

An Interview with
Linda Goldstein

at *The* Historical Society of Missouri St. Louis
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Oral History Program

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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.

Blanche Touhill: Would you introduce yourself.

Linda Goldstein: I'm Linda Goldstein and I'm delighted to be here today with you.

Blanche Touhill: Well, good. Talk about your childhood, Linda, where you grew up, your parents, your grandparents, your cousins, anybody who was a part of your life and did you play with boys and girls together? What was your life like when you were young and maybe into elementary school and did anybody in that time ever say, "Linda, you have ability" or "You should use this or that in your career," or whatever it is.

Linda Goldstein: Great. Well, I grew up in Chicago, Illinois and I was the oldest of four children and I credit birth order with my leadership skills. I had two younger brothers and a younger sister and I was always organizing everything in the family. I was very fortunate. I was smart in school. I was disciplined, I was in the accelerated class from first grade on, believe it or not, and I just remember when that first happened, when I was separated from some of my friends into an accelerated reading class, I was so disappointed to leave my friends and my friends said, "How can you do this?" and I said, "No, I don't want to go back. You have to be better and come with me," and I look back on that and I think, how prescient that I realized that, no, I shouldn't just settle for the norm if I have more abilities. One thing I remember very well about my childhood was that my dad and I would go to the library every two weeks, when the books were due, we would go, we would do a trip to the library and I just began to love reading. I loved to learn and I remember one time at my grade school, I was taking out 11 books. I would go through these phases: biographies or mostly non-fiction but various things that I wanted to learn about and the librarian said to me, "Why do you continually take out all these books. You can't possibly read them" and I said, "Oh, but I do." I look back on certain things like that and I have no idea where that came from. Well, in this case, it was my dad who really instilled that love of reading and knowledge in me. I had some terrific teachers, some really wonderful teachers growing up and I appreciated them very much while I was in their classes and I appreciate them so much more now, when I look back on what they did.

Blanche Touhill: Have you ever gone back and said thank you?

Linda Goldstein: I have to some and, unfortunately, not to all of them, but I went back to my high school reunion a couple of times but never to grade school and those teachers were equally as important. Then I look at my college days and there was so much impact there too. I went to the University of Illinois, a very large institution and so it's hard to reconnect or at least it was hard for me to reconnect.

Blanche Touhill: Did you play with your brothers and sisters?

Linda Goldstein: I did. I played with my brothers and sisters but mostly, with four of us, I was not in a caretaker role but it was a little bit different than being a buddy. I was the authority figure. I remember a lot of really good girlfriends in grade school and in high school too. I'm not an athlete by any means but we really enjoyed being outdoors. We would go to the playground; we would ride our bikes and we were fortunate, we lived very close to what is now the Cook County bicycle path through the forest preserves and so back then it was a dirt path. It was more like mountain biking at that point, without the mountains but it was still a great outdoor experience and it made me feel very independent and healthy and very alive.

Blanche Touhill: So in the summers you played on the playgrounds and in your neighborhood?

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Did you live in the city or did you live in the suburbs?

Linda Goldstein: We lived out in the suburbs, yeah. If you've heard of Brookfield Zoo...

Blanche Touhill: Yes.

Linda Goldstein: We were very close to Brookfield Zoo and that was my first job, was working the concession stands when I was in high school at Brookfield Zoo and that made me really appreciate zoos and really appreciate cultural institutions in the community. It was a great experience.

Blanche Touhill: But you must have been hot?

Linda Goldstein: Oh, it was terribly hot.

Blanche Touhill: And tired.

- Linda Goldstein: Yeah, it really was, it was really interesting. You started out at 75 cents an hour and then you progressed to 90 after a probationary period. But it was a fabulous experience in the sense that it was all of my contemporaries, it was all high school students and we all had just turned...I think you could work there when you were 15. So we were all 15 and I learned so much about team work, working with people, about discipline and showing up and being responsible. We were responsible...sometimes I would work in a concession stand by myself and so it was all on me: the stocking of the shelves and the finance and the responsibility of being there.
- Blanche Touhill: So you really had to take the money and give the right change?
- Linda Goldstein: And all of that, yeah. That was before it was calculated.
- Blanche Touhill: You had to really add and subtract.
- Linda Goldstein: You really had to add, that's right.
- Blanche Touhill: How did the people treat you?
- Linda Goldstein: People were wonderful. People were really wonderful. You know, I look back on that and it was so many families and their children and people were generally in a good mood.
- Blanche Touhill: How much did the concessions cost? Were they expensive?
- Linda Goldstein: I don't remember. They weren't but then, I really got a huge promotion. I got to work in the souvenir stand and that was...and again, it taught me so much about business.
- Blanche Touhill: [Inaudible 06:33] big items, wasn't it?
- Linda Goldstein: Right: the stuffed teddy bears and the stuffed animals and the postcards and it was air conditioned. So there you go, it was a big promotion. But, it's interesting, when any of us look back and we think, okay, what impacted you? What do you think of with your childhood?
- Blanche Touhill: Do you ever see any of those friends?
- Linda Goldstein: I don't, no. Sometimes I go back to my high school reunions but other than that, I haven't kept in touch.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to a big high school?

