

Interviews of the Margaret MacVicar Memorial AMITA Oral History Project, MC 356

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Institute Archives and Special Collections

Marina Paige Bartley – class of 1972

Interviewed by Kathleen Schwind, class of 2019

July 13, 2018

Margaret MacVicar Memorial AMITA Oral History Project

Marina Paige Bartley (SB Humanities & Science 1972) was interviewed on July 13, 2018 by Kathleen Schwind (SB Urban Studies and Planning 2019) at her home in Waltham, Massachusetts.

One of the few female undergraduates at MIT in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Paige Bartley has given back to MIT in a number of ways, including as a freshman counselor. As executive director of the Waltham Partnership for Youth, Inc., she used her passion for education to provide young people in her community with opportunities they had not had before. In addition to raising a family and giving back, Paige Bartley also had a legal career.

SCHWIND: First I'd like to ask: Do you go by Marina Paige Bartley, or Marina Bartley?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I go by Marina Paige Bartley because I grew up Marina Paige.

SCHWIND: Got it.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Even today, when I hear Mrs. Bartley, I still look for my mother-in-law! [LAUGHS] But back in 1972, it was just an easier thing to do to take on my husband's name. He's also an alum (George S. Bartley, SB Electrical Engineering 1971, SB Physics 1971; member of the class of 1970). I graduated from MIT as Marina Paige, although I got married shortly before I graduated. I've been Marina Paige Bartley ever since.

SCHWIND: Perfect. Let's start with your early years. Can you tell me about your childhood—where you were born, where you grew up, about your family?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, surprisingly, I was raised in Waltham. I was the oldest of three girls. My father was an immigrant from Russia. He came over when he was five years old. My mother was Polish, but born in Waltham, and grew up in Waltham. They both had an incredible high value for education.

What I heard from the very beginning was that I could be whatever I wanted to be if I got a good education, because education would open doors. I loved reading, so I guess that made it easy. I was never told that girls couldn't do anything. We could just do whatever we wanted to do. We could be whatever we wanted to be, just get a good education. I think it had to do with their cultural backgrounds and the era that they grew up in. They

worked very hard. My mother's family couldn't afford to send her to college. My father tried going to college, but because of the Depression stepped out to help support his family.

Anyway, I graduated from Waltham High School in 1968 as valedictorian of the class.

SCHWIND: Congratulations!

PAIGE BARTLEY: Thank you. That was kind of fun. I never thought I could get into MIT. I loved math. I loved biology. For a while I thought I would be a biology major. I didn't think I'd be a doctor, because I get a little woozy with a lot of blood.

SCHWIND: Same here.

PAIGE BARTLEY: I thought biology might be it. I loved math and I loved the sciences. And I never thought that I could get into MIT. However, I had a friend in high school who very much wanted to go to MIT. She had an interview scheduled, and she asked me to go along with her just to keep her company. And I did. The director of admissions at that time, Roland Greeley, saw me waiting in the office and said, "Hey, let's talk."

SCHWIND: Wow.

PAIGE BARTLEY: We talked. He encouraged me to apply. I did, and I got in. I could not have been happier. I was awarded a National Scholarship, which meant that MIT covered my full need, which happened to be tuition and room and board.

SCHWIND: Congratulations, that is quite an accomplishment.

PAIGE BARTLEY: My family could not afford to send me anywhere otherwise. I applied to other schools but received a little less financial aid. Doing a bottom line, MIT made the most sense for me. Plus, it was a dream that I thought had been impossible, so I very happily packed up and went off to live in McCormick Hall at MIT.

SCHWIND: That's incredible.

You said that you were interested in math and biology. Why do you think that was? Did you naturally come to love those subjects or was there an experience as a young student that influenced that love?

PAIGE BARTLEY: At the time, I really didn't think about it a lot. I just came to love those subjects. Logic, order, progression—it all makes sense to me. And now, looking at my children and my grandchildren, and other young ones through other connections that I've made, I think there's a certain preference—I don't know whether you want to call it left brain/right brain or whatever, but that's what my love was, and that's what made sense to me.

SCHWIND: Do you recall any achievements in grade school or high school that were particularly important to you?

PAIGE BARTLEY: It was all important to me. I loved school. I loved reading. I loved math. Waltham had a program, I think they still do, where if you qualified you could attend programs at Brandeis while you were still a student at Waltham. When I was at Waltham High, I took Physics for Physics Majors at Brandeis, never having taken a physics class before. The fellow who sat in front of me in the Brandeis class not only had had some experience in physics, but he also took notes in Hebrew, which meant his writing went in a different direction. I was a little bit astounded by all of that. But I passed the class, so I was very proud of that.

SCHWIND: What an experience!

PAIGE BARTLEY: I loved my teachers. I think I especially connected with some science teachers and math teachers at the high school. Dr. Rosa Kubin, who taught chemistry, was an inspiration. I had good role models.

