



***Recollection of an Undergraduate***  
University of Rochester, Special Collections Archives  
by Jeremy Egolf

**Jeremy:** I've started read your book, *The World Split Open*. I'm enjoying its approach to history, as well as being informative. Also, obviously, it benefits from your journalistic bent, being written in a way that ordinary people can understand while being rigorous.

**Ruth:** I should tell you that I wrote the first four chapters and my editor, who was one of the most famous editors in New York at that time said, "Throw it out. You sound like the schizophrenic because you now know how to write because you've been working for six years at the *Chronicle* and the *LA Times*, you now can write this book in a different way. You wrote four chapters that sound like you had been a learned scholar. Write it the way you write." I threw out the first chapters and I started all over again. My goal was to make it a very accessible book to someone who did not know what had happened.

**Jeremy:** There are certain books I've read that were produced by people who were active in the '60s and '70s, and there's a sense of what a movement felt like. There is the concern for how it looked from the inside. You've used the word "texture," but how did it actually feel to live something, not just read about it in a newspaper. I appreciate that in what you've done.

**Ruth:** Thank you.

**Jeremy:** There's a quality of recognizing there's more than just the manifestos and the pronouncements, but there are personal conversations and incidents.

**Ruth:** I should tell you that I lived with Todd Gitlin for 10 years, and he was a fine writer and he had written this book called *The Sixties*. From reading that and learning how to think about what it feels like to be in a movement, I know I was influenced by him. Even so, my first four chapters were lousy and had to be thrown away.

**Jeremy:** Let's talk about Rochester. You started at Rochester in 1963 as a music major, so was that at River Campus or was that at Eastman School?

**Ruth:** I was going to be a concert pianist, that was my goal. Within about two seconds, I realized that I had been a musician all my life playing percussion and the French horn, 20 years playing the piano and that the second I arrived at the River Campus, I didn't want to be in the Eastman school. I didn't want to be alone playing music for the rest of my life, though I'm still a musician and playing five instruments.

I discovered boys, I discovered politics, and I discovered history. Actually, I think it's a reverse order. First, I discovered history and fell in love with the idea of the

consciousness of people over time. I began to have this general feeling my very freshman year that if I were in charge of education, people would have to know anthropology without jargon about the culture of people all over the world now. They'd have to know about it throughout time, and then they would have a good education.

The history department had a tremendous impact on me. I was immediately accepted into a new program called the Honors Program based on Swarthmore, which meant you just went to seminars, no lectures, and wrote papers constantly and read amazing amounts of stuff. It was hugely intensive. I have to say, by the time I got to Berkeley, which was named number one in history in the country, and I got a five-year fellowship, I felt like it was eighth-rate compared to what I had experienced in Rochester.

I think it's important for you to understand how I entered Rochester with the state of mind I already knew. I had already been very much aware of the war in Vietnam and had been very much part of it since '64, which is after I arrived in Rochester, but I already knew about the war with France and Vietnam. I'd also been very involved in the Civil Rights Movement in high school and before I went to college.

The summer before I arrived at Rochester, I was in the International Experiment for Living. I lived with a Mexican family in Central America and for the first time I saw that the United States was seen as an imperialist bully. I had not been out of the United States before. It was very radicalizing to see how the world looked at the United States.

I arrived at the University and the first person I met, who I'm still very close with, is someone from France who was much more sophisticated politically than I was. We were in line and unlike students today, we actually talked to each other and didn't have phones in front of us. That was extremely radicalizing, that friendship. It continued to go on from '63 to today we still are very much in touch. So, that started.

In terms of Rochester, I immediately felt like the place just didn't fit my intellectual leanings at all. I didn't grow up with radical parents or left parents or anything, but I had already been radicalized in a high school by other friends who had had me read all these famous books, *The Lonely Crowd* and *The Organization Man*, and blah, blah, blah.