Linda Goldstein: Well, by Chicago standards, it was extremely small but by most other standards, it was fairly large. There were 2,000 students in the school, totally so each class had about 500.

Blanche Touhill: And did you take the Honors programs or things like that?

Linda Goldstein: I did, and I took all AP classes and essentially placed out of my first semester in college.

Blanche Touhill: Wonderful. Did you get through sooner?

Linda Goldstein: I did, three-and-a-half years.

Blanche Touhill: You did?

Linda Goldstein: Right, I did.

Blanche Touhill: You know, that is a wonderful opportunity to cut those costs, isn't it?

Linda Goldstein: It was. I paid my way through college so it was very meaningful for me.

Blanche Touhill: What did you do as you were working through college?

Linda Goldstein: I did a variety of things. My favorite job was working at the library. There's beginning to be a theme here. First I worked in the stacks which I didn't like. It was too isolating, and then I worked in, it was called the PE, Physical Education Library. I'm sure it's something else now, probably Recreation or Sports Physiology or something. But it was the PE Library and it was terrific. Again, the people, the patrons there were, they were students but they were also just very...it was comfortable to work in that environment. I had a semester abroad my junior year, the second semester junior year and I kept in touch with the library and they sent me things about what was going on and so it was just a really great environment.

Blanche Touhill: Did you work for them when you came back?

Linda Goldstein: I did, after I came back from that semester.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go abroad?

Linda Goldstein: I went to Salzburg, Austria. It was fascinating.

Blanche Touhill: It's a beautiful town.

Linda Goldstein: It was.

Blanche Touhill: A music town.

Linda Goldstein: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Are you a music person?

Linda Goldstein: I am, yes, and that was part of the experience. The other thing that I...I had this wonderful course when I was in Salzburg. It was called Music History and that's not very indicative of the content of the course but it was a course on how art, music, literature were all part of the history and how it all played into...they played into each other.

Blanche Touhill: And how they intertwined?

Linda Goldstein: Yes, and it was fascinating. So I'm a big Gustav Klimt fan. The movie's out now.

Blanche Touhill: You saw the painting?

Linda Goldstein: I didn't ever see that painting.

Blanche Touhill: But you knew the story?

Linda Goldstein: Well, I haven't seen Adele Bloch-Bauer and I have seen The Kiss and so, yes, I read the book and I saw the movie, both, but at the time, I just knew that I liked Gustav Klimt.

Blanche Touhill: How did you like Vienna?

Linda Goldstein: Oh, it was so...

Blanche Touhill: It's not from Salzburg, is it?

Linda Goldstein: No, it's not and I've been there a couple of times, both while I was studying there as well as since that time. I just think the history and the culture is fascinating. It's so regal to me, regal in a good way. I was going to say "aristocratic" but that sounds snobby. It's not like that at all. It's just so proud of their heritage. So I really enjoyed that.

Blanche Touhill: I don't know what year you were there but were the Russians still there? No?

- Linda Goldstein: No, not in Austria but I did go to East Berlin.
- Blanche Touhill: ...where the Russians were still in control.
- Linda Goldstein: Still there and I also went to Hungary which was communist.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, and how was that experience?
- Linda Goldstein: That was very eye-opening, very eye-opening. East Berlin at the time...and this was the early '70s...
- Blanche Touhill: I was in East Berlin at that time, too.
- Linda Goldstein: If you wandered off the street...I don't know if you did...you wandered off the main drag, there were still bombed out buildings and there were armed soldiers in the windows. We stopped someone to ask directions and I spoke German.
- Blanche Touhill: Did they speak to you?
- Linda Goldstein: No, they were like, "No, no." And then in Hungary, it was very controlled, it was a tour and we were in Budapest and it was beautiful and we toured the countryside a little bit. It was wonderful but it was very controlled and orchestrated but it was an eye-opener.
- Blanche Touhill: I think crossing over to East Berlin was rather...I was afraid when I crossed over because I felt I was a number and for some reason, they wanted a 5'5" brunette, American.
- Linda Goldstein: Right, they just...you'd be gone. Well, and you know, when we went over...
- Blanche Touhill: Did you go with somebody else into East Berlin?
- Linda Goldstein: I went with two girlfriends and we were traveling on our own and we took the train in from West Berlin to East Berlin and the border guards looked very stern and they were glaring at us. Then they all started to laugh.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, so they were humorous.
- Linda Goldstein: Yeah, they thought it was pretty funny because they knew we were terrified. Then I was just mortified as a poor college student, we had to buy money and then you have to spend it.

Blanche Touhill: That's right.

Linda Goldstein: And so I was like, "Oh, but I don't have this money to spend." So, I mean, it was fine. It wasn't that much but I thought, oh, this is interesting.

Blanche Touhill: I'm so glad I went. Do you feel that way?

Linda Goldstein: I am, too, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And I remember the soldiers on the corners and it looked like they had machine guns or something.

Linda Goldstein: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: They had big guns.

Linda Goldstein: It was intimidating.

Blanche Touhill: I remember the children were always sort of a lot of them together, holding hands, going down the street with the teachers and the people lined up outside the...