SCHWIND: I think a really important part of life is having people like that to look up to.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Absolutely. While I was in high school, music was part of my life as well. I played the piano, participated with accompanying choruses and things like that. It was fun as well as work. And I sometimes had part-time jobs, too. But it was just what we did.

SCHWIND: So how did you balance all those different aspects of high school? I'm sure at MIT, too, you were doing a lot of different activities.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, balancing activities just fits into MIT where although “drinking from the fire hose” wasn't the popular phrase back in the late '60s, early '70s. But it was a frightening first year at MIT. It might still be a frightening first year at MIT. Because everyone at MIT comes from the top of their high school classes. And when you realize that, and that everybody's working hard, and everyone is competitive-- If you're not competitive, you don't last too long at

MIT. It gets a little bit frightening. I think the pass/fail program for freshman year was brilliant—a life saver for many students. And I'm so glad that has continued.

I did not realize when I entered MIT the wealth of resources available and I think I still don't, because it's the universe. Whatever you're interested in, someone at MIT is passionate about it and can connect you with the resources to further explore it. And if you can't find that person, there is someone at MIT who will say, "Let's help you go explore it on your own so you can learn." The wealth of the MIT education is not just in the classroom, but it's being on campus with people that are passionate about whatever their interest is and willing to further it and do research and share their information. It's just a positive experience all the way around.

SCHWIND: Yes, definitely. So transitioning into your time at MIT--

PAIGE BARTLEY: OK.

SCHWIND: The pass/fail program, like you said, it's still going on today. And for me, it was fantastic because it allowed me to do a lot of things that I probably wouldn't have done freshman year.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Right.

SCHWIND: I know at other universities first years instead focus on trying to get all A's, and then will transition into extracurriculars as a second-year or upper-level student.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Exactly.

SCHWIND: What did the pass/fail program enable you to do that you wouldn't have done otherwise?

PAIGE BARTLEY: It enabled me to get involved with the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, which was theater and music all wrapped into one. It was a lot of fun. Also, you could meet people from other universities, from BU in particular, who just came across the river to participate. They have a large music program, and BU students came to MIT for Gilbert and Sullivan.

I also joined Tech Squares. I had never square danced in my life before. But I lived in McCormick Hall, right across from the Student Center. Tech Squares met in the Student Center in the evening. This was a way to get a little bit of

exercise, have a little fun, do a form of dance that I'd never explored before in a different genre of music than I had been exposed to before.

SCHWIND: That's fantastic.

PAIGE BARTLEY: I did house government for McCormick Hall and I was also an associate advisor for freshman students coming in.

SCHWIND: What was that experience like, being able to mentor younger students? Because it sounds like you had fantastic mentors in your life. How was it actually being a mentor for others?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I don't think when you're doing that when you're 18, 19, 20, 21 it sinks in at all. You just do this because you want to help somebody else at MIT. But in retrospect, it's a wonderful program to have, because it gives someone that older partner—not a lot older, but just somebody who's gone through who survived freshman year, who survived freshman year while doing some other activities, who didn't have to live under a desk in the Student Center library!

SCHWIND: Exactly. Who saw the light at the end of the tunnel.

PAIGE BARTLEY: That's right. And show that this could be done, so it was very valuable to me. And I think it also showed me things that I wasn't aware of until later, that every student needs someone and something that they love to succeed in. This was just another connection for trying to open some doors along the way.

SCHWIND: Definitely. Tell me more about your time in McCormick Hall, because it sounds like you were really involved, being part of the house government there. Also, what was it like being a woman at MIT, more generally?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, being a woman at MIT then was probably a little different than being a woman at MIT now, because of the numbers. Our class was the first to live in the east tower of McCormick Hall, so our class literally doubled the number of women undergraduate students who were there. I believe there were 60 women students in my class. Not all were in residence—maybe 40 were in residence and a few more commuted. But we were outnumbered. It was about 20:1, counting graduate students.

SCHWIND: That's crazy. Because nowadays it's almost 50/50.

PAIGE BARTLEY: It's crazy. And at the time, it was not uncommon to be the only woman in a class or in a seminar. It certainly encouraged strength on the part of young women, because we were expected to speak up. And we did. We held our own. What was interesting was when I went to law school afterwards, the class of about 200 was 25% women. And they thought—they being the other women—thought that they were horribly outnumbered. And, of course, I turned around and looked at the crowd of women in my class, and compared to MIT we were not outnumbered. But yes, I appreciate the difference now.

SCHWIND: In law school it must have been like, "Wow, this is fantastic."

PAIGE BARTLEY: "It's fantastic. Look at all these women in law school with me." Yes. But it was a different time, and we were held to a pretty high standard.

SCHWIND: What did you major in at MIT? I know you were a humanities major. Did you come in as humanities? And if not, how did you make the switch?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I came in thinking I would major in biology. Took an introductory biology class with Salvador Luria [Nobel Laureate in Physiology and Medicine, MIT Chair of Microbiology]. He'd just won the Nobel Prize. That was awesome.