I arrived at Rochester already feeling part of a movement that I also encountered in Manhattan and listening to jazz and so forth. I was very primed for being part of the radical activities. I didn't do very much with many movements at Rochester. What I did do was become very involved in the anti-war movement. That's because in the summer of '64, I wanted to go to Mississippi and my parents wouldn't let me, and I wasn't old enough. I went to an international interracial camp as a counselor.

That summer, because half the counselors were Black and had been in the South in '62, I learned what was going on in the South. On August 4th, literally there was a PSA announcement saying, "Today the United States has lied that blah, blah, blah has happened in Vietnam. Write your senators and congressman." That's the kind of

camp it was, probably a communist front and I didn't know it. When I came back from that camp after '64, that was extremely important to me.

I became involved with CORE, and I did a lot of canvassing in the Black areas that are close to the campus; unfortunately, for Johnson, who I thought would be against the war in '64. I was part of a very small group that had anti-war posters on their cars. We were stopped by the police because of that, all the time.

I really didn't have that many friends. They were mainly graduate student friends who were really the people who I hung out with when I was a sophomore. Those people had a much more sophisticated political understanding of what was going on.

**Jeremy:** At Rochester, there was PEACE, the local affiliate of the Student Peace Union. They still existed in 1966, but you were out of country. Then, they and Friends of CORE dissolved themselves in the spring of '66 and then reformed as an SDS chapter in the fall of '67.

**Ruth:** All I remember about the Student Peace Union was its organization to go to Washington's in April '65. By the time I came to Berkeley, SDS dissolved here because it was so crazy with the Weather people.

I should mention that one of the things I did that was probably the most important thing that changed me and intensified my commitment to the anti-war movement was the in spring of 1965. There was a summons that was sent out to all these students to come to Washington for the first anti-war march, and I still have it on my desk. It was sent to me from the Student Peace Union, not from SDS. A lot of people got on a bus and drove all night. We arrived in Washington, DC and I looked at these men in wheelchairs rolling themselves up to the Capitol at the same time Phil Ochs was singing, *I Ain't Marching Anymore*. It was an extraordinary experience.

I think that was a turning point in my life of how much more involved I would be, particularly after I left Rochester and came to Berkeley. It was the first time I realized there weren't like 10 people that I knew who were against the war and that there were thousands. That was very important.

I then lived in Italy for a year, and that was incredibly radicalizing because I lived with a couple that had been partigiani [Communist partisans] in World War II. One of my courses was comparative government and I came back, and I had learned a tremendous amount including how to speak Italian fluently. By the time I came back, I was so profoundly alienated from my family who disapproved of everything I did.

I think another thing that was very important was the closeness I had. I had a boyfriend for a very long time, including at Rochester and at Berkeley. We both went to graduate school here at Berkeley.

He had gotten a full scholarship to Rochester in ROTC. By the time we were sophomores, he refused to go on any of these insane exercises to prepare for more war in Vietnam which meant he lost his scholarship, and he was going to be kicked out of the university. Astonishingly, he went to the dean and said this was a political matter and that the university should reimburse him and give him a full scholarship

because he didn't come from a family that could afford to go to Rochester, and neither did I. I had a Regent scholarship. That wasn't enough to support myself.

Watching what he went through to get out of ROTC and why he got out of ROTC and the unbelievable hostility and the insults that were directed toward him because he refused to be in ROTC, was another thing that happened in 1965.

**Jeremy:** Would that hostility be from the administration or other students or everybody?

**Ruth:** It was other ROTC students who would see him on campus and start screaming and yelling at him. That was pretty important to me. I didn't realize how much ROTC prepared people for the war until I really, really understood that.

**Jeremy:** In *The World Split Open*, you mentioned living on the Hill in the Susan B. Anthony residence when you started at Rochester. It was the women's dorm. Did you ever live off campus?

**Ruth:** Well, you weren't allowed to for the first year. I had some wonderful people that I still, literally, every Friday I talked with my best friend from the first day of college and my friend Rafael in France, I talked to once every two weeks. I really lucked out and met incredible people the first week.