Linda Goldstein: ...the grocery stores, mm-hmm. Yeah, that was an eye-opener too. We went into the grocery store to look around because we had this money that we had to spend.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, see, I didn't do that.

Linda Goldstein: And it was very sparse. It wasn't like going into one of our grocery stores where you have lots of options and lots of different items. You could tell, it was a very depressed economy.

Blanche Touhill: I didn't see anybody who was particularly happy.

Linda Goldstein: No.

Blanche Touhill: That struck me too.

Linda Goldstein: Yeah. As I think back, my memories are all in black and white. It's almost like I'm thinking of a movie, a movie about my time in Berlin. It's all black and white.

Blanche Touhill: What was your college major?

- Linda Goldstein: I started out as a pre-med major and I quickly changed from that into advertising and public relations and then I also had a double major in German but I never declared it. I had enough to do that...
- Blanche Touhill: So you could speak German?
- Linda Goldstein: At the time I could, yes, I could. I had taken four years in high school and then three-and-a-half years in college.
- Blanche Touhill: When you went to Salzburg then, did you take classes in German or in English?
- Linda Goldstein: The classes were in English because it was a program that was designed for American students, to have an experience abroad. And so the classes were in English but, after school, I would meet a German boy who was the same age as I was and we'd meet over a cup of coffee and he would speak to me in English and I would speak to him in German.
- Blanche Touhill: So you were helping each other with the language?
- Linda Goldstein: Right, yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: How wonderful! Did he ever come to this country?
- Linda Goldstein: Not to my knowledge, no. I haven't kept up. I just recently did some online research about the program and the woman who started the program. I didn't realize when I went on that program, it was only in its second year. So it was a brand new program and she recently retired after building up the program into something that was really a big program and she was honored by the Salzburg government and some other institutions.
- Blanche Touhill: Did she bring students other than the University of Illinois?
- Linda Goldstein: Well, it was actually affiliated...you know, I'm not sure, at that time it was affiliated with Northern Illinois University so I look back and I used to laugh that I was simultaneously a student at the University of Illinois, Champagne Urbana, Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and Salzburg University in Salzburg, Austria.
- Blanche Touhill: So the transcript might...
- Linda Goldstein: That's right.

Blanche Touhill: However they put it back on [inaudible 16:22]. Well, how did you happen to choose advertising?

Linda Goldstein: I had been the editor of my yearbook in high school and I had also been a reporter for the student newspaper and so I really liked that experience. That had a lot of impact on me, being the editor and that experience with journalism and what we did with the copy and the layout and the decision for the theme for the yearbook. All of that was just...I really enjoyed that. It was creative but not in the sense of being artistic but still, it was creative in terms of marketing and so it was very influential.

Blanche Touhill: Was there a competition among a boy to be the editor or did you have it hands-down?

Linda Goldstein: I guess I had it hands-down. I don't remember any competition. I was the assistant editor in my junior year and asked if I would be the editor.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, I think they invite you, don't they, really, to take those positions?

Linda Goldstein: Right, yeah, but it was wonderful and actually, it's how I ended up at the University of Illinois.

Blanche Touhill: Tell me about that.

Linda Goldstein: Well, there's a couple reasons. I look at the process now. I have children and grandchildren who have been through the college decision-making process and it's so complicated. It was much more simple when I went to college. When I was in 7th grade and in 8th grade, I was in the local science fair and so both times I went to State and won first in the State in some category but the State competition was at the University of Illinois so in 7th grade and in 8th grade, I went to this competition and then when I was in high school doing the yearbook work, we went to the annual yearbook convention, my junior year and my senior year and that was at the University of Illinois. So it was just, to me, there was no question where I was going to go. That was it.

Blanche Touhill: Did you stay in the dorms or did you stay in a hotel/motel?

Linda Goldstein: When we went down there? For the science fair, I want to say that we just went down for the day both times. But then, for the yearbook conventions, we stayed in a hotel.

Blanche Touhill: But when you signed up, you weren't thinking of advertising? You were thinking of pre-med?

Linda Goldstein: Pre-med, right.

Blanche Touhill: Because you were good at science and math?

Linda Goldstein: Yes, and then I just...I did have to work through school and that wasn't going to work out; it really wasn't. I didn't place out of chemistry. I was going to be a chemistry major but I had honors chemistry the first year and it was just a lot and I took the full year of chemistry and it was honors but I felt like, I can't work and have this major, and so it all worked out great.

Blanche Touhill: It did.

Linda Goldstein: It really did.

Blanche Touhill: Did you join a sorority?

Linda Goldstein: I did, Alpha Delta Pi.

Blanche Touhill: And were you a leader in that?

Linda Goldstein: I would say I was reasonably sociable and I do stay in touch with some of the people from my sorority, from college, yes. But I can't say that I was a leader in my sorority. It was much more social, and again, I was working but what I did do was I participated on our sports teams and that was fun. It was particularly fun because A D Pi was, like, the sports sorority and we won first place in everything. However, I was on the B team so I was the forward of the girls B...basketball...team and every time we were beaten which we were always beaten. I don't think we ever won but we were beaten and the other team would just be hysterical: "We beat A D Pi" and I'm like, "Oh, gosh, we're the B team. Don't get too excited." But it was a great experience, again, and it was a lot of learning about teamwork and making those connections with people.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you learn sports?

