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Title

Beth Burnside Interview, Paula Fass and Christina Maslach, Academic Pioneers

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3tv5253n>

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Publication Date

2023-12-18

Beth Burnside Interview: Paula Fass and Christina Maslach, "Academic Pioneers: Women at Berkeley in the 1970s and 1980s." Interviews with Berkeley's pioneering women professors, Berkeley, CA. Conducted 2019-2023.

Who I am

My name is Beth Burnside. I was born in San Antonio and grew up on a rice farm on the Texas Gulf Coast. My father also grew up on a rice farm near Houston and graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in agronomy and a commission as First Lieutenant. My mother was born in San Antonio and grew up in the small college town of Huntsville (her father was an English professor there) and later in Austin. She studied home economics at UT Austin for two years, but when the war broke out, she left college to marry my father before he departed for the service. He was initially in the Cavalry but became a B-29 pilot during the war. Born in 1943, I was taken by my mother to live with my father in Alamogordo, New Mexico, where he was stationed until V-J Day. In fact, I was at Alamogordo when they tested the first atomic bomb there. My childhood was rather bumpy. The war was disorienting, and my very young parents were not yet accomplished at raising a child.

I went to school in Baytown, Texas, a small town near Houston that happened at the time to be home to the largest oil refinery in the world. The presence of the refinery made Baytown a surprisingly cosmopolitan environment for a town of its size, and we had a remarkably good high school. Many students' parents worked at the refinery and were well educated, and my classmates came from all over the country. I received an excellent education there. We had honors classes with very good teachers all the way through high school. The quality of those classes made it possible for me to place out of a whole year of college.

I was led early on to believe that I was smart and special, since I was among the few at the top of my class, but I soon discovered after arriving at UT Austin that there were a lot of other smart people out there. I was in Plan II, an honors liberal arts major, and all of the other students in that major were at the tops of their graduating classes too. That discovery required considerable adjustment — I wasn't nearly as big a frog as I had thought. This period of my life was made even more stressful by the fact that my father had been killed in an automobile accident when I was 17 — a year before I went off to college. My mother was not handling the tragedy well, and my brothers were at home having to more or less fend for themselves, which made me very worried about them. It was already a very hard time for me and having to adjust to not being the smartest kid on the block anymore didn't make it any easier. To rub salt in the wound, I was rejected by my mother's sorority at UT Austin, which she had joined before marrying my father. I had always assumed that I would be in her sorority, so I went through rush but was not selected. That was a bleak year!

Perhaps seeking to re-establish a family, I got engaged the summer after my freshman year and planned to marry the following summer after I completed med tech training, so I could get a job wherever my future husband (an engineer) found a job. However, during my sophomore year I came to my senses, rebelled against this plan, and gave back the ring. I

volunteered as an intern that summer in a marine research laboratory on the Gulf Coast at Aransas Pass, and from then on, I knew I wanted to become a biologist.

With advance placement, I completed a bachelor's degree in three and a half years. I then got a master's degree in 1967, and a PhD in 1968 at the age of 24, both in Zoology (Embryology). Since my graduate degrees were in the same department where I had received a BA, I had already taken many of the relevant courses offered. Also, I had the privilege of receiving in my first semester one of those extraordinary NSF pre-doctoral fellowships that provide research funds as well as living expenses for graduate studies. That meant that I had to teach only one semester and could focus completely on research and writing.

How I got to Berkeley

After I graduated, I went to Holland to participate in a postdoctoral research program in early amphibian development at the Utrecht Laboratory with Professor Neiuwkoop, one of the pioneers in this field. We were an international team of 15 people from 13 different countries studying the literature, listening to lectures, and conducting research together for one year. The official language of the program was English (not Texan), and most of the participants were not native English speakers and simply could not understand me. That was strong incentive to clean up my accent immediately. It was an extremely interesting and exciting learning experience to be working with all of those people from so many different countries. That's when I learned that what I thought was reality was really culture.

I had received a \$5000 scholarship from the American Association of University Women, which paid my expenses during my year in Holland. I am very grateful to AAUW. All along the path of my career, I've been really lucky to have generous financial support. I have absolutely no complaints about that, just gratitude.