SCHWIND: That is amazing. It's another great thing about MIT: you just show up to something and it's like, "Oh, this Nobel Laureate is here."

PAIGE BARTLEY: This is the best of the best.

I loved my math classes. When we had to declare a major, I chose math, and stayed in math through graduation. But I was not comfortable: I could not foresee a longtime career in computers for myself, in computer science. And computers were the big wall unit computers. Palm Pilots and tiny little microchips did not exist at the time, people still used cards. I did not want to continue only doing that. And the world of theoretical math was extremely theoretical, so it really wasn't a good fit for me either.

I loved music from way back. I participated with music programs at MIT, and I took music classes at MIT. Klaus Liepmann [Professor Klaus Liepmann, MIT's first full-time music professor and founder of MIT's music program] was head of the music department. John Buttrick [pianist, member of MIT music faculty] encouraged some performance. I had played piano since I was a small child. So through the humanities department—it was Course 21B at the time—I could pick up a major and a minor so to speak. I graduated in music and math. And that's where I was happy.

A firm belief has always been that if one does what one loves, one will be much happier getting up in the morning and pursuing that, so I graduated with a degree in math and music. And then went to law school, because that just seemed like the next logical step for me at the time.

SCHWIND: Where did you go to law school, and where did you practice?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I went to Villanova Law School and practiced civil law in Pennsylvania for a number of years before coming back to Boston. Then I worked in Boston and the Boston area practicing corporate and real estate law.

SCHWIND: I think it's fantastic. I'm actually thinking of a similar path, following a similar trajectory. I came in as aeronautical engineering, Course 16. I still love the aerospace field. But I took a negotiation class my freshman spring, and just fell in love with that. Like you said, I always believe that doing what one loves is the most important thing, so I switched my major to Urban Cities and Planning—that's where the negotiation and environmental policy field is housed.

I'm still able to do things with aerospace in very creative ways. For example, we were running a community engagement project in El Salvador, where we used a UAV to fly over the village and create a 3D model to run climate simulations. Being able to combine the two fields is something at MIT that I think is so unique—even if you do switch majors, still being able to do what you love and do it well.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Absolutely. And if anything, consistent through the MIT education what is taught both consciously and subconsciously, I think, is problem solving. And that's what you're talking about: negotiations, solving problems through the international exploration. And that's what law school was about for me. And that's continued.

When you graduate from MIT, I think you believe that you can solve any problem. Sometimes we haven't gotten the answers within the timeframe that we want, but we're not afraid of tackling problems. And we know how to build a team, however it's required-- multiple perspectives. And we learned that at MIT, as well. That there's not just one view for anything. That people come at different problems, challenges, from different backgrounds. And so you build a collaborative team that brings different perspectives in to tackle and solve problems. That's what I've been doing; that's what an MIT education taught me - how to solve problems.

SCHWIND: Excellent. And not be afraid to tackle them. Because like you said, we might not always get the answer, but at least we're out there searching and thinking there has to be a solution somewhere.

PAIGE BARTLEY: That's right.

SCHWIND: Let's try to figure it out.

PAIGE BARTLEY: You just don't give up. Sometimes you take a big breath before you start, because things are occasionally daunting. But you know that you have the tool set, and you have the resources to find the right tools, the right people, the right theories that will fit together. You just have to play at it a little bit longer.

SCHWIND: Exactly. Speaking of not giving up, the general Institute requirements for MIT are quite robust, and the first year is usually filled with a lot of science and math classes. What was the first year of MIT like for you, and how were those core requirements?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, it was a long time ago, but it was very similar. Those core requirements have not changed that much in terms of the math and the science and the humanities. We took the math courses, the science courses, the humanities. You had to take a lab course.

I was honored to be able to work under a graduate student in Jerry Lettvin's [cognitive scientist Jerome Lettvin, MIT Professor of Electrical and Bioengineering and Communications Physiology] lab, at the time in the old Building 20, which is now the Stata Center.

But the professors, who really cared about teaching, always talked to undergraduates, and were the ones who opened doors for us. So we walked through those doors and explored. And I think it's a good fundamental year. Clearly, the Institute still thinks it's a good fundamental background because the core requirements are there.

SCHWIND: You mentioned Building 20 was there. That's something that as a student at MIT now, you hear about. What was the culture like back then, and how have you seen it change over time?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Oh, that's a tough question. It's an interesting question. The consistency of the culture then to the culture now, I think-- I haven't prepared for any of

this, this is off the top of my head-- MIT, I still think, is a very large community of very strong individuals. And once one survives the freshman year--

SCHWIND: Yes.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Then, as we mentioned, pass/fail does a lot toward allaying those fears. Once one has survived that, people continue as very strong individuals. They did then, and they do now. But they also connect, whether it's a web or through living arrangements, some kind of network exists so that they learn that they can, on occasion, rely upon other very strong individuals and learn from them. I think that culture continues.