Linda Goldstein: Well, believe me, I am not a good athlete by any means, but basketball I'd always loved and it was more academic that I'd learned in school and then I rode my bike a lot.

- Blanche Touhill: And then your family encouraged you?
- Linda Goldstein: Yes, to a degree, yes. They weren't very athletic either but they did encourage me to get out and get some exercise and that.
- Blanche Touhill: So you graduate and what happens?
- Linda Goldstein: So I graduated and I did what many people at the time did which was, I was recruited by the May Department Stores Company for their executive training program which is what brought me to St. Louis and I thought, well, I'll get two years experience and then I'll move back to Chicago and I loved it here; I absolutely loved St. Louis. I thought it was just a great place. The people were warm and welcoming and I made very close friends who are still my friends from, what, 40 years ago when I first met them. I look back and that was such a good decision. It wasn't an informed decision necessarily but I would not have had the same opportunities in Chicago that I have been afforded in St. Louis.
- Blanche Touhill: So you worked in the May Company and how long did you stay?
- Linda Goldstein: Not very long. It wasn't for me but it was a good learning experience and so I moved on. I actually became a flight attendant and I went back to school.
- Blanche Touhill: Was it TWA or American?
- Linda Goldstein: Well, it was Ozark at the time, then it became American and that was great because I worked on weekends and I went to school during the week.
- Blanche Touhill: And you could arrange that.
- Linda Goldstein: I could arrange that after I had been there a few years and so I got my Master's Degree in counseling/psychology and then I started to work primarily for the union. We had a grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to start up an EAP.
- Blanche Touhill: What's an EAP?
- Linda Goldstein: Employee Assistance Program and so I was responsible for the flight attendants in St. Louis and in Chicago at the bases for this particular union. So that was a leadership experience that was fabulous and it was all about self-starting because I was creating this program. I mean, there

were guidelines and there were things that we had to do with the grant and training that we had and that kind of thing but I started it, promoted it. I was the first line of help for people.

Blanche Touhill: Did they come to you or did you come to them?

Linda Goldstein: Both. Mostly they came to me. So I think it was a really good model because they were comfortable confiding in someone who was going to be very confidential with their information and working out things like the insurance coverage and I remember one woman was a divorced mom and she had a five-year-old. She was so worried about, "What am I going to do if I go into treatment?" So we worked that out and I did things like financial counseling, mental health counseling, substance abuse counseling and was able to, I think, really impact a lot of people. So that was great.

Blanche Touhill: And you started the program.

Linda Goldstein: I did start the program for St. Louis and Chicago.

Blanche Touhill: Did other airlines have that program?

Linda Goldstein: Well, this was through the union.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, I see, like the stewardess union.

Linda Goldstein: Yes, Association of Flight Attendants. So that was a national union that got the grant.

Blanche Touhill: But you were the Midwest portion?

Linda Goldstein: Yes, I was in the St. Louis base and then Chicago base for Ozark.

Blanche Touhill: So you went to national meetings and met these other peers of yours?

Linda Goldstein: Yes. I felt really good about having done that and then there was...de-regulation came and I felt like I didn't want to stay in that industry, although I was in it for 11 years, total. I just saw the beginning of the end for our program, for unions and for the type of work that I wanted to do.

Blanche Touhill: How smart of the union to go into that.

Linda Goldstein: It really was, it was really wonderful.

Blanche Touhill: To save their personnel.

Linda Goldstein: Yes, and I worked closely with the company, the management, with the treatment facilities around town. So I feel like I did a lot of good.

Blanche Touhill: You know, in that time, it was recognized as a disease, wasn't it?

Linda Goldstein: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: It was recognized that it wasn't something that you could control yourself. You needed medical help.

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And psychological help.

Linda Goldstein: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: Whatever was necessary. You had to be treated.

Linda Goldstein: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: So, go on. So then where did you go after that?

Linda Goldstein: So, I ended up in human resources with, ironically, Venture Stores, which was part of the May Department Stores Company. So I went full circle and I ended up being in charge of college recruitment and executive training. So I was recruiting on college campuses. So it really was full circle because I had been recruited.

Blanche Touhill: Was it mid-western? What was your area?

Linda Goldstein: We went everywhere. We pretty much went everywhere. We went to Brigham Young University; we went south to some of the African American colleges, and then...I'm trying to think...not too far east. We went to Indiana University but primarily in the Midwest but we did have a little bit of a geographic reach.

Blanche Touhill: If you had stayed with the May Company would you have gotten that job, with the Ventures?

Linda Goldstein: Well, if I had stayed originally with May Company, I don't think so.

Blanche Touhill: No. See, I think sometimes you have to leave in order to come back.

Linda Goldstein: To come back and get, yeah, get something different. Then I was in their HR organizational development department for a while and then I was recruited into our family business. I had gotten married and my husband's family owned a commercial flooring contractor.

