

**Interviews of the Margaret MacVicar Memorial AMITA Oral History Project, MC 356**  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Institute Archives and Special Collections

**Josette Goldish** – class of 1969

Interviewed by Colette Abah, class of 2015

November 10, 2016

**Margaret MacVicar Memorial AMITA Oral History Project**  
**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

Josette Goldish (S.B. Economics, 1969; S.M. Management, 1984) was interviewed by former MIT undergraduate Colette Abah (S.B. Mechanical Engineering, 2015) on November 10, 2016, at the Women's Independent Living Group (WILG), an all-women housing option at the Institute.

ABAH: Good afternoon, Ms. Goldish. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me to share about your experience before, during and after MIT. For starters, I would like to hear a bit about your childhood, your upbringing, and how that affected the person you are today.

GOLDISH: I was born in Curaçao, which is a Dutch island in the Caribbean. It's right off the coast of Venezuela. I am an only child, so I was spoiled, one might say. I went to the public school system on the Island, and in those days, the Dutch educational system was absolutely fantastic, and very rigorous. You had to pass an exam to get into high school, and if you didn't, you had to go to another educational branch, and then eventually get into high school. So I finished high school when I was sixteen. This was very young.

The option was, in those days, that most people went to Holland, where the education was essentially free, and you just paid for your room and board. I wanted to go to Holland, and my boyfriend was going to Holland, so I wanted to go to Holland as well. My parents said, "What? Sixteen years old living in an apartment in Holland? I don't think so. How about the United States?" In those days, I was very anti-American. It was in the time of Nixon and Latin America was having a lot of upheavals. So I was anti-Yankee, and I definitely did not want to come to the United States, and definitely did not want to go to Smith College, where my father wanted me to go.

I was second in my class, so they felt like I really needed to continue studying. So, I applied to go to university in Venezuela, where I had an uncle and an aunt with whom I could live. I went there, started in September, and in November, I think it was, there was a revolutionary upheaval and they closed the university. So I ended up spending a lot of time having fun in Caracas, which was then a very beautiful city. Eventually my father said, "It's time for you to do something." So I took a course in typing and shorthand, and I thought I would become a secretary instead of a chemist.

ABAH: So did you study chemistry in high school?

GOLDISH: Yes, high school was very rigorous. First of all, we took four languages for five years.

ABAH: Yes, I saw on your resume that you are fluent in several languages.

GOLDISH: I have lost some of my German and French; I can read it and I can understand it but don't speak it well anymore. But the other languages I am quite fluent in. And then we had math all the way through, as well as geography, history, biology, chemistry, physics, everything. Five years of high school. So I was pretty well prepared. But as it turns out, the university remained closed in the New Year.

Eventually, after I finished the shorthand and typing course, I needed to go find a job. Around then, they had gotten the first computer in Curaçao ever, at the Shell Oil Company. The island has a very large refinery; it's still there. It's not as large as it used to be, but it was then probably the second- or third-largest in the world. Between that refinery and the one that used to be in Aruba, they provided 90% of the aviation fuel for the ally forces in the Second World War.

So Shell got the computer and they were looking for people who had high school training with a lot of math, which I had had. I applied for the job, took the test, they trained me, and I became a computer programmer on an IBM 1401, which had 4K of memory. Anyway, later we expanded to 16K, which was a big achievement. I worked there for four years. I was a computer programmer and systems analyst, and it became very obvious to me that if I wanted to advance in my career, I had to get a college degree. By then I had become more enamored of the United States. I had a very good friend who had graduated from MIT in '60 or '61, I forget – around that time. And he told me I should apply there. So I applied to MIT and got admitted.

I had been out of school for five years. So when I came here, they had everybody take the physics exam to determine if they were good enough to get into 8.01, and I didn't pass. So, I took 8.001, which was taught by Professor [Anthony] French, who was quite an important physicist. It was wonderful and I aced all my physics courses. I failed some exams of other courses but I aced physics. And my undergraduate degree was in economics.

ABAH: How did you decide to transition from computer science to economics?