The culture in 1968 to 1972 was different than now, I think, because it was the peak of activism against the Vietnam War and students were very politically motivated, for the most part. I did not participate in any large demonstrations because I came from this background—I guess I think this is the reason—[that] I was there to get an education. And if I couldn't get the education there, I didn't have the resources to find another education source. Also, I loved what MIT was offering me, so I did not want to be confrontational with the Institute.

At the same token, I was opposed to the war in Vietnam, but I took quieter ways of expressing that. My first-year advisor at MIT was Jerry Wiesner [Jerome Wiesner, President Emeritus of MIT, MIT Dean of Science, MIT Provost, former science adviser to President Kennedy], who was provost when I came in and then became president of the Institute. Dr. Wiesner was an incredible mentor, an incredible educator. He started as President Kennedy's science advisor; he ended up president of MIT. He was opposed to the war, but he wasn't breaking down doors. He was coming into meetings saying, "How can we build teams to solve these problems?" Very typical MIT leadership style. He led us that way, so it was that kind of culture.

I don't see the student activism today that occurred back then. There are different kinds of problems, but I still don't see the degree of student activism.

I was a freshman counselor, an MIT counselor, for the admissions office for a good number of years. That was a lot of fun. But I believed, after a while, that I needed to step back because of age. I think that the high school juniors and seniors that counselors are interviewing need to connect with someone who's a little closer to the MIT experience. And although I have incredible

value for the MIT benefits and experience, I thought it was more important for an MIT counselor doing admissions interviews to be a little bit more connected with the current culture on campus.

SCHWIND: Talking about being connected, what was your relationship with the faculty and the professors at MIT while you were there? And overall, how did they tie into your MIT experience?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, it was astounding. As we mentioned before, there were Nobel laureates. In economics, Samuelson [Paul Samuelson, American economist, MIT Institute Professor Emeritus, and first American to win the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences] won the economics prize, and he was teaching an introductory economics class. Professor Luria taught an introductory biology class. Dan Kemp [American chemist, MIT Professor Emeritus] taught organic chemistry, and I think he got a Nobel someplace along the way. I'm not entirely sure.

There were large introductory classes, and then there were grad students doing sections, small sections, so most of the time the direct connection was with the graduate students, because they were meeting with you in small groups on a weekly basis. I never met a professor who didn't make time for a student. The full professors might have been very engaged in their research or in their publishing, but no one ever said, "You can't come in this office." No one ever kept the door closed. If you were brave enough to knock on that door and step across the threshold, they would answer your questions. So it was positive.

SCHWIND: Going back to our conversation about being both a humanities major and a math major, MIT's political science program is now one of the top departments in the world. The same with urban studies. And a lot of MIT's other humanities departments, little do people know, are ranked incredibly well. Back then, was it common for people to double major, or to take minors in humanities? Or was it purely engineering?

PAIGE BARTLEY: It was not common. The largest school was Course 6, the School of Electrical Engineering. Now it's Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, but it was still EE at that time. It was less common for people to double major. More people, I think, took the humanities courses because they were required. And I'm very glad they were required because it maintains some balance. But there were far fewer of us that majored in Course 21 or double majored along that way.

The joy of the Course 21 programs [was that] they were much smaller because they were not required, so the opportunity for dialogue and discussion was very different. It felt very comfortable being in Hayden [Library].

SCHWIND: Definitely. I felt the same thing in Course 11, aka Urban Studies, where the classes are a lot smaller. A lot of the time we can take graduate courses as well, which is fantastic, because the graduate students have so much expertise in the field and are from very different backgrounds. We'll have people from technical majors at MIT come and take a class and give a whole new perspective too, as classmates. But when people ask me what I major in, they ask, "Oh are you Computer Science or Engineering?" And I say, I'm Course 11. And I either get "Oh, that's really cool. What is Course 11?" Or I get "I didn't know we had a Course 11."

PAIGE BARTLEY: Really?

SCHWIND: Yes. And I always try to make people guess what Course 11 is. And hardly ever do they actually get it right and say, Urban Studies.

So back then when you told people that you were Course 21B, what were the reactions that you got? How did you feel about being a non-engineering major at an engineering school?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, I never thought of MIT as an engineering school. I thought of MIT as a math, science, engineering school, so I really wasn't asked that question about being an engineer. It was more "What are you majoring in?" I think it was more surprise that a woman was at MIT, if someone was not part of the Institute. You know, "You're at MIT?"

SCHWIND: Exactly. More "What are you doing there?"

PAIGE BARTLEY: I did hear, "I didn't know they had women there" from some people at the time. Yes. So that was enlightening for them. But I didn't feel any stigma about not being an engineer. Probably because of the other women on my floor, in my suite. We had an economics major, we had a biology major, we had a physics major. And we had an electrical engineering major, of course. But the strength was across the sciences. So there was a little surprise—"Oh, and they have humanities classes?" That's the other surprise. Yes, of course they have humanities.