Blanche Touhill: Now, tell me about that because you spoke about that at the Trailblazers Award.

Linda Goldstein: Yes. Well, it was certainly something that I had to think twice about because, really, who decides to go into commercial flooring sales? I mean, really. It's not something you grow up thinking, oh, I want to do this when I get older. But it was the family business and that was another thing to think about because my father-in-law had started it but when he passed away, my sister-in-law became the president. My mother-in-law was chairman and so I was going to work...and don't get me wrong, we have a very close family, but you have to step back and say, is this going to be okay, working with your sister-in-law and your mother-in-law? And it was, it was just terrific. As I mentioned at the Trailblazer Award, I didn't realize how underrepresented women were in commercial construction at that time. That was back in mid '80s and so, because we had almost totally female sales force. My sister-in-law was president; my mother-in-law was there and so when we acquired one of our competitors and merged with them, they were more of a traditional company, they were all men and I think I joked about, "It was the wine and cheese ladies meet the beer and pretzels guys." It was just a big cultural difference but it worked out great because you have to look at the strengths of each organization and one of the strengths was that now I could bring in a man to better relate if I had a client or potential client that wanted to talk about the good ol' days in the army. I can't talk about that. But I knew who to bring in and so we would work together. And there were a lot of other things that...their business practices that were a little bit different from ours and we took the best of everything.

Blanche Touhill: When you were dating the gentleman you married eventually, did this come up in the conversation?

Linda Goldstein: Never, never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be...

Blanche Touhill: So it was after you were married...

Linda Goldstein: Yes.

- Blanche Touhill: ...the family said, "Why don't you come in with us"?
- Linda Goldstein: Yes. My mother-in-law and my sister-in-law said, "You have to come work with us. You really do." And I'm so glad because it was a great experience. I just left recently after 24 years in that business. There were a lot of changes but we sold our family business to DuPont Chemical Manufacturer and so that was a real eye-opener because DuPont owned about 100 different flooring contractors around the country and when they first bought us, I was the only woman in my position that ran...at that point I was running the St. Louis location and I was the only woman who was in that position. My sister-in-law was in corporate management and she was the only woman in senior management with DuPont. So it was interesting.
- Blanche Touhill: I'll say. How did they greet you?
- Linda Goldstein: Everything was very business-like, very nice. DuPont was a wonderful company to work for and, again, I had gone from a large company to a family-owned business to a huge company and then Koch Industries actually bought us which was even larger than DuPont, which was interesting. They weren't as political at the time but they owned us just for about six to nine months and they didn't want to be in the contracting side of the business. They wanted fiber production, nylon production.
- Blanche Touhill: Where do you get your flooring produced?
- Linda Goldstein: We worked directly with mills.
- Blanche Touhill: You didn't own the mills? You just would go around and get the cloth that you wanted?
- Linda Goldstein: Right. We would order the product from the mills and so we had access to virtually every product around and so, from my perspective, and I think the reason that I was successful with clients was I could get anything so what was the very best thing for that client? And so, again, I felt like I was in counseling. I was the trusted advisor, so to speak, to figure out what was the best solution. And we did a lot of the floors you walk on, even here at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, I think that's a wonderful service.

Linda Goldstein: It was an interesting field. Again, it certainly wasn't something that I set out to do but I very soon learned to really appreciate it and appreciate the opportunity to. I really think so many of us start out...I know I started out with a plan and I had goals and a plan and I worked towards those but when an opportunity came along, I thought about it long and hard and sometimes I pursued it and other times I didn't. But this was an opportunity that I pursued and I just had a very gratifying career.

Blanche Touhill: What then happened? How did you get into politics, because you were the first female mayor of Clayton and that was in the 21st century?

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: In one way, it's wonderful, but it's a little later than one would have thought.

Linda Goldstein: Than most, yes, it is.

Blanche Touhill: And I always think of Clayton as really being a very...I think of really as the center of the county, which of course it is.

Linda Goldstein: Yes, and progressive. We did many progressive things but they just...I actually was the first woman to run for mayor in Clayton.

Blanche Touhill: And you won.

Linda Goldstein: And I won.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get into...you were always in politics?

Linda Goldstein: I'm going to sound like I'm a very random person here but it was an opportunity that came my way. What happened was, being in the flooring industry and running a commercial flooring contractor, I just felt like, oh, my gosh, I'm making a living in this community and I need to give back. I really feel like I want to give back. I need to support the community. They're supporting me and I do business here. So I got involved in not-for-profits and the not-for-profit that I became president of was the Scholarship Foundation.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, yes. Talk about the purpose of the Scholarship Foundation.

Linda Goldstein: The Scholarship Foundation is a not-for-profit that financially supports students who are pursuing their post-secondary education and so at that

time, we were interest-free loans and that still is the primary way that they support students but they have branched out into so many different programs now and they're such a great resource and such a wonderful organization for our community because...of course, because I had to pay my way through college, I was very attracted to their mission and wanted to help and I ended up becoming the president of the organization. When I was president, we bought a little shopping center, a couple little shops that were next to our office and we wanted to expand our resale shop into that little shopping center. Well, it was controversial and it was my first experience with community controversy. The neighbors were concerned. They didn't understand. They didn't know who we were. We were pretty much...