GOLDISH: I thought that I would do more microeconomics. I think I had an erroneous view of what economics would be. I thought I would learn about how to understand the oil business and so on. But in any case, when I got started, it was very interesting. But as I moved along, it became very technical. Everything was a mathematical model. I took an international economics course at MIT, and we never mentioned a country! We just said "country A" and "country B" and a lot of numbers. By my junior year I thought, "I don't really think I want to do this." My husband agreed-- by that time I had gotten married--

ABAH: Was this to the same boyfriend that went to Holland?

GOLDISH: No. Actually, it's very interesting, because he went to Holland to study engineering in Delft, [at] a very good school. After the first year, he decided that he wanted to be a medical doctor. So he went to Leiden, to medical school, and became probably one of the top oncologists in Europe. He retired recently, and he was president of the Oncology Society in Europe. Top guy!

Anyway, no, I met my husband here at MIT. I will tell you how. I had a tape recorder that I brought up and the cycles in Curaçao are different from here. So it was electric of course, and I couldn't listen to all my nice music I had brought over. He offered to fix it for me – he was a mechanical engineer. He had to grind down the whatever it was, and it worked. So I gave him a book about the Island to thank him and he liked it. About a year later, he and a friend were going to take a vacation. And his friend said, I think we need to go to a place with palm trees and dancing girls. And he said, "That would be cool!" So he came down to Curaçao for a short stay that summer. After my freshman year, we started dating.

ABAH: That is a great story!

GOLDISH: He was in graduate school here, dual degree in mechanical engineering and at Sloan [School of Management] as well.

ABAH: Was it the Leaders for Global Operation (LGO) program?

GOLDISH: No, they didn't have that. It was two separate degrees. As a mechanical engineer, he started to take business classes and got interested in it. When we got married, I think he was already done, and he was working. And I still had two years to go.

I finished school and went to work for a company that did air pollution research, mostly for government agencies and states. In my junior year, I had a pretty heavy schedule and I was living off campus, so I was commuting.

ABAH: Where were you living?

GOLDISH: In Brighton, almost Newton. Anyway, I was taking the courses that I have to take in economics, political science – things that I was interested in. Then I needed Humanities credits, so I had to take other things. Once, when I needed to pick a course, I took econometrics, which is also a lot of math! I only took it because it fit my schedule, but it ended up getting me my job. I worked on modeling fossil fuel use in the United States, working on a lot of very interesting projects. I did that for four years. In the meantime, I had my son, but when I had my daughter, I couldn't continue with a full-time schedule. I still did consulting and took some time off. And then I went back, did some work with the same firm and also did energy consulting.

ABAH: OK. I'm going to take us back to MIT. What would you say is the biggest challenge you faced while at MIT?

GOLDISH: I was 21 when I came. I was older than the average student coming in, the freshmen, in this case. Back in Curaçao, I had my own car and my own life. I would go out and come back home whenever. My parents wanted to know where I was, but I didn't have a curfew. And then I came here; I had to be in the dorm by 11:00.

ABAH: They had a curfew back then?

GOLDISH: I lived in McCormick Hall, and it was pretty new. I was living with two roommates, one of whom was okay, I guess. The other was thrown out, which is pretty hard to do at MIT. First of all, she came with about forty pairs of shoes. And they were all piled up in boxes at the side of the room. She never came home, I mean, she didn't sleep there. She used to bring food in during the morning, and then it would sit there and the milk would congeal-- You could turn the glass upside down and it wouldn't come out.

ABAH: [LAUGHS] That sounds disgusting!

GOLDISH: That was the most shocking thing I had ever seen in my life. So, my sophomore year, I moved in with some friends. And I made good friends. By the way, there were only 50 women in my class.



ABAH: Wow!

GOLDISH: Yes. I was really good friends with the women, still am. I come to the special reunions every five years. My Sloan reunion coincides with my undergraduate reunion.

ABAH: That's great, 2-in-1!

GOLDISH: Actually no, because I don't get to see them as much. I have to split my time. I think that the women in McCormick Hall became very close. I was involved with the Jewish community on campus and through that there were other women who became my friends.

I worked really hard when I was here, particularly my freshman year. I was drowning in work. I did OK, but it felt like work never stopped. My son went to MIT, too, and I have to say, I don't think he worked as hard as I did. And I don't know if it is just the way he was, or he was better prepared with the English and all that – because English was my second language.

ABAH: Was that also a challenge?