I'm trying to remember what are the political things that were important to me. This is sort of a proto-feminist without any really feminist awareness but apparently a very strong awareness of certain things. When I was a sophomore or senior, I was taking a course in European intellectual history and I went to a very famous professor, Hayden White, who was my professor, and we had to do an intellectual biography and read all the works of some major intellectual in the 20th century. I said, "I'd like to read Simone de Beauvoir because I know she's important, but I don't know why." He said, "Why don't you read Camus and Sartre?" I said, "I've read all of them." So, I did read all of Simone de Beauvoir and he said, "This is okay but it's B+ because she's really not important and you really haven't shown the significance of her work."

Then I was taking Russian intellectual history. It was a whole year, and we were reading. I was in a special honors program where we took very few courses, not lecture courses, just these long seminars and read huge amounts and wrote a paper every single week. It was harder than what graduate school was in Berkeley, actually.

I don't know how it happened, but a group of us, as we read all of Russian intellectual history from the early 19th century to the 20th century, it was all intellectual history, it was all novels, some poetry. We began to think that the women in the novels played a very important part, but we didn't understand it. We went to the professor, Michael Cherniavsky, who later committed suicide, and we said, "Could we take a special independent course with you and try to understand the role of women in Russian literature?" I don't know where this came out of. It was just there.

We would go to his house on snowy nights, and he would be playing the piano, and we'd have to sit out in the snow until he finished. Then what I began to realize from

that experience was that so many of the women in 19th century literature, not just Russian literature, were resident aliens, were people who could say things and see things in the novels that were unlikely for men to criticize.

The men would not be the alienated ones who could describe the culture and the inequalities or the insanity of things, but the women did. That was a very extraordinary experience for me. It's not surprising that when I first came to Berkeley, I became one of the first organizers of the women's movement here because I somehow had this proto-feminist instinct in already at Rochester.

**Jeremy:** Do you remember who the other women in this class were?

**Ruth:** I don't. I also was very good friends with a number of graduate students. One was Nunzio Pernicone, who was an Italian, a graduate student. I learned a lot about anarchism from him. There was a woman named Carol Groneman from whom I learned a lot about American radical movements. I knew Danny Walkowitz very well, and I learned a lot from just being friends with him. I can't think of the other people who had tremendous influence on me, but there probably were.

**Jeremy:** I'm curious how you experienced the campus after being in New York and your various formative experiences in New York City, even though you lived in the suburbs you spent considerable time in the City. How did you find being on the campus ...

**Ruth:** It's Midwestern. I really felt like Rochester was one of the most Midwestern boring places. The people who were there, it really was, they had a Midwest twang. I had lived 20 minutes from Manhattan and gone into the Village and seen the Bohemian scene and gone to jazz clubs and listened to things. It all felt very Midwestern and very insular. On the other hand, I also got into Brandeis, and I went there and I thought, this is so tedious. Everyone looks the same. Everyone's Jewish, everyone's from New York. At least at Rochester, there were international students and people from all over the country. There were some friends I had from Oregon, places I didn't know, from Indiana and that was good. At least there were some people from the rest of the country, but there was a quota of Jews in my class. They had a regional quota, which kept the number of Jews down at Rochester. They got rid of it the next year, and the next class was just filled with New York Jews.

**Jeremy:** Interesting. It sounds like some of your campus friendships were the focus. Rochester as a city, et cetera, was less your focus, You mentioned doing voter registration with CORE. Did you have any other engagements or attempted engagements with the world off-campus, such as it was?

**Ruth:** No, I didn't. I hardly knew anything about Rochester. Everything that I was involved with was anti-war stuff, and that was going on on campus. Particularly going down to Washington, DC, that was a very big thing, organizing people to get a bus and get down to Washington DC.

By the way, the Rochester weather was the most horrible I've ever experienced. I'd dread every winter.

**Jeremy:** I remember there were the tunnels between buildings, people used them to avoid the snow and the rain.

**Ruth:** I went to the doctor once, I said, "I have bronchitis all the time." He said, "You should go to Italy or California." I decided to do both, and I did.