After Holland, I came back to Boston for a 3-year NIH postdoc. The first year I spent at Harvard University, from 1969 to 1970 — working with a very distinguished cell biologist, Keith Porter, as my supervisor. He then decided to go to Colorado, and I didn't want to leave Boston so quickly. Instead, I moved over to Harvard Medical School and worked there for two years with another distinguished cell biologist, Donald Fawcett. Though I learned a lot at HMS, I did not really get along so well with my supervisor there. He tended to direct his postdocs to work on projects directly related to his own interests (as is generally the case). However, I was supported by an NIH postdoc fellowship based on specific proposed projects, and so I insisted on following the fellowship objectives and refused to pursue the projects he suggested.

Fortunately, there was actually a female professor, Betty Hay, in the Anatomy Department at Harvard Medical School. She was very interested in my project, took me under her wing, and looked out for me. She was a wonderful supporter and mentor. This was Harvard Medical School in 1972 and she was already a full professor. She was the first woman I encountered in my academic trajectory who was actually a regular faculty member. Not surprisingly, she was one tough lady. I used to say that having her as a mentor was like teething

on bullets. She was ferocious, but she was wonderfully smart and competent and very well respected. With Betty Hay's support, I was made an Instructor at HMS. I was in that position for a year before I left for my first Assistant Professor position. I was in Boston for four years altogether — which included summers at Marine Biological Labs in Woods Hole, also a wonderful opportunity and privilege.

In 1972, I started looking for a job. Betty Hay was extremely helpful, wrote really strong letters for me and coached me about going for interviews. I also imitated her ways of giving research talks, as mentees often do. I interviewed in five places during the spring of 1973. Of course, interviewing from Harvard wasn't such a bad situation to be in, and I got offers everywhere I interviewed: UC Davis; University of Washington, Seattle; University of Miami Medical School; Dartmouth; and University of Pennsylvania Medical School. I took the job at University of Pennsylvania Medical School in Philadelphia because there were lots of people working in cell motility there. I was the first female faculty member in the Anatomy Department at Penn, one of the oldest medical schools in the country. There was only one other woman on the whole medical school faculty at the time.

I was at Penn from 1973 until 1976, when a letter came across my desk describing a job here at Berkeley in the Physiology-Anatomy Department. I couldn't help but notice that the description for this job sounded like my CV. They wanted somebody doing my kind of research to teach histology, which I was doing at Penn. It was about as perfect a fit as one could ask for. So, being single, I thought, "Well, I might rather live in Berkeley than Philadelphia," and I sent my CV with a letter saying I had just seen their announcement and that I was interested in the position.

A few days later, I was invited out for an interview, and in a few weeks, I was offered the job. A couple of weeks after that, they offered me tenure to stay at Penn, and I turned it down to come to Berkeley without tenure, which gives you an idea how delusional and arrogant someone can get from being at Harvard for a few years. It also shows how naive I was. I told them at Berkeley that Penn had offered me tenure to stay, but of course they could not offer me tenure without reopening the search, as it had been at the Assistant Professor level. The chair promised that I would likely be put up for tenure shortly.

Based on that expectation and my ignorance of how things work in academia, I insisted after a year on being put up for tenure. My chair tried quite reasonably to talk me out of it because there wasn't enough of a track record yet to show that I had done here was different than what had been used to justify my hire. When I later became considerably more enlightened about these matters as Dean, I retroactively trembled in my boots for how extremely unwise this had been. But fortunately, I was more lucky than wise, and did get tenure.

Research and Teaching Experiences

Over my career here at Berkeley, I had only seven graduate students and 15 postdocs. In the biological sciences, these are rather small numbers. This was influenced by my extensive sojourns in Administration, and it also relates to the question as to whether women more than men change their research to try to fit into their department more successfully. I did rather the opposite – another example of this arrogance I have mentioned.

I gave my job talk about the role and mechanism of programmed cell shape change in early embryonic development that I had pursued in graduate school, and then continued working on in my postdoctoral fellowship. However, during my sojourn at Penn, I had begun to explore another system for studying regulated cell shape change that allowed me much greater experimental control and more quantitative characterization of experimental outcomes. This biological system was photoreceptor retinomotor movements in fish retinas. I was thrilled with this system because we could actually trigger the photoreceptors to elongate or contract at will by changing light conditions, and the movements generated were linear, massive (on a cell scale), and easily measured.