GOLDISH: A little bit, at the beginning, particularly writing essays. But I had been reading in English for quite a while. I remember I had to take a humanities class my freshman year. I don't remember what it was called. Greek literature? I don't remember. The first class we went to, the professor said, "you have all read *The Odyssey*, so just skim through it for next time." And the next time was two days later. I had not read it, so I am going, "What? [LAUGHS] I had to read it in one day."

ABAH: That's tough!

GOLDISH: You get it done. I had to do it.

ABAH: You spoke a bit about your friends at MIT. I was wondering, who else was part of your support system here at MIT? Professors? RAs? TAs?

GOLDISH: No, mostly the friends. The roommate my second year was Lee Wolfe Mozes [S.B. Biology/Life Sciences '69], an amazing friend. She is still my friend. There were a lot of other friends. I was introduced to my husband by my 'Big Sister.' She was a junior who had been assigned my name to write with me before I came. We may never have met – my husband and I – if not for her. I think also there was a Dean for Women Students, Dean

[Emily] Wick. I used to go to her office occasionally. And Dorrie, She was actually one of the co-founder of WILG [Women's Independent Living Group]. I can't remember her name now. She was Dean Wick's assistant. They were helpful to talk to but I didn't have any need to go beyond my friends at that point.

I felt very comfortable at McCormick. It was very nice environment. We had the dining room in the building. One of the RAs in McCormick was Margaret MacVicar, who later started the UROP program here at MIT. She was a very good friend; I was very fond of her. So there were not all people from the same class. They were from different networks, particularly people on my floor. I knew most of the people on my floor really well.

ABAH: What were your extracurricular activities at MIT?

GOLDISH: Not a lot. First year, I joined Wings of Flight, which was a women's branch of ROTC. I cannot tell you what their purpose in life was.

ABAH: [LAUGHS]

GOLDISH: I know that we once went to go fly a plane with some guy, I don't know why. I was very nauseous. I was very active in Hillel, the Jewish community at MIT. I think I was on the board. The Jewish community would have bagel brunches and such. By my sophomore year, when I started dating my husband, preparing for our wedding in Curaçao, I got very busy.

ABAH: You got married as an undergrad?

GOLDISH: I got married in '67, after my sophomore year. His family came from Cleveland, Ohio, and they never heard of this place called Curaçao. It was very hard to plan because we came from very different cultures. We are both Jewish, but he was Orthodox and my family was very secular. My family has lived in the island for over 350 years. It was hard to reconcile the differences. I was busy with that. Also, I took six courses the semester before I got married. Why I did that is beyond me. Two of which were in mechanical engineering, for which I had no inclination. It was difficult.

ABAH: Why did you decide to take those courses?

GOLDISH: I had to take some engineering and science requirements. I took that and I took computer science as well. I had to take a lab in mechanical engineering. They were three guys in my group. One of the first



experiments, we had to measure the sounds in a bar. They had to put something on a bar, a sensor. They gave me a gauge and they said, "glue these gauges onto the bar." I glued them on backward. So after that, all I was allowed to do was fetch things from one place to another.

ABAH: You mentioned there were only 50 women in your class. How was your experience as a woman at MIT at that time?

GOLDISH: In the computer department that I worked in, at Shell Oil in Curaçao, there were not that many women. So the situation at MIT wasn't that odd. But sometimes I was the only woman in the class. My junior year, they started doing the cross-registration with Wellesley College. So in that econometrics class that I told you about, there were, like, four girls from Wellesley College in that class. And after the first month, I was the only one left. I don't know what they thought there were getting into, but it wasn't economics, it was mostly math. In other classes, there were two or three women. I didn't feel too awkward about it.

I was friendly with Shirley Jackson, who was a year ahead of me. She was one of the first black women accepted at MIT and she is now president of RPI. I remember she was one of the only women in one of my political science classes. She was brilliant. She never came to class, and one day she comes bouncing in, 10 minutes after class started. The professor said, "Ms. Jackson, so nice to see you!" She looked at him, picked up her bag and walked out [LAUGHS]. She was tough. In economics, there were a few women. Honestly, it didn't bother me that much. There were 25 men for each woman. It wasn't on my radar at that point.

ABAH: So you never experienced any sort of discrimination?

GOLDISH: No. If anything, more help, actually.