Do you know, Noam Chomsky [MIT Institute Professor and Professor of Linguistics Emeritus]? That's Linguistics. Yes, people knew of Noam Chomsky. Well, that's part of the humanities program there. And the music program was growing at the time, so I didn't feel the stigma—it was just, “Oh, you're doing something a little different. But that's OK.”

SCHWIND: Exactly. Sometimes doing something different is the best thing you can do.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Of course. Yes. Yes, absolutely.

SCHWIND: Were there any especially memorable classes, exams, labs, projects, extracurriculars that you did at MIT that really stand out, that enhanced your experience?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Extracurriculars: I loved the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, and I loved the dancing, the Tech Squares. That was just fun. Those were fun extras.

Classes, I think I loved the lab, Jerry Lettvin's lab, which I mentioned earlier. I wouldn't have mentioned it earlier if it wasn't something that I truly, truly enjoyed. Because it was hands on, it was doing experiments, it was writing it up, it was watching the animals and the testing. And the whole scientific process of laboratory studies which I enjoyed tremendously. And the camaraderie among the graduate students in that lab. They were all working on their own programs, but they were also very supportive of each other.

And I loved the music classes. The math and the science classes, I enjoyed. I can't say I didn't enjoy them. I enjoyed them. But I loved the music classes. I think there's just been something in me that vibrates with music, and it was the right balance for me.

Oh, and I have to go back and say that I passed organic chemistry! I was very proud that I passed organic chemistry. And it wasn't too terrible, because I've heard horror stories from other people and pre-med people, even at other schools, saying, “If you can't survive organic chemistry...” Dan Kemp was the professor of the class, and it was a large class.

SCHWIND: Congratulations!

PAIGE BARTLEY: And I lived. It wasn't that terrible!

SCHWIND: What do you think your male classmates thought of having only a few female classmates at the Institute? Did you ever get any pushback? Also, if you had

to guess, how did going to MIT and being one of the few females shape your university experience, versus going to a university with more women?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, since I didn't go to a university with more women, I don't know how that would have ended up, but I can relate one story, which was very uncomfortable for me when I was at school. I was taking a math class. It was not a beginning math class. I don't want to say which class it was, but it was a higher-level math class. There was a take home exam. My close friend, even today—I met her first day of living in the dorm, and we're still close friends—was a math major. She stayed in math, she got her PhD in math, and she became a math professor. We lived across the hall from each other. We studied with each other. We were in the same classes together, a number of them. There was a take home exam, and we were not supposed to collaborate with anyone else about it. We didn't. However, we had studied for this class together right along. We both apparently made the same kind of error on the take home exam. The professor accused us of cheating.

Now, he may have done the same thing if it had happened to two guys, but I felt that we were being singled out. I remember feeling exceedingly frustrated, and I spoke with him individually. I think she spoke with him individually as well. We must have both given the same explanation—we had studied for this class right along together. I would not be surprised that we made the same mistake, because our approach was the same because we had been working together up until that time.

SCHWIND: Exactly.

PAIGE BARTLEY: And he finally must have believed us. We were not penalized for it. He had threatened that. That was intimidating. That was frightening. I had never been accused of cheating before. Integrity and honesty was something that I had been brought up on as incredibly important. And the fact that someone would accuse me of doing something wrong, dishonest like that, just floored me. It was like walking into a wall.

But we survived it. We passed through it. In my head, even today, I think he was uncomfortable with the fact that two women made a mistake. And I think that colored his initial response to us. But I could be completely wrong.

SCHWIND: It sounds like your experience at MIT taught you to stand up for yourself and be resilient. If you thought something wasn't right, you were able to say: "Here are the facts."

PAIGE BARTLEY: This is what I did. I can only tell you the truth. And a basic tenet for me has been that it's just easier to tell the truth because then you don't get tripped up. Always tell the truth. Sometimes it's unpleasant, but just always tell the truth. You're consistent that way.

SCHWIND: Honesty is the best policy, they always say. Nonetheless, it sounds like, overall, you had a wonderful experience at MIT.

PAIGE BARTLEY: I think I did. You know, there were a lot of late nights. There were nights when I thought, "How will I ever get through this problem set? How will I ever get the paper in in time? Oh no, more homework." You know, that's typical. At the time, you sweat through those things. But you think back after a little bit of distance and you think, "Hey, you know? That was worth every bit of it." But when you're in the middle of it, you don't always think that.

SCHWIND: I agree. So like you mentioned, after MIT you went to law school.

PAIGE BARTLEY: I did.

SCHWIND: Was that a common path to take? And how did the skills you learned at MIT help you in law school and beyond that?

PAIGE BARTLEY: It was a more common path to take around my era than it had been previously. But especially for men, because staying in school was a way of avoiding the draft. I understand that law school and medical school applications were spiking during that era until the draft system did away with graduate deferments.

I don't think a lot of MIT women went to law school. A few of us did. It made sense. People were surprised, because people said, "Oh, English majors or history majors go to law school." And in my opinion, they do, but I don't think that's the best preparation. I think an MIT preparation was excellent for law school because law school was about taking a case study, which is a problem, and analyzing the problem, parsing it, analyzing the solution. And that's what MIT prepares you to do: solve problems.