Worried about the difficulty of studying embryonic movements with the technologies available at the time, I thought it wise to move to this more tractable system. Thus, not long after I came to Berkeley, I started using the fish retinomotor system to study the same questions I'd been pursuing — the intracellular mechanism of force production for cell movements, and what signaling mechanisms control those movements. I do think I was right to be concerned. Subsequently, people have gone on to study the movements that I was studying in embryos, but more than 15 years passed before the introduction of molecular techniques made much progress possible. If I had kept trying to use embryos for this work, I would most likely not have been able to be as productive as I have been. Although I switched to a fish eye system that was less obviously fundamental and did not rely on a model organism, I nonetheless did receive 35 years of NIH funding to study cell motility in fish eyes. I do think that the fact that I was not using one of the standard model systems contributed to my having fewer graduate students — in addition to the impacts of my administrative duties as Dean and Vice Chancellor for Research on my availability in the lab. Getting involved in being a Dean when I was so young (40) definitely had an impact on attracting students, even though I did maintain my research funding through my tenures as both Dean and VCR. I didn't get any more students when I returned to the lab after being a Dean, though I continued to attract postdocs and the lab was still quite productive. I think one is a bit tainted for the students (as one is for faculty) if you veer off the expected trajectory and take up administration.

Nonetheless, I did receive a Merit Award during my tenure as Dean from the National Eye Institute of NIH, which granted 10 years of funding without competitive renewal. After five years, you tell them what you've been doing and if they think it's okay, they give you another five years. The Merit Award helped carry me through the Deanship and get my feet back on the ground on reentry. Also, we did get our funding renewed during my tenure as Vice Chancellor

for Research. My grant ran out right at the time I was stepping down from the VCR job. I was able to get an extension so that I could pay one of my postdocs to stay on and help me shut down the lab for retirement, a very painful experience. I officially retired December, 2008, and closed down the lab over the next year. I found shutting down the lab really traumatic, as everyone must. Throwing away all those things that said "Burnside Lab" on them, all those little tubes of such work-intensively saved samples students and postdocs had placed in the freezer. Throwing out all their lab notebooks! Dispatching all the striped bass! Still not over it! Also, my mother died right then, in February 2009, right in the middle of shutting down the lab. It was a difficult time.

I very much benefited from the fact that, unlike many others, Biology is one field in which funding for postdocs is available. Postdocs made it possible for my lab to continue productively publishing throughout the tenures of both my administrative commitments. Postdocs, already trained for laboratory work, often (but not always) get more done than graduate students and can work more independently. We also always had about four undergraduates in the lab too, working with the postdocs. These undergrads were an invaluable contribution to making the lab culture rewarding and enjoyable. They generally more or less lived in the lab, so it gave them a home base on campus as well.

The trauma of having a grant rejected for renewal struck me down several years before I was Dean; so it could not be blamed on administration. I had proposed in the previous grant period that we get something to work with fish photoreceptors, which we had never gotten to work effectively...so they were not enthusiastic about giving me money to try again. This was very traumatic because everyone in the lab was dependent on the grant for his or her salary. That focused me, all right. For about three weeks over the Christmas holidays, I went into the lab by myself every day and worked from dawn to midnight on this problem, and indeed I did get the system to work! Nothing like fear to focus the mind. I resubmitted the NIH grant and also one to NSF and got both funded. That was my last non-funded grant, but after that I was terminally traumatized by each renewal because I had a lab full of people who'd be suddenly out of jobs if we blew it and I knew exactly what that felt like. It is definitely stressful. And as faculty at Berkeley, we even have hard money salaries for ourselves from the University. I don't see how people who depend completely on grant money for their salaries survive it. It's cruel and unusual.

Teaching was also a rewarding part of my academic experience. I taught Histology when I came to Berkeley, as I had been teaching at Penn. I got excellent reviews and teaching awards from the medical students for that course. Later, I began to teach upper division Cell Biology, where I also got very good student reviews. I did do quite a lot of teaching, but no more than the men in my department. I really enjoyed teaching until after I stepped down as Dean, when I was assigned to teach Bio 1A to 650+ students. That was a nightmare. I had 15 lectures to teach animal form and function and evolution. That means that I'd have one lecture for the immune system, one lecture for the nervous system, and so on! It was almost impossible to even introduce the relevant vocabulary for these complex subjects in one lecture — it was like trying to teach somebody 12 different languages at once. That wasn't particularly a woman's

purgatory — men taught that course too, some quite a bit more successfully. Alas, I never figured out how to do it well, and the students certainly knew it. Another motivation to become a Vice Chancellor was that I got to escape teaching Bio 1A.