ABAH: Ok. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to do MIT all over again? Would you have done a different major, for example?

GOLDISH: I don't think so. I don't think I am suited for engineering. Economics was a good major. It opened a lot of doors for me. I think the degree from MIT-- I cannot say [enough] how valuable it has been in my life. It has made it a lot easier to find jobs. People think you know a lot more than you actually do. And somehow you can push through because you have been taught how to do that. I think we really are taught that there really isn't anything you can't understand, and you can go for it. I have to say that when I first applied for that job in the air pollution field, I didn't know what air pollution was. You learn.



ABAH: Yes. Looking things up on Google might be the most valuable thing I learned at MIT.

GOLDISH: Except back then, you had to go to a library to look it up.

ABAH: Were you an international student when you came in?

GOLDISH: Yes. I don't think there were any other international women students in my class. There was one girl who was from Hawaii, and she was great. When it snowed the first time, they came-- it was the middle of the night-- and gathered the two of us in our pajamas to show us the snow. There weren't that many of us. But there was one guy from Curaçao also my year.

ABAH: What a coincidence!

GOLDISH: Actually, we were related; his grandfather and my grandmother were cousins. I knew his brother, but he was younger than I was. And through the four years, I would see him in the hallway and say "Hi," and he would look down. He was very shy. But now we are best friends. We met again later in life.

ABAH: How was your experience as an international student at MIT?

GOLDISH: I did go to some international dances and activities that there were. And there were Latino students here, and I found them very clique-ish. I would identify most with them. I mean, I wouldn't expect to find many people from the islands here.

There was one girl in my class, Linda Sharpe, who was president of the Alumni Association at MIT. Her family was from, I think, Trinidad, or one of the Caribbean islands. But beyond that, I would identify with the Latino students over the Dutch students. I was part of some Dutch academic association we would get invited to, but they were boring as anything. And the Latino students would have good parties. I'd go to the parties. But they all knew each other, and I didn't know them.

ABAH: Oh, that's unfortunate. International students find the immigration system very confusing. Finding a job is especially hard because they're not sure they can hire you for the job-- Did you experience any of those struggles?

GOLDISH: Because I was married to an American citizen, I got a green card very early on.

ABAH: Nice.

GOLDISH: So I didn't become an American citizen myself until my husband voted for Ronald Reagan, which was in the 1980s or something like that. But no, I didn't have a problem with visa because I had the card. It also wasn't as complicated then as it is right now.

ABAH: Right now, yeah.

GOLDISH: I remember in '69, I think I could have applied for a green card after having been here. And I would have gotten it. Maybe not as quickly as when I got it.

ABAH: Nice. Let's talk a little bit about your life after MIT Sloan.

GOLDISH: So, well, that was quite a bit after, because when I graduated in '69, I had been married for two years. And I did want to have children. And so my son was born in '71, and my daughter was born in '75. So I spent quite a bit of time working part-time in order to be able to handle that. And then my husband made a very bad investment at a certain point, and we lost all our savings.

ABAH: Oh, no.

GOLDISH: At that point, I decided-- well, I had no idea what he had done-- I needed to understand business better. And I applied to Sloan.

ABAH: Oh, OK.

GOLDISH: I applied to that, and Harvard Business School as well at that time. But my kids were already 8 and 11. They were already in school most of the day. So I had somebody come live in who would receive them at 3:00 when they came home from school. And that worked pretty well.

ABAH: Nice.

GOLDISH: But there were lots of evening activities I didn't come to. But again at Sloan, too, we didn't have that many women, and we didn't have that many old people like me. I was almost 41 when I graduated.

ABAH: Wow. And the average age is about 27, 28?



GOLDISH: It's pretty young. So we had a group. We called ourselves the "vintage" students. But yeah, it was somewhat good. And I think I was more relaxed at Sloan than I was as an undergraduate because my family was more important to me than what I was doing there, whereas before, I was so career-oriented. And it didn't matter. I didn't have any other things pulling me. And my husband, if anything, was pushing me to do well in school. Here, I felt that if my daughter had a performance, I would skip classes and go to it. And that was more important to me.

But when I graduated, I ended up working at Bank of New England. And while I was there, I got a call from a woman who I used to work for in the energy field. She was the founder of the company I worked for, one of the founders.