I did not have the History or the Government background that many of my classmates had, but I could analyze a problem and outline a strategy more effectively, more efficiently, I think, than they could. So I think it was excellent preparation.

SCHWIND: And you weren't afraid of tackling problems, either.

PAIGE BARTLEY: And I wasn't afraid of tackling problems. And again, there were more women. Percentage wise, there were more women in my law school class than there were in my MIT class, and I thought that was just terrific. There was actually a Women Law Students Association, and I got very active in that. It was a good thing to happen.

SCHWIND: What did you do after Villanova Law School?

PAIGE BARTLEY: After law school, I worked in Pennsylvania in the greater Philadelphia area, practicing a general civil practice, predominantly corporate work and real estate work. By then I had gotten married to a man who graduated from Course 6 and Course 8—Electrical Engineering and Physics—at MIT.

We came back up to this area for two reasons. The industry for him was better up here than in the Pennsylvania area, and my family was from around here. Surprisingly, we found a house in Waltham, which was the town that I grew up in. Mortgage rates were incredibly high, but the builder had a buy down so we could afford it. We bought, and we moved in. I went to work for a Boston law firm, and George went to work for a firm in the Western suburbs doing electrical engineering.

SCHWIND: Can you tell me more about your children and your husband? What it was like to raise a family and also be working at the same time?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I'm probably not a good role model for young women today graduating from MIT. As I said, honesty is my philosophy. And I could not stay at home full-time, nor could I have worked full-time when the children were very small. I came back up here, practiced with a Boston law firm, and packed my child off to daycare. My husband and I took turns. One of us would go in very early in the morning to work and then leave early enough to pick up from daycare. The other would drop off at daycare and then work late in the evening. But I felt guilty. When I was with the children, I felt guilty that I wasn't working, and when I was working, I felt guilty that I wasn't with the children. So after practicing law full time with Posternak, Blankstein & Lund in Boston, I stepped back so that I could work part-time. That was the solution for me, and that absolved my guilt. I felt wonderful. I practiced law a bit on my own and I did some business law teaching at Massachusetts Bay Community College while I raised the children.

I had two children, which I can tell you more about later. I'll just stay on the career path for a while. I had been teaching business law for a while when I

became aware of a store in Cambridge, the Bryn Mawr Book Sale. Bryn Mawr Book Sale is a nonprofit organization. At the time, there were nine Bryn Mawr Book Sales across the country loosely affiliated through the Alumni Association of Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. And the Bryn Mawr Book Sales, each through the sale of donated used and rare books and volunteer staff, sold those books to raise scholarship funds for women to go to Bryn Mawr College.

So it appears that education has been my passion. The Bryn Mawr Book Sale was looking for some help. So I thought, "I wonder if I could use my corporate skills to organize and get them on the right path?" Amazon was just coming into its own, independent bookstores were not doing very well. I was the only paid employee of the Bryn Mawr Book Sale in Cambridge. We developed systems. We turned profits. We began selling books online. I knew very little about used and rare books, but I learned a lot when I got to the Bryn Mawr Book Sale. I relied on very talented people who were skilled in that area to teach me while I set them up with a good corporate system. The Bryn Mawr Book Sale in Cambridge is still operating today.

SCHWIND: That's great.

PAIGE BARTLEY: At the same time, still living in Waltham, I was elected to the Waltham School Committee. I believe civic engagement is important, and as I said, I'm not afraid of tackling problems. I was elected to two four-year terms, which was very exciting and an honor at the same time.

Close to the end of my second term, I became aware that the Waltham Partnership for Youth, Inc. was looking for an executive director. I was committed to leaving the School Committee, because while at the time I did not believe in term limits, I believed that two terms, or eight years, was an adequate amount that most people should spend in their elected role and they should then step out of that political role.

I applied for and got the job of executive director of the Waltham Partnership for Youth. The Waltham Partnership for Youth is a third-party intermediary agency which identifies the needs of youth in Waltham and then builds collaborative programs to address those needs, providing young people with the opportunity to succeed.

We worked with Brandeis and Bentley to do needs assessments. Then with a good blend of municipal departments, nonprofit organizations, and the corporate sector, we built programs, such as after school programs. We

brought mentors and scientists into the classroom to speak to students. We built Healthy Waltham, now operating as an independent non-profit. And we built the Waltham Family School, a family literacy program for low-income families with preschool-age children. All participants are very low-income and with minimal education. The parent attends classes at the same time as their children. The children are prepared to learn to read when they enter kindergarten. The parent can become a partner in their child's education and achieve a better place in the economy by being better prepared for the workforce.

Surprising to me at the time, a good percentage of the mothers—and it was mostly mothers who enrolled and still enroll in the program—had minimal education in their home countries; many had never set foot inside a classroom anywhere.

So that was my career path.

SCHWIND: That's amazing!

PAIGE BARTLEY: It's been fun.