My Department at Berkeley

My original department at Berkeley, Physiology-Anatomy, was a little strange because it was the product of a shotgun marriage between two departments, Physiology and Anatomy, which had originally taught preclinical year courses for UCSF medical students. When UC moved all of the pre-clinical teaching to San Francisco, faculty were allowed to choose whether to move to UCSF or stay here at Berkeley. Since there were not enough faculty left at Berkeley to create a viable Physiology or Anatomy department, a joint Physiology-Anatomy Department was created. There were already two other women in the department, Marion Diamond and Paola Timiras. I did find the department welcoming. I would say that the department faculty got along more or less well enough, especially the young faculty who were hired around the same time. The same was true at Penn, where the Anatomy Department was quite collegial. They had a lot of dinner parties and were quite supportive of one another.

When I came to Berkeley, I found it much less collegial than Penn — not just in my department, but everywhere. There was much more of a sense of little fiefdoms, especially in biology. I found it comparatively lonely when I first came to Berkeley in January 1976. Then in 1979, I met a woman faculty member from Molecular Biology, Ellen Daniell, who asked if I wanted to join a professional support group she was in, which they called “Group”. It was comprised of a combination of faculty from Berkeley and UCSF. I joined them and have been in Group since then, for more than 40 years. Group has been very supportive and exceptionally useful in navigating the rapids of academia. Of the eight of us who have been in it since the early ‘80s, four are in the National Academy of Sciences — one, Judith Klinman from Chemistry at Berkeley, has received the National Medal of Science; and another, Mimi Koehl from Integrative Biology, has received a McArthur Genius Award. So they’re quite inspiring company! None of us were members of the same department. This was handy because it made it possible to talk about anything going on with our careers. Group members gave each other abundant and useful advice about how to cope with various challenges that arose for each of us.

As I mentioned, I went up for tenure after a year, which I received in 1977. Not very long afterwards, I was asked to be an Assistant Dean in L & S. These Assistant Deans deal with the students who have various problems and are requesting exceptions. That was a very enlightening experience for me, and I also got to know some of the Deans in L & S. This may have planted the seeds of my interest in Administration. I liked being in an environment where faculty were temporarily putting aside their own research agendas to concentrate on the wellbeing of the students and the university. While on the L&S Executive Committee as an Assistant Dean, I was exposed to and inspired by Bob Middlekauff, who was Dean of L&S at the time. I suspect that interaction contributed to my being asked to be Dean of Biological Sciences

in 1984, soon after I became full professor. My strongly positive impression of the L&S Executive Committee influenced my willingness to agree to take the position.

Experiences as an Administrator

The sequence of my appointments was Assistant Professor in 1976, Associate Professor in 1977, and Full Professor in 1982. In 1984, I became Dean of Biological Sciences. One of the reasons I was willing to become Dean was that we were launching into a massive reorganization of the biological sciences; the travail ahead was obviously going to be huge, chaotic, and traumatic for lots of people. It was clear that we were going to rip up all turf and start over to create completely new departments in the biological sciences. I thought to myself that I would rather run this rapid as a dean than as a regular faculty member or department chair. Even though I knew it was going to be quite a tumultuous job under these circumstances, I thought it would still be better than feeling buffeted about helplessly. As you might expect, faculty were getting pretty hysterical. Everybody felt powerless while departments and space assignments were being reorganized. That was a very intense time. I was seven years in that job and got to know my colleagues in some of their more colorful morphs.

There were many players in the reorganization process. I wouldn't describe my experience as having much say in how the reorganization came out, but I was certainly in the thick of it and knew as much as anyone about what was going on. I saw my job as trying to make the process as fair as possible, interface between faculty and the administration and the Senate, make sure people felt heard, and take care of faculty and staff as well as I could while these machinations were going on. That included arguing with Dan Koshland if I thought he was trying to do something in a little too draconian a manner. I think my job was more facilitative than directive, but that's the way I saw the Dean's job. It was genuinely a group process; I perhaps had more influence than anyone else but Dan, but as you know, in the democracy that is the University of California at Berkeley, that is not a lot.

The reorganization was quite an intense experience. When I stepped down from the Dean's job, I went back to research and teaching for 10 years. I have to admit that I missed the big picture of administration; it was indeed rather like a catbird seat for watching the processes of a great university in action. Eventually, being back in the lab began to feel a little like I was at home in the suburbs with the kids. I wasn't quite sure I wanted to do that for the rest of my career. I was still fairly young then (late 50s). I went through some soul-searching about what I really wanted to do. Though I was asked to consider various senior administrative jobs, none really appealed to me — either because I didn't think they were a good fit for my strengths and weaknesses, or they would have required my leaving Berkeley, which I did not want to do.