And she said did I know anybody who might want to take over the job of treasurer of that company that she was treasurer of. And I said, well, let me think. And I started thinking, because at the bank I had had exposure to a lot of people in different companies. And as we talked about the options, she suddenly said, "How about you?" I said, "Ah, I don't think so. I don't like doing accounting." And she says, "No, we have an accountant. You don't have to do accounting at all." I said, "I don't know this field..."

So I went in to talk to her. And she told me that she has been sick, and she has been out for a while. And then the president, whom I knew also, came in, and they pushed and pushed. And they offered me a significant increase over what I was making at the bank.

And I thought, well, what the heck; I have nothing to lose. So I took the job. I went in, and I never saw her in the office again, because she was dying. She didn't tell me that. She died a month after I started there. So I was really, you know, left with a lot of stuff to take care of.

I worked at the company as treasurer for four years. And then in '89, I left for a number of reasons, one of which was that my daughter was in high school, and I wanted to work part-time. And you couldn't do this job part-time. I wanted to be more aware of what was going on with her. My son was more structured, but she was a little difficult at that time.

ABAH: Teenage years?

GOLDISH: Yeah. And then I worked part-time. I went back to the bank again. I had a good relationship with that bank. And then I went back to them, just worked there and then did some consulting in the finance field mostly.

And then I decided I'd had enough of this nonsense. I started working on a family reunion in Curaçao. We ended up with people coming in from a lot of Latin American countries – from all over.

ABAH: How many generations back?

GOLDISH: At least six. We were able to connect them. I have a family tree; I can go back many more generations than that--

ABAH: Oh, wow.

GOLDISH: We had descendants from these people going back that were related to each other four generations back and forward. So there were about 160 people at this reunion. It was great fun. It took up a lot of time. But when I went to it, I found out that there were people in my family that have gone to live in Dominican Republic in the early 19th century. And I had no idea that we had family there. So I started researching that. And then during that research, I became interested in the migrations in the Caribbean of the Jews that lived there. And so I actually wrote the book [*Once Jews: Stories of Caribbean Sephardim*] about that.

ABAH: Wow.

GOLDISH: And I've continued doing research in the field. So that's what keeps me busy. But I'm my own boss. I do whatever I want.

ABAH: Is that what you do at Brandeis [University] now?

GOLDISH: Yeah, but I don't get paid.

ABAH: Oh.

GOLDISH: No, I have a business card. I'm invited to all relevant conferences, and so on. I can use their library and all their resources. And in turn, I give lectures every now and then and so some reviewing there, but no money is exchanged. And when I publish, I have to put their name on the publication. It has nothing to do with work that Hadassah-Brandeis Institute does. They're mostly into women's studies. And mine has nothing to do-- I mean, I mentioned women in my work if they happened to be there. But otherwise, it's not about that.

ABAH: So how did that arrangement happen?



GOLDISH: I had a friend who was a professor at Brandeis. And we had lunch one day. And I said, "You know, I found this very interesting thing, and I wrote a short paper about it. Want to see it?" And she says, "Yeah." She looks at this. And she says, go talk to Shula." I said, "Who's Shula? I don't know Shula." She said, "Shula [Shulamit Reinharz] is the wife of the president of Brandeis [Jehuda Reinharz]. She's in charge of the women's studies program there. And she started this Hadassah-Brandeis Institute." So I called her up, and went to see her. I told her what I was doing, and I was doing research about this Caribbean migration of the Jews, and so on. And she goes, "OK, do whatever you want. You want money? Do you want a scholarship? Do you want a job? What do you want?" I said, well, I want a library card [LAUGHS].

She said, "Oh, OK. We can do that. Write up a contract." And so I wrote up a contract, and that's the arrangement we have. And it gets renewed every year.

ABAH: Wow.

GOLDISH: Yeah. I publish quite a bit. I mean, I have several papers that came out last year. And I'm working on a new project now. I don't know if it will be a book or a paper.

ABAH: If you wanted to change some of the contract, would they be OK with that?

GOLDISH: They might. They might. But I think she's also getting close to retirement. So I think when she retires, this will end. And I don't know.

And I'm 72. So there's a limit to how much effort I wanted to put into this. But I'm having a good time. And I just spent two days in Vermont going through old papers left behind a woman who was born in 19th century, and it's fascinating, fascinating. I don't want to lose it. I want to use that information, but I am not exactly sure how--

ABAH: You mentioned that your son went to MIT?

