Yes, on that kind of a scale.

Maureen Zegel: And how many camps were there that you...

Marcia Barber: We had two camps and we closed one. It was the overnight camp, the one in the city where our office was, the troops could come for weekends but we didn't offer a program where the girls could be dropped off for a week and left there and had the counselors. That's what we did up north and that's what we set up, then the relationships with our neighbors so then the girls still had the experiences. Where I think my leadership skills came in from this camp decision was more from a...of how to help the

council heal because it did need some healing at the time and that was where I made the decision that it was the best for the organization if I no longer was the executive director, that somebody else could come in and the anger could go with me somewhere else and somebody new could come in and run the ship and it would be better for the organization. So it was a hard decision to make because I really wasn't interested in leaving. I loved the position. I loved the job but I made that conscious decision that it was the best for the organization.

Maureen Zegel: Were you being blamed for closing it?

Marcia Barber: Oh, absolutely, by the volunteers, absolutely, well, the board too. Oh, sure but the board or volunteers. I'm the paid person, I'm sort of where the buck stops from that aspect, that and the board chair too but the board chair rotates so the board did not ask me to leave. There was no hard feelings at all with that. In fact, I don't think they did really want me to leave but I do think, even looking back, it was the right decision for the organization and for the volunteers to be able to move forward in a positive way.

Maureen Zegel: Did they leave the camp closed?

Marcia Barber: It was sold to a gentleman who I understand today has not done anything with it. It's still sitting as an empty piece of property. He bought 100 acres on the most pristine lake in Northern Wisconsin. I mentioned once before about God giving me experiences that helped me get ready for something else that I didn't even know was coming down the pike, I moved from Philadelphia to Naperville. Now I'm back in Pennsylvania.

Maureen Zegel: The other end.

Marcia Barber: Right, I got the job as the executive director of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Council out of Pittsburgh. It was a larger council, serving about 25,000 girls, serving all of Southwestern Pennsylvania and actually Northern West Virginia and the little part of Maryland that sticks out to the west. If you think about the State of Maryland, the next time you go look at a map, take a look at the far western portion. There's, like, a little triangle of that and it doesn't make any sense. They don't relate to Baltimore. They relate to West Virginia and Morgantown area so from the way people would travel, it just made sense that we served these two

counties in Maryland. But after I was there for a couple of years, I was faced with the decision about guess what?

Maureen Zegel:

What?

Marcia Barber:

Closing another camp.

Maureen Zegel:

Get out.

Marcia Barber:

So I do remember my board chair saying, "Don't tell anybody you've done this once before. They'll think we hired you to come and close the camp."

Maureen Zegel:

Yeah, the closer.

Marcia Barber:

But from what I had learned from the first experience, I approached the second one differently, used a decision-making process called Kepner – Trehoe which is an absolutely marvelous decision-making process. We involved the volunteers from the get-go and basically what we were doing was...well, the board said, "We need to cut \$150,000 out of subsidizing our outdoor program. How do we do that?" So we sat down with the volunteers and the first thing you do in Kepner-Trehoe is figure out all the possibilities. So we talked about what running all the different camps...we had four camps that we owned there...so all the combinations of three camps, two camps, one camp, what were the monetary things there; what was the program aspects; what would we lose if we didn't have this particular facility; could that be taken care of on another one.

Maureen Zegel:

What was causing...

Marcia Barber:

Budget, in this case it was budget.

Maureen Zegel:

Was it budget also in Naperville?

Marcia Barber:

Well, yes, and a matter of, we're spending X number of dollars on an outdoor program and we're also wanting to do this program and this program and this program, either after school or STEM programs were starting to pick up and we don't have the money to do that, or go into the communities that are volunteer-poor and you need more financial resources to be able to bring Girl Scouting to that community. So they're trying to balance...

Maureen Zegel:

So the Girl Scouts was changing its mission?

Marcia Barber: No, not changing the mission but changing how much money is being spent in the various programs. So the board is looking and saying, "How many girls are using the outdoor program and how much are we subsidizing the outdoor program?" versus "Show us what other programs were doing, how many girls are being served there and how much we're subsidizing that." So, that's, in Pittsburgh, where that conversation got started. But the process of involving volunteers who, from the first meeting, would say, "We're never closing the camp. There's going to be another way to take care of this situation." But by using this process and then having them come around to saying, "I don't like the decision but I understand the decision and it makes sense to be able to do this." Then having that core of regular volunteers: troop leaders, not board members, who could stand up in front of the rest of the volunteers and say, "This is what we did, this is why we've made the recommendation to the board we did." Again, the other volunteers could say, "We don't like it but we understand it and we can live with it."

Maureen Zegel: So what happened after Pittsburgh?

Marcia Barber: St. Louis.

Maureen Zegel: Circuitous route.