[laughter]

**Jeremy:** Part of the texture of life is people's informal social relations and just how people share their leisure time as part of the Movement. Do you recall those kinds of informal social relations at Rochester with like-minded people?

**Ruth:** Well, I remember, because I hung out with a lot of graduate students and had a boyfriend, my memory is mostly being with them going to lectures, special lectures that various professors told us, "So-and-so is coming to campus. You shouldn't miss this." I went to the, at Berkeley, it's called, the Pacific Film Archive, but at Rochester, there was also a film repertory at the Eastman Museum. That's where I really learned the history of film because I went to a lot of those films. I also sang in the Rochester Eastman chorus. It was huge. The Oratorio Society, that's what it was called. There were about 300 people in it. We sang Beethoven's *Ninth* and *Hallelujah*. Actually, if there were not COVID, I would be singing in the Berkeley Community Chorus right now, which I've been doing for years, but I don't want to be in a place where there's 250 people blowing out wind.

I spent a lot of my time with musicians. My friend, Gwen, who I talk to every Friday, and I met the first day of campus. She and I sang at Hootenannies on campus. I would play the guitar. She had a beautiful soprano voice and I had a mediocre alto voice. We used to go to cafes and sing and we used to sing on campus at these various events. We would pick all the wonderful old radical music from the '30s and then contemporary ones as well.

**Jeremy:** Weavers, Almanac singers, Pete Seeger-type music?

**Ruth:** That, and also the ones that came out of the '30s.

**Jeremy:** Were these Hootenannies in dorm lounges or at the--

**Ruth:** Yes. They were in the huge auditorium. They were huge, I don't remember what room, but someplace that was very big.

I do remember one social thing that is worth mentioning. Norman O. Brown was at Rochester in the history department, which is not where you'd expect him to be. I'm not sure where you'd expect him to be. His son, Tom, was a friend of mine and one summer he went to Berkeley and brought back marijuana. It might have been after my freshman year. He gave it to me and I didn't know what to expect. I knew I would never take any other drugs that were more powerful than I was hearing about like LSD or peyote because I felt like my brain was a really important part of my life. I remember hearing a Bach concerto violin in a way that I'd never heard before and it

was really quite extraordinary. That's how I got introduced to marijuana from Tom. I don't know that Norman O' Brown's son knew that, but that's how it happened.

It's hard to remember the social events that I did. I know I lived off campus for a while. Danny Walkowitz and Judy Walkowitz lived in an apartment and my boyfriend and I lived in the other room and so the four of us shared an off-campus place for a while.

**Jeremy:** Was that the west side of the river? I came across an address for Danny that would have been in the-- It was like a working-class community, I'd say 60% or 70% black, just across the Genesee River from the campus, or another area?

**Ruth:** It was the other side of the cemetery, about a mile from campus. I used to go through the cemetery when I walked to campus.

**Jeremy:** In the interview archived at Smith College, you mentioned having worked continuously. You had the one summer at camp Oleana, I think it was Oleana, the radical camp.

**Ruth:** That was the radical camp, yes. That's right.

**Jeremy:** Did you work on campus otherwise? Did you stay in Rochester during summers?

**Ruth:** I don't think I spent one summer there. With a group of other young women, I had a boyfriend at one point at Harvard and those four guys were disappearing for the summer. We took over their apartment on Mass Avenue in Cambridge and I got very involved in the anti-war movement organizing in Cambridge. Another summer I worked at Oleana and another summer, I can't remember where I was, though I was never home. The disapproval that was oriented toward me by my parents made it so that I barely talked to them after I was 16.

**Jeremy:** That summer in Cambridge or rather Mass Ave. must have been quite invigorating. There was a rather vibrant environment.

**Ruth:** It was. During the evening, there were meetings and organizations, and I worked all day as a waitress. We all got jobs as a waitress within 24 hours. That's how easy it was to get jobs then. We had this four-bedroom flat, the ceiling of the bathroom fell on my head. That's how crummy it was. My parents just were outraged that I wouldn't come home and so, they came to see me there. They saw that we had a big tub of water in the middle of the living room because we all stood on our feet all day. Then the ceiling fell in my head in the bathroom. They were appalled by the way we were living, but I didn't care. I really just didn't care.