GOLDISH: Yeah.

ABAH: What year was he?

GOLDISH: He graduated in 1994. His name is Andrew. It's only the three of us [MIT graduates].

My daughter aced her math SATs, got all 5's on whatever those things are that you have to take that I never took. And all her teachers in school said, "You should apply for MIT." She goes, "My mother went to MIT. My father went to MIT. My brother went to MIT. If we had a dog, it would have gone to MIT. I'm not going there!" She went to Brown.

ABAH: Oh, Brown is such a happy place.

GOLDISH: It's such an antithesis to MIT.

ABAH: Yeah, definitely.

GOLDISH: Oh, lots of pass/fail. Take this, take that. She had a great time there, and she made fabulous friends.

ABAH: Yeah, the party scene at Brown is definitely something. I kind of regret-- I wish I had experienced a bit of that.

GOLDISH: Very, very good people. And she can travel from Boston to California and never stay in a hotel because she met friends everywhere.

ABAH: Wow. Great. So I think I've exhausted all my questions. Is there anything interesting you'd like to talk about?

GOLDISH: Well, no, I'd like to say there were some professors that were very special, I think, at MIT, and it was not Professor French. I think it was Professor [Philip] Morrison who taught that remedial physics course.

He was handicapped. He was brilliant. And he was also a physics professor. And he was great. And also, it was a treat to have Professor [Paul] Samuelson for economics, because he wrote the book.

ABAH: Wow.

GOLDISH: And there were some really, really-- I took German at MIT. And I thought that some of those professors were great, too. And the political science teachers-- There were really some very, very prominent people. And my thesis advisor was Professor Adelman, Morris Adelman. And he, too, was a prominent economist. And really, he died I think last year or this year. And he must have been in his late 90s when he died. He was just super.

And then after I married my husband, I became more observant in my religion. So there were certain days that I wouldn't work or take exams. And everybody was so accommodating. They'd say, "It's a Jewish holiday?"



Oh, when do you want to take it? Do you want to take it next week? Oh, it's OK."

ABAH: That is nice.

GOLDISH: Yeah, so the school was super, super accommodating. And tuition was low, but it was high for me. But it was \$1,500 when I started. And--

ABAH: Ooh, wow.

GOLDISH: Yeah. When it went up to \$1,700, there was a big protest!

ABAH: Right now, it's just ridiculous.

GOLDISH: Well, when I went to Sloan, it was. And when I went to Sloan-- I have to tell you this story. When I went to Sloan, I was paying \$10,000 in tuition. I lived at home, of course. And one day, I was taking a course, and I wanted to combine a final paper from one course with another course and cover both issues. And I needed permission from the professors to do that. Someone had given me permission. And the professor in my strategic planning class I needed to speak to still. So I called his office and I asked if I could make an appointment to come talk with him. And the secretary says, "Are you taking his course?" Now, you have to understand these professors were all the same age I was. "So are you taking his course?" I said yes. "Oh, he doesn't make appointments with people who are taking his course. You need to talk to him before or after class." I said, "Are you kidding me?"

ABAH: What?

GOLDISH: So I went, and I sat in his office. He wasn't there. And I sat in his office. And he walked in, and he said, "Oh, hi." I said, "Can I talk to you for a minute?" He said, "Of course, come in." So I came in. I stood. He said, "Sit down." I said, "No, I have to stand here. You don't take appointments to see people who are in your class." He said, "That's right. What is it?" I told him. He said, "It's OK." And I left. I finished the course. I got an A in the course.

And then I wrote a letter to the faculty supervisory committee. I said, "I'm paying \$10,000 tuition. There is no way anybody's going to tell me I can't to make an appointment for that amount of money."

I got called in front of the committee. And they wanted me to say who it was. And I said, "I don't care who it was. You need to tell your faculty that

this is not acceptable. It doesn't matter who it was." And later, I became personal friends with the head of that committee.

ABAH: Wow.

GOLDISH: In fact, he's actually coming to Curaçao with me in January. And the professor also became a friend. Not close, but a friend. But [as an] undergraduate, I never had that. You could walk into anybody's office.