Blanche Touhill: Where was this located?

Linda Goldstein: This was where it is now.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, today?

Linda Goldstein: Today, on Clayton Road across from the Galleria. We had the two-story building, that was the shop on the bottom and the administrative offices on the top and so it was very small and then we bought that whole...

Blanche Touhill: But you own the building?

Linda Goldstein: We owned that building and then we bought the buildings that are now the Scholar Shop and so we re-did the building. Actually it was demolished and we re-did it to what you see today as well as the shop and now we have a shop in Webster Groves as well. So the resale shop was really important because it was such a big percentage...and I hesitate to say how much because it's grown so much over the years, but if I had to guess, it does probably about two million, two-and-a-half million...

Blanche Touhill: Of scholarships a year?

Linda Goldstein: A year, from the resale shop, plus the additional donations and endowments and grants and all of that.

Blanche Touhill: So what's the total, about, that you give away every year?

Linda Goldstein: Again, that's changing, I want to say it's, like, 3.75 million now. It's interesting because we have...and again, I'm a little foggy but within a

small margin of error...there's about a 98...97% repayment rate of the loans because we connect so much with the students and the students understand their responsibility to the next generation of students, to pay back the loans.

Blanche Touhill: I assume that many of them then make other donations to the Scholar Shop as they proceed through life?

Linda Goldstein: Yes, they do, and some of our biggest donors are the ones who were recipients and there are so many prominent people in the St. Louis area who are former recipients. But how I got involved in politics, I was the president of that organization, Scholarship Foundation and we were trying to get our project through City Hall and I had to meet with the neighborhood groups and I met with the elected officials and the city officials and I presented at meetings and I did all of this and as I was presenting to the mayor and board of aldermen, I looked around and they were some of my neighbors, people I knew and I thought, this is really interesting. This is another way to really potentially have an impact on your community and do some good for the place where you live. And so I ran for alderman about a year later.

Blanche Touhill: Were there women aldermen?

Linda Goldstein: There were women aldermen.

Blanche Touhill: Or "alderwomen."

Linda Goldstein: Yeah. Some prefer to be called "alderwomen," and others were just aldermen but at the time, it was still a minority. There were mostly men but there was a good representation and there had been for quite a while. So I served as an alderman for eight years and then the opportunity arose to run for mayor and I ran for mayor and won and I served six years as Clayton's first woman mayor and then I was term-limited out.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. Talk about some of the things that you handled while you were the mayor?

Linda Goldstein: It was very diverse. It was really wonderful and I say what was so wonderful about it was, in local government, you really can make a difference. You impact people's everyday lives. You impact their safety,

security, their schools, their streets, all their services and so local government really makes a difference and I loved working with the community. I learned very quickly the importance of multiple perspectives in making a decision. It was different from business because I was always a manager who wanted my people to give me ideas and we would brainstorm, but ultimately I would make the decision on where we went in business. In politics, as a good elected official, you might have an opinion...you do have an opinion, everybody's got an opinion but you feel like, okay, so here's our baseline, here's what we're working from but I want to hear your opinion. I want to hear everyone's opinion and maybe there's a way we can tweak this or change it or do it differently or not do it at all, I don't know, things that we haven't considered. And so the best decisions are made by taking into account multiple perspectives. And so I really loved that process. We did some pretty progressive things while I was in office with a minimum of controversy.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, I don't recall any controversy, or if there was some, it was very minimal.

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: So how did you change Clayton?

Linda Goldstein: Well, I think the most important thing, the thing that I'm most proud of is that we started the domino effect that brought the St. Louis region to the No Smoking and Clean Air ordinance.

Blanche Touhill: That must have been terribly hard.

Linda Goldstein: It was very intense and it was very...now that was controversial. We had debates but we had civil debates and I think that that was a good thing, that I was able to keep everybody calm. But what we decided to do, I had tried at the state level, at the county level, to go smoke-free because, in my mind, it's a public health issue and some people would criticize and they would say, "You're infringing on people's rights. You can't tell people they can't smoke" and I would always say, "No, no, no, I'm not saying you can't smoke. You can smoke but when your smoke affects me and my health, that's a public health issue and you're impacting my right to breathe in clean air," and it's like drinking and driving. The laws don't say you can't drink. They say you cannot drink and drive because when you do that, you impact someone else's health and safety. So I tried to

get with some other mayors, we tried to get our little inner ring suburbs to go smoke-free and that just didn't work out because the mayors couldn't get their elected officials to go along. So I went to my board. I had been keeping them up-to-date on what I was doing and I said, "Are you willing to be an island? Would you be willing to go smoke-free even if no one else did?" and to their credit, my board said, "Yeah, let's start the process. Let's see how it goes."

Blanche Touhill: So they were brave.

Linda Goldstein: They were brave and there were many times, behind the scenes, that there was panic and I had to keep the troops all together because it was hard; it was very hard.

Blanche Touhill: Well, especially the restaurants and the hotels.