Then I got asked to consider the Vice Chancellor for Research position. That was more interesting to me. I felt that one of my strengths was my intuition for identifying the right person to effectively accomplish a particular objective (and talking them into doing it!). I thought that I might be able to leverage that in the role of VCR to have a real impact in making it easier for faculty and students to get research done at Berkeley, both by finding ways to help

and by removing (particularly bureaucratic) barriers. This was a motivation I felt strongly about. I imagined that I could pretty well guess what my life would be like in five years if I continued my research program and teaching responsibilities, and everything that I was doing. I confess I was very tired of writing grant proposals. Having once had a grant proposal turned down, I was completely traumatized by each new proposal. On the other hand, if I was chosen for the VCR job and took it, I would be confronted with a new and much broader perspective. And I liked the idea of having an opportunity to draw on my perspective as an academic and Dean to serve the interests of the faculty of the whole campus.

I agreed to be considered for the VCR job, and when offered, decided to take it. I started the VCR job in January 2001 – right after the crash of the economy. In August 2000, when I accepted the job, the economy was roaring along...but by the time I took office, things were grim. I served as VCR from January 2001 until December 2008, so I got out just in time to miss yet another crash. When I stepped down, I retired. But I did manage to keep my lab going the whole time I was VCR.

There is one perspective I'd like to mention that struck me from my experience as Vice Chancellor for Research. At the vice chancellor level, you get a lot of really not so pleasant issues that come across your desk. Often, they have already defeated several layers of administrators on the way up. (Chancellor level is even worse, of course!) And occasionally, there were really hard, acrimonious, and stressful interpersonal interactions involved. After many years of observing these experiences, I found myself beginning to suspect that going up against a woman in a supposedly powerful position (rather than a man) disinhibits aggression in men (and maybe in some women too). I wonder if a frustrated man isn't more likely to act out aggressively if the person with the power to say no to what he wants (or who represents the institutional no) is a woman. I wonder if I didn't encounter more acting out than a man in the same job would have seen. I don't know that, of course. But I wonder. I certainly observed quite a bit of behavior that crossed the line in terms of basic civility while in the VCR job. Not just from men, but mostly from men. But of course, most of my interactions were with men.

Many aspects of being VCR I found very interesting and satisfying, but of course some were quite stressful. My favorite experiences in my career were those of working together with very smart and dedicated people who put aside their personal interests to concentrate on what they can do to make something work for the institution in as effective a manner as possible. For me, several collaborative experiences like that were highlights of my VCR experience. For example, I was lead for the campus on the massive Energy Biosciences effort which entailed the collaboration of faculty and administrators from many departments at Berkeley, LBNL, and the University of Illinois to put together an application for a \$500M grant from BP, defend it in London, and then actually negotiate the contract and set up the Institute when we won the competition. That was an opportunity to see extraordinary collaborative performances on every side by faculty, administrators, and staff from all three institutions. It was truly exhilarating to experience such impressive teamwork.

The hardest part of administration for me is coping with the frustration. One needs a huge frustration tolerance to do academic administration, especially at a public university. Berkeley at least seems to manifest an impenetrable thicket of frustration opportunities. Perhaps a private university would be easier.

And as for the confrontational stresses, I have retained this feeling that I expressed earlier that I think it probably was harder for a woman. On the other hand, I think it may be a bit easier for a woman to build consensus. I think that two of my main contributions in the VCR job were building consensus and getting people to feel heard. And I do think that's where women have an advantage, and it's a very important part of administration. So, in fact, although the parts of the job that are harder for women may be more stressful to them, the parts of the job where women's skills are particularly effective are those that make very important contributions to the wellbeing of the University.

Impacts of Affirmative Action on Career

I think there's no question that the many opportunities I experienced in my career were influenced by affirmative action. For starters, I was hired as the first woman, ever, in the Anatomy Department at Penn in 1972. They didn't just suddenly decide, "Oh, let's hire this woman." There is no question that they were feeling pressure to have more women on the faculty. The one other woman faculty member at Penn was very proactive. She was much older than I was and much respected, and she had been making a serious effort to press for affirmative action at Penn. Also, I sincerely believe that the five job offers I got were influenced by affirmative action. Yes, it is true that I looked like an attractive candidate — I came from Harvard and I was doing some good work — but it was also important that I was a woman. Clearly, hiring a woman was some kind of bonus in that climate. The pressure on my department here at Berkeley was probably a bit less because they already had two women faculty, but it was still a bonus with the administration.