Cambridge was so exciting. Now looking back, it looks extremely arrogant when my professor later at Berkeley.... I was in Cambridge again for a year doing my dissertation. I had an SSRC fellowship to be in Cambridge. It was called the pre-dissertation fellowship. He said, "You're a top candidate for anyone in your field. Where would you want to go?" I didn't think about the arrogance of what I said. Now I look back and I think, "What was he thinking?" I said, "Oh, Cambridge or Berkeley."

[laughter]

My parents didn't give me enough money to live and I waitressed a lot in the Rochester Faculty Club. I couldn't believe the way they drank. I had to carry their meals like this, which was really hard and heavy. Then I got a job, which was really the right job for me. I worked 20 hours a week, and I worked at the bookstore, which was fabulous because there, I could just stand and look and see, "Oh, my God, Nietzsche wrote this too. Oh, my goodness, look at this, and Heidegger." It was tremendous education to work in the bookstore. That was a great job.

**Jeremy:** You can see all the books the professors are ordering for classes.

**Ruth:** Exactly.

**Jeremy:** All laid out there. [laughs]

**Ruth:** Yes. It was a good bookstore.

I should mention that most of the faculty at Rochester, which was an extraordinary faculty in the history department, were all very radical. They had a tremendous influence, just the way they talked and how they perceived things, and their receptivity to ideas.

**Jeremy:** Quite a number of them were signing anti-war petitions or anti-war letters published in the newspapers. Some people like Harry Harootunian and Ralph Crozier were making themselves available for anti-war meetings in the city to talk about the history of Asia and Vietnam and so on.

**Ruth:** Now, Harry was one of the most wonderful people. I'm still in touch with him. I took a year of Chinese history with him, even though that's not his field. He was wonderful. His door was always open. I could just walk in and start talking about anti-war work and so forth. There was such openness from a lot of the faculty. When I arrived at Berkeley, there was a corridor with a lot of closed doors. Big difference.

**Jeremy:** You mentioned in the interview at Smith that you discussed Chinese matriarchy with a professor. Would that have been Harootunian?

**Ruth:** Yes. Any time I had a big question that was bothering me, you could just go in and not during their office hours. When I arrived at Berkeley, there'd be 30 people standing outside someone's door for two hours of office hours. The intimacy that was possible in the history department was quite amazing. Harry Harootunian and I still, we've emailed each other and still talked to each other.

**Jeremy:** One of the items in your other interview, you mentioned experiencing gender discrimination in the Civil Rights Movement early on, was that in Rochester?

**Ruth:** No. It was much more in Berkeley. There's a reason why the women's movement erupted when it erupted is because so many women were involved in the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war movement. There was gender discrimination in the fact that left professors didn't think Simone de Beauvoir was worthwhile writing about. On the other hand, Cherniavsky was willing to, in the middle of the winter, let



us come to his house and talk about the role of women in Russian literature. I did not feel really discriminated against in Rochester. I felt like the professors loved me. I thought they would, for the most part, be really incredibly supportive.

The worst thing they did is they thought I was so brilliant. They said, "You'll get in everywhere you want to go, but you shouldn't apply in history." They all said to me, "You'll never get a job. There are no women in history." I had just come back from a year in Italy, and they said, "You know so much art history. Why don't you apply in art history?" What did I know? They said, "You'll never get into a graduate school in history, and you'll never get a job." I did what they said, and I got in everywhere, all the famous places, but no money. Berkeley gave me a five-year fellowship in art history, which I loathed. I love art, but the way it was taught was all memorization. It was just the most unintellectual thing I've ever experienced.