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And anybody in business that smoking helped the people as they were coming or they enjoyed it and it is the freedom of my personal life: why are you interfering with my personal life?

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: So how did you eventually get it through?

Linda Goldstein: Well, again, this was another issue that we listened. We said, "Here is a draft..."...draft in very large letters..."...draft ordinance. This is our starting point. We're open to talking this through." So our restaurants were understandably concerned and I do understand that and they were concerned, though, their main concern was...well, two main concerns: the economy...this was 2008...and the Highway 64/40 reconstruction project which impacted Clayton the entire time because we were at the crossroads. First we were the west-bound and then we were the east. So we understood that. The hotels really didn't care. They were a little concerned but most of the major chains had...I didn't realize this until I talked to the hotels...they had no smoking in the rooms, in the facilities and all that. So it really didn't impact them. But we had also...a lot of things are data-driven too and so we had done a citizen survey asking our citizens how they felt. Our citizens, 76%, wanted to go smoke-free. So we knew that our citizens were behind it but we didn't want to alienate our

businesses or certainly our restaurants and so we were working with them and what we did in the end was we did a compromise and we passed the smoking ban but we delayed implementation for a year-and-a-half so, very naively, we thought, well, we'll be coming out of the recession but what we knew for sure was that the Highway 40 reconstruction would be finished and it was. Meanwhile, I had been working with Lyda Krewson in the city and Barbara Fraser in the county and the city and county ended up going smoke-free.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go smoke-free together or was it, you were first?

Linda Goldstein: We were first.

Blanche Touhill: And then, that encouraged the city and the county to pass this?

Linda Goldstein: Well, what happened was, we were going through all of this and, yeah, we were first and then Lyda Krewson was successful in getting legislation through in the city.

Blanche Touhill: In the board of aldermen?

Linda Goldstein: The board of aldermen and they said that if the county went smoke-free, the city would go smoke-free. So I worked with Barbara Fraser who was working very hard on the county council. She was county councilwoman and she couldn't get the legislation through but what she could do was she could bring it to a vote of the people of the county. So the people of St. Louis County voted to go smoke-free so the county went smoke-free and the city went smoke-free. Clayton had already implemented their...

Blanche Touhill: And that then would placate the restaurant business all over?

Linda Goldstein: All over, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Because then you wouldn't lose clients because they crossed a line.

Linda Goldstein: Mm-hmm, right. And the restaurants, I understand their concern individually.

Blanche Touhill: But if they all go...

Linda Goldstein: If they all went, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Then it's much easier.

- Linda Goldstein: Yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: So it was three women?
- Linda Goldstein: So it was three women who made the St. Louis region smoke-free.
- Blanche Touhill: How did you happen to get the other two, or how did they get you? How did you all come together?
- Linda Goldstein: Well, we all knew each other and we all worked together on various other issues and so I had actually approached Lyda Krewson because I was trying to get some of the inner ring suburbs and the central west end to go smoke-free. So I was trying to work with her because that's where the restaurants were. So she knew what I was doing and I had a very close relationship with Barbara Fraser because she was our county councilwoman. So it just worked out that the three of us were working together.
- Blanche Touhill: So you were the spearheads?
- Linda Goldstein: Right, and it's a good feeling. Some people I know disagree with it but you know what? It's a public health issue.
- Blanche Touhill: It is a public health but I just think, to be able to get the county and the city and I can see why they watch each other and then Clayton was really a small part of the county...
- Linda Goldstein: Yes, we spearheaded it.
- Blanche Touhill: You were able to do it.
- Linda Goldstein: Yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, that's a case of three women coming together.
- Linda Goldstein: That's right and I think I mentioned when I received the Trailblazer Award, that sometimes women are the only women in the room and we get things done but, oh, my goodness, when you get three of us together, look what we did.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes.
- Linda Goldstein: The power of...

Blanche Touhill: The power of...

Linda Goldstein: ...you know, of teamwork.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, and really, your background when you talk about it, you were interested in retailing; now you're the Scholar Shop or you were the Scholar Shop.

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Then, your advertising and your writing skills, it all links, doesn't it?

Linda Goldstein: It does.

Blanche Touhill: There is a theme.

Linda Goldstein: It does, and the counseling too. I went from traditional counseling to working with clients and citizens, constituents and it takes that certain approach.

Blanche Touhill: Actually, you know, that fits into the smoke-free as well, doesn't it? It's a dependence on something else to help you through so the smoking is, in a way, an opiate.

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: It's an opiate, in a way.

Linda Goldstein: In a way, yeah, but, again, it's an addiction, so to speak.

Blanche Touhill: Well, we all need opiates.

Linda Goldstein: Right.

Blanche Touhill: What kind of opiate have you chose?

Linda Goldstein: I've chosen caffeine. That's my...I'm down to two cups of coffee a day. There are certain habits that we form and hopefully they're good habits.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to mention anything else while you were mayor?