I fully appreciate that without the people who had been willing to take a stand about affirmative action issues and fight the good fight for women, it would have been unlikely that I or any other women would have even been considered for faculty positions. I actually think affirmative action affected most or all of the many opportunities in my CV. But for my own part, I wasn't cut out to be an activist for women's rights. It's not me. I'm not an activist sort. I don't want to pick fights. I don't want to push, push on people. It's much more my style to not be seen as an advocate, but instead to be seen as unbiased, as someone who wants the best for the institution, who wants the best outcome for whatever the situation is, who's not pushing an agenda, to play the role of an honest broker outside the fray. I think we need both kinds of people for women's future wellbeing. And I do think that this attitude has a lot to do with my career trajectory. I think someone who was out front pushing women's rights and proselytizing for affirmative action would not have been given the administrative opportunities I have had, or would have been much less likely to be asked to be a Dean or a Vice Chancellor, since these are broker types of positions - jobs where the person needs not to be an advocate for any

party, but to be absolutely committed to trying to find the best outcome for everyone, to be fair, and not favor anyone. That doesn't, of course, mean that you do not object when you encounter something that looks like discrimination, just that you do not go proselytizing for special treatment. I think a lot of women would probably consider me as having wimped out on that, but I think you can't be in of those roles — they are mutually exclusive. That once you get seen as an advocate, you will not be seen as an unbiased broker. It's only the broker types that are likely to get let into the upper echelons. And it's only when they get admitted at that level that people get to see that a woman can do this job. Carol Christ is an example of someone who wins this sort of trust. I think both approaches are crucial, but I don't think for a minute that just doing the brokering would have worked without the social pressure of affirmative action.

Balancing work and family life

Since I chose not to marry and did not have a family, this particular challenge which impacts so many women was different for me. Once I became clear that I wanted to have an academic career, I never really thought it was feasible to marry — both because of the two-body problem regarding finding jobs at the same place, and because of the conflict between having kids and working. I also didn't really want to have kids. And that's not because of women's issues so much as the fact that I grew up in a quite dysfunctional family. For me personally, I don't think I could have handled both marriage and career, because marriage was likely to be so fraught for me. I never contemplated getting married after my 19-year-old foray into wishful thinking. I did have a lot of different relationships, especially in the '70s and '80s. Since then, I've been in a long term, non-couple relationship resembling that with a close sister. We have our own houses in different cities, but we share everything, do a lot of things together, and are there for each other in a pinch. I have a lively social life separate from this partner as well. I have never regretted not marrying, though I must confess that sometimes I feel a little jealous of my friends' grandmother ecstasies.

Group has been another supportive network for over 40 years. At first, we mostly talked about work, but now we mostly talk about life, so there's plenty of data to disabuse me of thinking I would have lived happily ever after if only I had gone the family route. You choose this or you choose that, and that's the way it is. You don't get to have it all. I think it's unfortunate that people set expectations that are undoable and then feel bad about what they have. There is much I value about the single life.

Unfortunately, one downside of not having a family is that there are fewer antidotes to workaholism. Much of my career, I suffered from the common illusion that if you could just accomplish enough, you would prove your worth. And it doesn't work. It's a constantly receding horizon. I finally figured that out in my 50s, and it was a tough discovery.

As for anything else I think was important regarding my career at Berkeley, one thing comes to mind. I think one difficult thing about Berkeley is that it is such an elitist place.

There's always somebody who's more visibly impressive and successful. If you have the delusion that accomplishment can prove your worth, you're in trouble at Berkeley because there are so many incredibly brilliant and accomplished people on this campus. It's a tough ego environment to be surrounded by superstars. I think most people who end up at a place like Berkeley are at least a bit inclined to try harder and succeed better and be worthier. After all, that's what we hire people for and what we give them promotions for. It's a challenging environment for being at peace and being satisfied with your yourself. But then, being at peace inside your life is probably a challenge anywhere. Of course, that challenge is counterbalanced here at Berkeley by its flip side: how inspiring and exhilarating it is to be interacting with such smart, quirky, competent, and interesting people every day. And these traits in faculty attract the same traits in students. Comfort isn't everything.

END.