After two years, I went to the graduate division Dean and said, "I have hated the last two years. The history department has accepted me already, and it's six months after the deadline because of the recommendations I have from Rochester. I really want to change my fellowship to the history department." The problem is, it was a very important fellowship. There were only 16 out of all the graduate students at Berkeley. Every year, it was called a career fellowship. He said, "You don't change majors at a PhD level." I said, "I know, but I'd rather be a taxicab driver in Berkeley than continue in art history." This was the most boring. I never made a friend. I didn't like any faculty member. I was sexually harassed by people. It was an awful experience. He said, "What didn't you like about it?" I couldn't speak. At that point, my throat just tightened up. My eyes became wet. I prayed I wouldn't cry. I just looked at him and I could not say a word. He said, "Okay, I'll change your fellowship to the history department."

That was fantastic. I had lots of friends, enough faculty that really thought the pioneering work I was doing in women's history was really important. In my view, I wasted two years of really being miserable. Because of their advice, their advice maybe was right at the time. I did later see Hayden White at Santa Cruz and told him that he derailed my life by telling me to apply for art history. He said, "Yes, probably that was true. I'm sorry."

Anyway, the history department at Berkeley was very different. It was social history, whereas Rochester was built almost completely around intellectual history. It was a very different way of dealing and thinking about history. Both were fascinating to me. I had done very, very little work in American history, almost completely Russian, Chinese, and all these other fields. Now I actually started doing American history. Because of the war, I felt like, how could I be a speaker? Which I did become. I spoke a lot in public in Berkeley about the war. I would be more effective if I were an American historian and knew the history of American thought and political culture.

**Jeremy:** On the subject of intellectual history, if I recall correctly, you had some involvement with Lauren Baritz at Rochester.

**Ruth:** Very much. He was an incredible mentor to me. He seemed to adore me and be willing to sit for hours teaching me how to write better and think better. I could go

in and have long talks with him. There are people, I wouldn't call Hayden White, one of them, but Harry Harootunian and Lauren Baritz were very important people to me.

Someone in English my first year named Monas, who's the son of a famous English professor somewhere in Columbia or someplace. I remember him, he was a great teacher. I remember hearing, but I didn't really understand what getting tenure was about when I was a freshman. He didn't get tenure in Rochester. I can't remember his first name, I just remember him being Professor Monas, who was a fantastic... [crosstalk]

**Jeremy:** There was a Sidney Monas, who left with many others in 1969. There was a great efflux from the history department. It was partly at the time there was the imbroglio about bringing in Gene Genovese.

**Ruth:** I left in 1967. I had enough credits to leave in the middle of my senior year. I spent the second half of my senior year in Berkeley working as a secretary on the campus, this was in political science. They didn't realize I had a five-year fellowship. They just told me to go get coffee for them and get their motorcycles fixed for them. I just put up with it. By then I was very much involved in the women's movement. That job came to an end and then I said, "I quit. I have a five-year fellowship."

Then I went and started in the history department, and walked in with such a chip on my shoulder because of art history. Larry Levine at Berkeley was so fantastic. The first thing he did is he said, "What do you want to do?" I told him. He said, "Well, I don't know, but let's go to the library right away and look." I felt like I had such a supporter. Then Natalie Davis came and there were at least five people who were truly supporters of me.

**Jeremy:** Very fortunate.

**Ruth:** Very. Then I got a job at Davis, which was 72 miles away, but that was considered a real coup because there were very few jobs available. Especially in my field, in women's history, there was one at UCLA, one in Berkeley, one possibly somewhere on the East Coast. It was very few people at that point, but the next year, there were a lot of people who are getting jobs in women's history.

**Jeremy:** In the long interview, do you go into your involvement with the TA Union and your strikes and so on?

**Ruth:** Yes, I think I did. I was on strike so many times. I remember one winter was like this winter, it rained every day and we were picketing with umbrellas every day. We were just soaked. I didn't have a car. I had a bicycle. I was riding in the rain. I was on strike probably two or three times, so was the faculty member. We all taught at home. Well, he taught in a church, and we had set small groups and the students came to our homes.