ABAH: Absolutely, yeah. And I also had a question about Sloan. I have friends from Sloan. And then they say the most valuable thing they get from Sloan is the network. Would you agree?

GOLDISH: Yeah. I mean, you can call on anybody. You tell them who you are from Sloan-- I didn't get into Harvard undergraduate or business school, and I'm glad I didn't. I thought the business school would be a nice combination with MIT undergraduate. But after I sat in, I thought, this is not for me. I mean, the Sloan approach is much more practical. There's a lot of hand-waving at Harvard, and we don't do that.

ABAH: What is hand-waving?

GOLDISH: It is touchy-feely kind of stuff, you know?

ABAH: Fluffy.

GOLDISH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And a lot of things they teach you at Sloan here are very practical and numerically based. You want to make a decision. Well, you can make a decision chart, and you can do things in an organized fashion.

There [Harvard Business School], they talk it through-- And it is great, you know? They do very well in the world, the Harvard Business School people. But I was very happy with this. I made nice contacts.

You mention to somebody you went to Sloan. They go, oh, I went to Sloan too. But the MIT undergraduate degree I find even more important. I don't wear my [school] ring. You know why?

ABAH: Why?

GOLDISH: Because when I first started as a junior, I came home with it. And I had a neighbor. I was married then. I had a neighbor. And she had twin babies. And they were a year or two old. So I said, Betty Carol, look what I got.



And she said to me, "Oh, did you get this in a Crackerjack box? I want to get that for the kids."

ABAH: Wow!

GOLDISH: What? After all that work?

ABAH: After all that money.

GOLDISH: But when I wear it, it's like, oh, right away. Do you wear yours?

ABAH: Absolutely.

GOLDISH: After all that work.

ABAH: I've earned the right to wear it.

GOLDISH: I know.

ABAH: Yeah. So what would you say is the most important lesson you've learned at MIT-- like undergrad, I guess.

GOLDISH: You can do anything. You can do anything. If you don't know it, you can learn it.

ABAH: That's a good lesson.

GOLDISH: Yeah, yeah. And I have to tell you one-- You asked me about discrimination. The only discrimination I ever experienced as a woman at MIT is when I had my 25th reunion, we were standing in the duPont Gym there, waiting to march to the Great Court. And there were a bunch of these red-jacketed 50<sup>th</sup> reunion people at these reunions. (Soon I'm going to get one, too. I hope it's better looking than what they have now.) But anyway, so one of these guys came over and said, "Girls, it's time for you girls to leave now because we're going to start walking on." And we girls are going, "What?" He thought, of course, that we were spouses of MIT alums.

ABAH: Wow.

GOLDISH: So that's the only time that I've experienced that.

ABAH: So was he asking if you were the wife--

GOLDISH: Yeah, yeah.

ABAH: Wow, that is just dreadful.

GOLDISH: Well, when he was here, probably there were two women.

ABAH: Yeah, probably. OK, my very last question is, if there was advice you would give to your 20-year-old self or 25-year-old self, what would it be?

GOLDISH: You know, I don't think I would have done things very differently. I wanted to have a family, and I had to balance that pretty well. Some people can bring in somebody who lives in full-time. I couldn't do that because my family was very traditional in Curaçao. My mother didn't work. She was at home. She took care of me the whole time and drove me here, drove me there-- basketball, or piano lessons, whatever is needed. And I knew I couldn't do all of that here, because in Curaçao, you have much more help in the house that we have here. And so I cooked. I cleaned. I washed. I did everything.

ABAH: Makes sense.

GOLDISH: And that's not the background I came from. As a matter of fact, I didn't know how to make scrambled eggs when I got married. But I am a very good cook now. I am a terrible baker, but a good cook. So I don't know how I would have done it differently, considering my background, and felt comfortable. If I would have worked full-time and been more career-oriented, would I have gotten further in my career? I don't know. But would I have been happier? I don't think so. And I did what was right for me.

Some people don't have to do that. Some people can go for the career and be perfectly happy. And their kids are well adjusted and everything. But for me, it didn't work. So that's just what I did.

The advice I would give is that you have to know who you are, all of you – your background, what you come with, your social setting, and what you yourself aspire to – and find a balance for all those things at the same time. And it's not always easy, but it can be done.