We have two children. Michael went to Harvard and majored in computer science. After working in the computer science world for a number of years, he went to law school and now practices intellectual property law with a boutique firm in the greater Boston area.

Elizabeth went to Wellesley College where she majored in biology, and then to Brown University, where she got a PhD in pathobiology. Elizabeth then went to law school, and now also practices intellectual property law, but as a litigator.

SCHWIND: Which is quite a career--

PAIGE BARTLEY: That's right. I could not be more proud of them. I like to think that my MIT background, as well as my husband's education at MIT and our bent for science, combined with my law school background, helped shape both of them in very positive ways.

SCHWIND: It sounds like it. You should be incredibly proud. Raising a family like that while giving back so much to the community.

PAIGE BARTLEY: I'm happy. I did retire eight years ago. I am still on the board of the Waltham Family School, and I am currently president of the Friends of the Waltham Public Library. So that continues my civic engagement, as well as my love for education and reading.

SCHWIND: That's amazing. When you were an undergraduate at MIT, did you ever imagine that you'd be doing anything like what you're doing today, or imagine how much you would be able to do for your community?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I had no idea. I was clueless. [LAUGHTER] I'm very proud of my work with the Partnership for Youth because there are thousands of children that organization helped move toward achieving their dreams. Career-wise, that's my proudest achievement. MIT that prepared me for that.

SCHWIND: It's an amazing place. I work within education myself, and one of my sayings is that education is 80% motivation. And it sounds like that is exactly what you're doing: motivating not only the students, but their parents as well, to be able to reach those goals that they never thought possible.

PAIGE BARTLEY: You need to show young people the path that's possible and the resources that exist. You can't force anybody. You let them know what might be possible and what tools and resources are possible to pick up along the way. Being supportive is the best you can do.

SCHWIND: We need more dedicated people like you in the world!

PAIGE BARTLEY: Thanks so much! You're making me feel so good.

SCHWIND: Well, we touched on this a bit earlier, and it's kind of a big subject. But given your life experience, what are your observations about institutions like MIT and how they've changed or not changed to accommodate women?

PAIGE BARTLEY: It's absolutely wonderful that women are there in greater numbers. I don't like to use the term "accommodate" women, but I don't have the right language yet. I don't think we as a culture have the right language yet. Because when you think "accommodate" it implies that they need extra help—and women don't need extra help. Women are strong on their own, just as men are strong on their own. But through the culture, they've been raised with different expectations.

Maybe a story that connects with it-- When I was at the Partnership for Youth, one of the initiatives we had was an IBM mentorship program for

middle school girls. Middle school is when more girls turn away from paths in sciences and math.

The IBM program matched women scientists working for IBM with middle school girls. It was a very structured program with science and math, STEM programming. At the end of the session we met with the girls and asked if they would like this kind of program to continue as an afterschool program at the middle school. And overwhelmingly they said, “Yes, absolutely.” And we said, “Should we open it up to boys?”—because afterschool programs were co-ed. And the girls overwhelmingly said, “Absolutely not.” They did not want any boys in their program, because, they said, boys would try to tell them what to do.

The beauty for these girls, in addition to everything that was laid out in the program and having these female mentors, was that no boys were telling them what to do. I think one of the beauties of having more women in college is that they're achieving—we are achieving—on our own. We are stronger on our own. We don't have to listen to so many boys telling us what to do.

In my case, perhaps I was very naive, but I did not believe that a lot of boys, or men, at MIT were telling me what to do. I think that was a credit to the school in admitting strong women. And I still believe that MIT admits strong women. But across the country, I think that there are more women going to college now who don't have that core strength, because of whatever social factors lie behind them. And by admitting larger numbers of women, we are teaching our daughters to be stronger. They're being supported more so that they can succeed.

SCHWIND: Definitely.

So, if you were to give advice to the young women graduates of MIT today or to women who are freshmen at MIT, what would you say, based on your experiences, your career path, and your time at MIT?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Persist. Never give up. Follow your love. Follow your passion. Do what makes you happy. And be flexible. For some time, when I was working and starting a family, as I said, I felt guilty in one spot and I felt guilty in another spot, until I found the balance that worked for me. But as long as you keep doing the things that you love, over time somehow you figure it out and it falls into place.

I'd like to think that I had some success along the way. I was fortunate, though. I came from a very simple background. The Institute opened its doors to me and supported me. MIT gave me the opportunity and the means to attend the Institute. I continue to make a small financial contribution annually. And I've donated my time to the Institute by interviewing applicants and by encouraging women to succeed. I think encouraging people to succeed through innovation, invention and problem solving is an integral part of the MIT mission.

MIT gave me the confidence, the strength and the resources in so many different ways to continue and persist. I know that you can do it, and so that's what I tell them. You can do it. If MIT opens the doors to you, you can do whatever you want.

SCHWIND: That is the beauty of MIT. They seem to open the doors and give you the opportunity. It's so unique in that way.