**Jeremy:** Who did you TA for in Berkeley?

**Ruth:** Well, one of the most important people I TA'ed for was Leon Litwak. Not one of my favorite people. I'd say he had the biggest gender blind spot that existed in the world. Then Carl Schorske. While I was still in the art history department where I was

supposed to be teaching, they were annoyed that I wasn't in love with art history, and they weren't in love with me. Carl Schorske decided to have these satellite seminars and have every one of his TAs come from a different department. He chose me from the art history department and I taught a course basically about art history, about the ways in which art had been politicized or had critiqued society starting in the early 19th century with Ruskin and people like that.

**Jeremy:** So you spent the second semester of your senior year at Berkeley, which would have been the spring of '67, is that correct? You were already in Berkeley?

**Ruth:** I arrived in February 1967 in the middle of a blizzard in Rochester, and it was sunny and cool and Ronald Reagan was being inaugurated as governor. I thought, "Oh, this is really a strange place."

**Jeremy:** You had the experience of Rochester, which was quite insular, other than the intellectual environment there, but compared to anything else, to New York or to Italy with the Communist partisans, it was a very different kind of ambiance. [chuckles] Then you moved to Berkeley, which was a much, to say the least, livelier place at the time that the counterculture was taking off, or what was called the counterculture. I'm wondering how you personally encountered all that business that was happening in Haight-Ashbury.

**Ruth:** It was overwhelming. I arrived in February '67 and I was living with my boyfriend from Rochester. There were famous musicians playing in the backyard and rehearsing. When I went on campus, although I was just getting a job as a receptionist in the political science department, waiting to start graduate school in the fall, the huge numbers of people just to get through. I began to write letters to people and saying, "There is nothing you have to do in Berkeley except be in a queue for everything, for the women's bathroom, for everything. There's so many people."

Then, of course, Berkeley was very political at that point and there was no real intersection with the counterculture yet. I remember going with my boyfriend to the Haight in the spring and in the summer and visiting it. It was so completely a world that I was so... stunned by. These happenings, these be-ins, people taking off their clothes, the drugs, the whole atmosphere of the Haight and everything was just something so antithetical to me. I was too intellectual. I was too straight.

I would be and I knew I would be part of the Berkeley political world, which then did have a kind of intersection with the counterculture. The politicians did become more counterculture in Berkeley, and me too, but at that point, San Francisco just blew me away. I was just stunned by what was going on, and Berkeley felt a lot more comfortable and more like me.

**Jeremy:** It's well known, some of the San Francisco and Bay Area bands were-- There was a lot of explicitly anti-war, at least radical rhetoric, music coming out of the Bay Area.

**Ruth:** Oh, yes. I heard them rehearsing in my backyard. There was a common backyard, and they were rehearsing all kinds of anti-war music that became later very famous.

**Jeremy:** Country Joe came from Berkeley.

**Ruth:** Country Joe was one of the people that was rehearsing behind another house. They were rehearsing all over the backyards of people's houses. I was aware of them. I felt very proud of them. I had already seen Pete Seeger and knew about Hank Williams, and knew about Woody Guthrie, and had seen Dylan, Joan Baez, so I realized this was a very important musical movement. Just to show you the intersection of the political world of Berkeley and the counterculture of San Francisco, the very first huge march in San Francisco there were trucks, and the bands were playing on the trucks, and people were singing and dancing along the way to the march. It wasn't like 1965 where everyone was very serious. Just tears in their eyes about what was going on. It was also a celebration of life as they thought life might be without the war. It was a very different experience.

**Jeremy:** That's part of the way I remember it. An element of the movement life was you can basically live in this environment every day of the week. You go to a meeting, next day you go to a concert, next day you go to a demonstration and a rock band is playing, or there's a benefit. Benefits were big.

**Ruth:** Right. I felt like I lived in the Movement, and then, of course, by about '68, I lived really very strongly in the women's movement. I was the only woman in my seminar, all graduate seminars that I was in, literally the first woman. I would say something important, and not all professors do this, but Leon Litwack seemed to be completely blind to women. I would say something, and literally, a man would say something, the same thing, and he'd say, "Oh, that's very insightful and brilliant." I thought, "God, this is what the women's movement says happens." It really does happen.