ABAH: Nice. If you had brothers, do you think you would have been treated differently than your brothers?

GOLDISH: You know, I don't have brothers and sisters.



I did very well in school always. My father would give me a dime every time I got a perfect score. I remember that. And so there was a lot of positive reinforcement of my doing well, OK?

My mother was the eldest of three. And she had two brothers. And her father was certainly a male chauvinist, so when she started not doing well in school, they pulled her out. So she had only seven years of schooling, which was, to me-- How do we do this to a person? And so she lacked a lot of self-confidence. She was not a stupid woman, but she was not educated. But she spoke many languages, and she was a whiz at Scrabble-- So I feel like they really gyped her.

My father-- Neither one of them ever did that to me, but my father particularly wanted me to excel and do well. And he is the one who wanted me to go to college, and so on and so forth. And then working in Curaçao, when I had a good job and everything, I finally decided I wanted to go to the USA after all, mostly because my social life was, like, really unbelievably bad. All my friends went on to study.

ABAH: Oh, abroad, yeah.

GOLDISH: So my father was encouraging me to go. My mother was like, shocked. She never thought I would go again.

And they came to my undergraduate graduation ceremony. For graduation from Sloan, my mother came. My father couldn't come. My mother came to my Sloan graduation. And when we were driving over to the graduation, she says, "You know, I never thought you'd even finish nursery school."

ABAH: Wow.

GOLDISH: You cried the whole time we went. So to her, it was really amazing, what I was doing. She had no idea what I did. But she was very supportive, very proud. So I was encouraged a lot.

And my friends, I was very fortunate. But my childhood friends were children of their friends, which isn't always the case. But they were all smart. They were all very bright women. They all read a lot. And so it wasn't awkward to be smart.

My daughter, when she started high school, her first grade she came home with was a C. I hadn't seen a C.

ABAH: I don't know what those look like.

GOLDISH: I go, "I beg your pardon. We don't get Cs around here. If there's something you don't understand. You ask, and we'll help you out." And that was the only one she ever got.

ABAH: Good.

GOLDISH: But she was embarrassed that she was smart. And she was trying to hang out with the cool kids.

ABAH: Oh, unfortunate.

OK, so I'm trying to recreate your geography. So you were born in Curaçao, and then you went to study briefly in Venezuela, and then back Curaçao, then in Boston.

GOLDISH: Yeah.

ABAH: And then you haven't moved back?

GOLDISH: No, no, no. I go back every year on vacation. It's very nice in the winter.

ABAH: Do you guys take family vacations there?

GOLDISH: Well, when the kids were younger, they'd come with me. And when I had my 70th birthday, I had a big party down there. And 30-some people from here went down. My kids went. And then yeah, it was a lot of fun.

ABAH: OK. That's it from me then.

GOLDISH: Well, OK, thank you very much.

ABAH: Thank you so much for your time. Thank you.

GOLDISH: Well, I wish you lots of good luck with figuring out how to do the visa. You want to stay, right?

ABAH: Yeah. I'm currently in the process of applying for graduate school because I want to get my Ph.D. Yeah, it shouldn't be too-- The visa problem is mostly for getting employment.

GOLDISH: But after you get the Ph.D., then do you plan to go back?



ABAH: I want to go back, but then I want to work for myself when I go back.

GOLDISH: I don't much about Cameroon. Will you tell me a little bit?

ABAH: Sure.

GOLDISH: Was it a French possession?

ABAH: It was a German possession. And then after World War II, they split it into French and English. So the English have a tiny corner of it, though most of it is French. So I grew up in the French-speaking part. But then I got a scholarship to study at the United World Colleges in England. So I started-  
- Well, I had learned English in school, but I started speaking English when I went to England. And then I came to MIT for undergraduate.

GOLDISH: Oh, wow. My schooling was in Dutch. Your schooling was in French, or not?

ABAH: French.

GOLDISH: Yeah, my schooling was in Dutch. And I think that's why I cried so much in kindergarten, because I couldn't understand any Dutch.

ABAH: Oh, dear.

GOLDISH: So but you learn it fast that way. It was interesting.

I'm learning Hebrew now, and my teacher has gone blind. So we only talk a little bit. But she's 102!

ABAH: Thank you for all your time.

GOLDISH: Well, thank you for having me.