Linda Goldstein: I think our environmental; our sustainable practices were really pretty progressive too. We had a lot of firsts. When I was a new mayor, I went to the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Summit in Seattle, Washington and that was just fabulous. It was fabulous for me as a new mayor and it was

fabulous to learn about sustainable practices. So, I had always pushed that as an alderman and pushed programs like signing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and jump-starting our sustainability committee, expanding our recycling programs and then, as the mayor, I was able to get legislation through that any city-owned building, city-owned or occupied building that is being remodeled or built would be at least silver lead certified or higher. So now Clayton has...when I was there, we built a new police station and it's platinum lead and that's the highest that you can get and that police station is a national model for sustainability in law enforcement facilities. So I'm really proud of that. We were the only community in the Midwest that was an EPA Green Power community. We just had a lot of firsts in the sustainability realm and I think that's so important.

Blanche Touhill: It's looking ahead.

Linda Goldstein: It's looking ahead and protecting what you have for generations to come.

Blanche Touhill: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what do you think your life would have been like?

Linda Goldstein: It certainly would have been more limited than the opportunities that I had. I don't think I mentioned this but I was...although I did well in school and I was very disciplined and I was encouraged to be a good student by my parents, they didn't feel it was important for a girl to go to college and so if I hadn't had the grit to pay my way and to get in and to do all of that, I would not have been able to go to school. Now, it was easier to do it now...well, 50 years ago...40 years ago, whenever it was...40 years ago than it would have been if I had been born 90 years ago. I think that, if my parents said, "You can't go to college" that would have been the end of that. So I was fortunate that I had the opportunities that I had and I think that otherwise maybe I would have had a nice life but I certainly couldn't have done the things...I couldn't have run for office.

Blanche Touhill: No, and you wouldn't have probably run the company.

Linda Goldstein: I wouldn't have run the company, certainly in a male-dominated field.

Blanche Touhill: If your husband wasn't doing it, he might have been the titular head.

Linda Goldstein: That's right, yeah, and my sister-in-law and mother-in-law probably wouldn't have been there either. So, yeah, so I feel like I think it's so important to feel like you are contributing and that...I always feel like, I want to improve myself, I want to improve our community but I'm not dissatisfied. I feel good about where I've been and where I'm going and I always feel like this is the best time of my life. I've accomplished all these things and now, okay, what am I going to do next?

Blanche Touhill: That's a wonderful question. What are you going to do next?

Linda Goldstein: Well, I have started a consulting business and I've combined my political background and my business background and it's been fun. It's been very different from working in a large organization or working for a city because I'm a sole practitioner. But it's been very creative. My advertising and public relations background has come in handy and I have fun. I'm working right now with a municipality and I'm doing management consulting, strategic planning, team building, which are things that I did in business so now I'm doing it in a government environment and it's really fun. Then I've done some advocacy campaigns.

Blanche Touhill: It's probably not much different, is it?

Linda Goldstein: No, it's not but it's interesting.

Blanche Touhill: The responses are different probably. What's different about it?

Linda Goldstein: Well, the customers are the citizens. The customers are the tax payers and so there's a little bit of difference because sometimes it takes more education...you know, the citizens sometimes don't understand the bigger picture at times and I'm not saying that in a bad way but they're just not tuned in, whereas, if you're in commercial flooring, your customer understands what you're talking about. So, with government, it's multi-faceted and so sometimes there's a lot more education and outreach that's needed.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. Well, we have a few minutes left. Do you want to talk about your family in some way?

Linda Goldstein: That would be great. I just feel that my family is so important to me. My husband is wonderfully supportive and I have great kids and grandkids.

It's just terrific and it's what keeps me going. It's what keeps me motivated to continue to try to invest in our community and make it a great place, have it be a sustainable place, have it be a strong community and knowing that my grandchildren are going to hopefully be here, if not here, hopefully somewhere that's equally as wonderful as the St. Louis area. I have seven grandchildren and I have, I think, two possibly budding political people...politicians. My grandson, who is now 14, he lives in Springfield, Illinois so it's a very political place, he has been ill and he recently decided that what he wanted to do when he felt better was go to Washington, D.C. and he went to present a petition signed by 60,000 people to save the boundary waters.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, isn't that wonderful!

Linda Goldstein: Yes, he is working with a group called "Save the Boundary Waters" and I'll tell you what, my daughter-in-law was texting me photographs of him and he's met more politicians, more famous people at 13...14 now...than I will probably in my entire political career. I think my favorite picture is a beautiful one with him and Nancy Pelosi standing there smiling and he met with Al Franken, he met with the head of the Parks Department, United States Parks Department and he conducted a press conference and was just cool and calm. So I feel like maybe I can learn from him. So that's Joseph and then he's got wonderful younger brothers who I know are going to make a big impact, and then here in St. Louis, I have three grandchildren. My granddaughter I know has asked me about a lot of my business experiences and political and so she's very inquisitive so who knows if she'll head up a company or what she'll do. My two grandsons who are here are both...of course they're brilliant and talented and all that stuff. So, for the sake of our grandchildren, I think it's important for all of us who can commit and help make our community a better place, I think it's really important that we do that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you so much. It's been a wonderful time talking to you.

Linda Goldstein: It's been fun.

Blanche Touhill: And I congratulate you for being the first female mayor of Clayton, Missouri.

Linda Goldstein: Well, thank you.

Blanche Touhill: Thank you.