**Jeremy:** You capture that well in the book. Possibly coming from your own experience, you discussed some of the demeaning and condescending rhetoric that some of the activists met.

**Ruth:** Oh, yes. Then I was used as a token. After that, I became a token, and I was speaking from Sproul Hall and from Ho Chi Minh Park, and so forth, with Bob Scheer and all sorts of people. I became the token woman of the four people who would speak when the Black Panthers were speaking and so forth. Yes, I think they treated us as indispensable, like tissue paper, at the same time, they wanted to show there was someone, one woman that was going to speak.

**Jeremy:** On the subject, you mentioned the Panthers. I saw the finding list for your archives at Radcliff. You have several photos of the Panthers. There was an intersection between your work as a photojournalist and the political work. Can you talk a little bit about your experiences or your encounters with the Panthers?

**Ruth:** I met the Panthers several times. They worked very close to where I lived. The pictures have to do with this collective we created, this magazine called the *Every Other Weekly*, which was investigative reporting and reporting about the movement. Sometimes I edited it and sometimes I was doing professional journalism. I took pictures of Ronald Reagan. I took pictures of Bobby Seale. There's all these pictures

that I took. I learned how to develop my own film and how to process it and how to take pictures. That's what's in there, a lot of pictures.

**Jeremy:** I had some limited contacts with the Panthers, and they varied from going to an Eldridge Cleaver speech where he was quoting Stokely Carmichael, "The place of the women in the revolution is prone," and all this, and very kind of insultingly, nastily, macho kind of thing. Then, I also had casual encounters with people in the Panther Party who were just very down to earth, straightforward and constructive interactions.

**Ruth:** So did I. Mine were the same as yours, I never met Eldridge Cleaver, and no one ever treated me that way. They would come on campus. I would meet them on campus when they were going to speak. I didn't meet Eldridge Cleaver, but I met other people from the Panther Party, and they're very brief conversations. They were not really intimate conversations.

I should mention that one of the most important things that happened was when I arrived in Berkeley, Stop the Draft week was being planned for the fall of '67. The idea was to literally stop the buses bringing all these young men to the induction center where they were going to be sent to Vietnam. By then, I was very involved in the movement and went with lots of people to that. As we were planning it, this guy kept saying, "I have a police radio, so I can find out where, what," blah blah, blah. I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "Rochester." I said, "*Rochester*."

I told the leaders of the movement that this guy should be very carefully scrutinized, that he's probably an informer, and that if he had been so important in Rochester, I would have known him or known of him. I don't know what they did with that information, but I remember being shocked by him saying Rochester as sort of-- I was in the movement and you just don't know me.

I should tell you that the Smith interview, I remember being very chaotic and long. I just had an interview that was 15 hours last July, by a brilliant young woman who really asked the right question. Which was, "You say you were brought up by conservative parents where there were no books, no records, nothing. Your father was a lawyer in the southeast Bronx. He didn't teach you anything. Your mother was very smart, but she didn't really-- they were both conservative Republicans. How did you get from there to who you are today?" That story is the 15-hour story, which will apparently be online this spring. She did a great job. She came and filmed me for three days.

I asked, "Why did the university pick me?" They said, "Because you're so unusual. You were such a famous activist. In Berkeley, you spoke in all these public places, on Sproul Hall, and so forth". I started a magazine that was investigative reporting while I was a graduate student called *The Every Other Weekly*. Then I was a graduate student pioneering in women's history. Then later, they saw that when I was at Davis, that I started writing op-eds for the LA Times. I was the only woman on the page. Then *The San Francisco Chronicle* offered me a full-time job as an editorial writer, and as an op-ed writer.

That's after I've taught for about 30 years. They said, "This is a very unusual life. We want to understand someone who is not an academic, who's writing the same book about British history every year or French history every year and writing one more specialized book.

The truth is, I was only at Rochester for three years. [chuckles]

**Jeremy:** It sounds like it was a very intense academic experience for you.

**Ruth:** Oh, it was intellectually extraordinary, absolutely extraordinary.