Marcia Barber: Yeah. St. Louis came into being because on a national basis, the organization went through major mergers. I went to a national meeting back in maybe about 2003, 2004 where it was announced that the national board had made a decision we were not going to be 317 councils anymore. We were going to consolidate down to about 100. And so us 317 executive director CEOs sitting around this room are looking at each other going, "Oh, we're going to play a big game of musical chairs, aren't we?" But it was done for a capacity-building reason for the organization. Some councils were very, very small, all rural, maybe serving 600, 700 girls, not having a media market of their own, not really having a core city with foundations so the national board set up some parameters around saying every council that we have is going to meet these parameters. Now, let's put a study group together to say if we were starting from scratch, looking at these United States and with these parameters, where would we draw our boundary lines.

Maureen Zegel: So what happens to the rural girls?

Marcia Barber: Well, the rural girls still get served but the headquarters that is serving the rural girls is not in a rural community. Here in St. Louis, there was a merger of two Girl Scout councils, the Girl Scouts of Greater St. Louis and the Girl Scouts of...Beck Thatcher Council out of Hannibal and Hannibal served...they had a Girl Scout office in Hannibal and it served the northern and eastern portion of the state and Greater St. Louis actually serves all the way down to St. Genevieve so in our situation here, there was just the merger of those two. In Pittsburgh, there were four councils that were merging into one. The entire western half of the state was becoming a council and when this ended up happening, I came home and had a conversation with my husband to say "We have a choice: we can stay here in Pittsburgh, I can compete for the Pittsburgh job. If I get it, fine; if I don't get it, most of the rest of the mergers will have already happened so there really won't be another Girl Scout job for me there. I'll have to figure out something else to do for the rest of my career."

Maureen Zegel: I didn't ask what your husband does.

Marcia Barber: He's in buying/purchasing. He worked in the IT field for a while but right now he works at a law firm in Clayton and it's a very, very large firm. They have offices in, like, 10 different cities around the United States but there's only four of them that do buying. Electronically today, you can do purchase orders, to everything over the internet so you don't have to be in Denver to buy a refrigerator and have it delivered to the Denver office. He also worked in Pittsburgh for UPMC which is the BJC equivalent in the Pittsburgh area. So he looked for a job at BJC here when we first got here because that would have been the easiest transfer for him. But he did struggle, the older he got and, as we started applying for jobs online more, when we moved here to St. Louis, he could hardly get an interview. People wouldn't call him because his resume looked like a job hopper, from Wisconsin to Philadelphia to Chicago to Pittsburgh to St. Louis and you didn't have the opportunity in cover letters when you apply online to say why this is my background and this is my career, my career path, being a little different than somebody else's would be.

Maureen Zegel: What do you think your life would be like if you had been born earlier, say 50 years earlier? What would Marcia be?

Marcia Barber: Actually, thinking 50 years earlier, I would have been born in Poland so my life would have been very, very different. But I don't think I would have

had the opportunity to be in as many leadership positions. I probably would have ended up staying a teacher, even though I wasn't as happy with it because the opportunities just weren't visualized for women to be able to do a lot of other things other than nursing or teaching and even though my father was a doctor, I wouldn't have been in nursing because I get too upset of the stomach and throw up. I tried that once. I tried thinking about physical therapy and so my father had me work with a physical therapist one day and I don't know what it was but I remember having to leave the room and throw up and I went, this isn't going to work. But, coming back to your original core question on that, I really think I probably would have had a much more mundane life and just not had the opportunities to use my leadership skills as much or probably been as satisfied with my career and my life choices.

Maureen Zegel: Do you think there's anything we missed?

Marcia Barber: I don't think so. There was one question you prepped in the material I got that talked about a life theme and I really think that does go back to that, why did I work in not-for-profits all my life and why did I help kids and I made a comment earlier about making the world a better place and that's where I think that is because even today, I've turned into, in my retirement, a professional volunteer.

Maureen Zegel: And you volunteer where?

Marcia Barber: Well, I volunteer at the Science Center on a weekly basis but I spend a lot of volunteer time with United Way. I worked for organizations that got dollars from United Way for many, many years and I feel very strongly about the United Way and the St. Louis United Way is an absolutely wonderful organization. I currently chair one of the allocations panels for people with disabilities and really think that I want to continue giving back to the community and to the world and continue on a daily basis to make it a better place.

Maureen Zegel: And you're making it a better place by ringing bells?

Marcia Barber: By ringing bells, yes. My music, where did my music go? I don't own a piano, believe it or not. I have not, in many, many years, had a piano in the house but I do play hand bells and I play for an organization called the Gateway Ringers here in St. Louis. We are our own not-for-profit organization. It is a group of adults who are auditioned in order to be able

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to play in the group so we play fairly high-level music and we do more than Christmas concerts. Christmas is the time people always think of hand bells, or with your church but we also do a concert series in the fall and a concert series in the spring and we've cut a couple CD's and that's just a great outlet for me and I love doing it and it's a great way to continue my music.

Maureen Zegel: Great.