You mentioned that you have given back to MIT--

PAIGE BARTLEY: In a small way.

SCHWIND: Well, any way is fantastic. Both with your time and financially. As for the Women's Independent Living Group (WILG), what has been your involvement with that?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I had lived in McCormick Hall. It was delightful to live in McCormick Hall. It was pure luxury. I knew Dotty Bowe and others working in the administration at MIT. When the Women's Independent Living Group needed residential space, some of those women invited me to participate by drawing up the documents so that the group could rent space from the Institute. We worked out the lease and the living arrangements with MIT. I was honored to be a part of that. It was great fun. I've been on the mailing list of WILG ever since then. I never lived in WILG, but I'm glad that those who wanted to live in WILG could, because a variety of living styles is important.

SCHWIND: And it's neat that it's a women's--

PAIGE BARTLEY: That's right.

SCHWIND: And then you're also a donor, part of the giving circle at MIT.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Yes.

SCHWIND: So how did you decide to start giving back, and what has that experience been like?

PAIGE BARTLEY: We could not start giving back until after I graduated from law school. And MIT was so generous to me, there was never any hesitancy that we should give something back in addition to my time. It's very small, but it's consistent. It's great fun when we go to reunion weekends, or whatever, to be able to participate with the 1861 Circle. It's just terrific that so many alumnae are committed to making consistent contributions.

SCHWIND: And the alumni events are always so much fun.

PAIGE BARTLEY: They are wonderful. People have a good time. People come to learn, and people come back to share. And they carry on the lessons and the traditions of MIT.

SCHWIND: Like I mentioned earlier, I'm part of the Student Alumni Association—I'm actually the president of that organization.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Yes! Yay!

SCHWIND: It's very exciting. We get to meet and interact a lot with the alumni at these various events, and they're all fantastic.

I noticed earlier that you were wearing your brass rat, and we were comparing them a moment ago. It's so much fun that MIT has traditions like this that grow over time. You can talk about brass rats or anything. I think something that really caught me off guard when I first starting going to these alumni events is that someone much older than I, who I would think I have very little in common with, would all of a sudden start talking about 8.01 [Physics 1: Classical Mechanics, General Institute Requirement] and 8.02 [Physics 2: Electricity and Magnetism, General Institute Requirement]. "Oh, and is this professor still there? And, oh, what's the hacking scene like nowadays?" And just being able to laugh together through those conversations.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Yes. It's a part of our vocabulary.

SCHWIND: Exactly. And never would I have thought that I'd be able to have a conversation almost completely in numbers with someone who's so much

older and more experienced than I am. But it's something-- Just instantly when you meet an MIT alumna or a graduate, there is that connection.

PAIGE BARTLEY: That's right.

And I love the story of Katharine Dexter McCormick, too, by itself. That Katharine chose to support the women by building a dormitory and the endowment.

SCHWIND: Indeed.

To wrap up, and looking back at MIT, if you were to have to do the experience again, is there anything that you would change?

PAIGE BARTLEY: Yes. There is definitely something that I would change. I would work less, and I would explore more of the resources and opportunities that are on campus. I came from a sheltered environment, not having parents who were aware of the opportunities on university campuses because they had never gone to college. At the time, I thought I was taking wonderful advantage, and I did. But now knowing more, I would explore more opportunities, more extracurriculars, more courses.

I wish that I had taken an architecture course. I would love to explore the Architecture Department more. That's something I've thought about. The paths that were open that I didn't take advantage of, I just think I would dabble a little bit more before I settled on more traditional paths.

SCHWIND: Got it.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Urban planning. I have a friend in our class who was an urban planning major and very successful at it. It didn't occur to me at the time, but in retrospect, I should have gone over and explored a little bit more about that department. And I should have explored the Architecture Department.

SCHWIND: Well, you've done so many things anyway.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Well, if I were there, and if I could fit in the time, that's what I would recommend. I would do a good cross-section of departments and courses.

SCHWIND: There's so much to do and there's no shortage of opportunities.

PAIGE BARTLEY: That's right.

SCHWIND: How has your perspective of the Institute and its impact on your life changed over time?

PAIGE BARTLEY: I thought when I was in high school that MIT was so much in the stratosphere that I could never get in. It was the interest of the admissions director in me when I went along with a friend, just to enjoy the day, that opened the door. First a crack, and then that door opened wide for me. So I think that generosity, that human interest, from the first time I was in an office at MIT, changed the world for me. The admissions director gave me some encouragement that I followed, and then MIT followed with more encouragement. MIT opened doors to possibilities for me to do what I did. I don't have the right words to describe the impact that MIT had for me, providing the foundation for a lifetime.

SCHWIND: Well, thank you so much, Marina. This has been fantastic.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Thank you, Kathleen.

SCHWIND: I loved hearing about your experience, what you've been able to do with that over time, and how MIT has had such a positive impact on your life.

PAIGE BARTLEY: Thank you for taking the time and doing this. It's wonderful.

SCHWIND: It's my pleasure.