

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Lisa Lindahl

Transcript of an interview
conducted by

Alison Oswald

at

National Museum of American History
Smithsonian Institution

on

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with subsequent additions and corrections

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:00](#)):

7334.

Speaker 2 ([00:00:00](#)):

Okay.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:04](#)):

Do you live in Bernardsville?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:06](#)):

Just in the summers.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:07](#)):

Where?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:08](#)):

Colchester on Lake Champlain.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:10](#)):

Oh nice.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:10](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:10](#)):

Cool.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:12](#)):

Everybody should come visit. [inaudible 00:00:14] come visit.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:15](#)):

We've done a lot of [inaudible 00:00:18] of bikes at Hero Islands.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:19](#)):

Oh yeah, right there. Yeah, we're right there on the bike path.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:22](#)):

Oh nice.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:22](#)):

Polly lives next door.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:24](#)):

Oh wow. My wife's from Barnard [crosstalk 00:00:27].

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:27](#)):

Oh yeah. Oh, you should ... Oh, well you should come. Come.

Katie Cleary ([00:00:32](#)):

I saw it a little bit, it was nice in the summer that's for sure.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:38](#)):

Yeah, it's the only time that [crosstalk 00:00:38]. Not so much winter and mud ...

Alison Oswald ([00:00:38](#)):

I don't mind winter, but don't I want to shovel as much [crosstalk 00:00:41]

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:41](#)):

It's just long and when you're working, you get up in the morning it's dark and you get out of the office and it's dark.

Alison Oswald ([00:00:49](#)):

Yeah.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:00:51](#)):

It's not fun.

Casey McAdams ([00:00:52](#)):

I'm rolling.

Alison Oswald ([00:00:55](#)):

I'm Alison Oswald and I'm an Archivist at the National Museum of American History and we are speaking with Lisa Lindahl in the boardroom of the National Museum of American History.

Today is Thursday, March 5, 2020. Welcome Lisa.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:01:10](#)):

Thank you.

Alison Oswald ([00:01:12](#)):

Let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised [crosstalk 00:01:17]?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:01:18](#)):

Oh-oh, yes. I was born in Montclair, New Jersey in 1948 to Florence and Ernest Zobian. That was my maiden name and actually, I was born Eugenie Louise Zobian and my mother looked at

... Held me in her arms and said ... Because Eugenie was a family name and she didn't like the nicknames, so she said, "We'll call her Lisa."

Alison Oswald ([00:01:52](#)):

Do you have any siblings?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:01:56](#)):

I am the youngest of four by far. I was an oops baby. My mother was 40 when I was born. So, I have two older brothers and an older sister. My eldest brother Ernest Jr. would be 81 now, but he passed away I think three or four years ago now.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:02:27](#)):

I have another brother Mark Zobian who still lives in New Jersey and my sister Victoria Woodrow who lives in Half Moon Bay, California. She's 77 now, I think.

Alison Oswald ([00:02:42](#)):

Where did you go to school?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:02:46](#)):

I went to a lot of different schools because I had this ... I went to school mostly in New Jersey, but my parents for some strange reason, they moved a lot so every two or three years, I was in a different school. My father always worked in Manhattan. He was an advertising and marketing executive and, but every few years we were in a different house and so I was in a different school.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:03:18](#)):

In 7th grade, I went to Kimberly School for Girls and I liked it very much, but at the end of 9th grade, I was not invited back. I think because I was a little bit of an instigator or anyway, there are different tales about why I was not invited back.

Alison Oswald ([00:03:45](#)):

Can you tell me a little bit about your college [crosstalk 00:03:49]?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:03:52](#)):

Oh, that's a complicated story. So I wanted to go to art school and my mother had gone to Parsons, my sister gone to Parsons School of Design in New York and I wanted to go to art school as well and my mother said no. I went to art school, your sister went to art school and look what it did for us.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:04:23](#)):

So, you are going to do something different and I was not happy about that and so I said, "Well then, I'm not going to apply to any colleges." And like this. So, my mother picked up the phone and I had not gone to a traditional high school. When I was not able to finish high school at

Kimberly, I had ended up at a school called the Tutoring School of New York in Manhattan which was a one-on-one, literally tutoring school.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:05:07](#)):

You sat in a cubicle with a tutor and he did Biology and you got up and you sat in another cubicle with someone else and did English and then you got up at the end of that hour. And so, I finished ... I did 10th, 11th and 12th grade there and I did it in a year and a half because there's no extracurricular or anything, you just went to school did that.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:05:35](#)):

So, when I refused to apply to any colleges because I couldn't go to art school, my mother picked up the phone and called the headmistress of the tutoring school and those two women conspired to get me into a private women's junior college in Newport, Rhode Island.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:05:54](#)):

I didn't fill out any paperwork whatsoever. This was the middle of 1960s, remember when such things happened and I was enrolled in Vernon Court Junior College in Newport, Rhode Island and the paperwork came and it said you will bring six cocktail dresses, so many skirts this many cardigans, this many sweaters, I kid you not and I was shipped off to Vernon Court Junior College to find a good husband.

Alison Oswald ([00:06:30](#)):

What happened after that?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:06:36](#)):

Well, at the tutoring school, I had already found a young man and so he went to Babson. He applied and went to Babson because it was close to where I was and anyway, I graduated from Vernon Court and there was a family upheaval. My father had started his own ... Had left right before being eligible for his pension and all that, he had left the company he worked for, started his own company and lost everything.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:07:17](#)):

And so, I got a phone call saying, "You got to go to work." I thought I was gonna graduate from Vernon Court and transfer to a four year college and so my mother took me by the hand and this again, remember the times, going to college, your parents paid for it in my socioeconomic group.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:07:47](#)):

Now, all of a sudden, my mother showed up took me by the hand after I graduated and took me to the bank and cosigned a loan for me to go to Katharine Gibbs Secretarial School. So, I had learned how to type and take shorthand and could get a job.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:08:01](#)):

Now, the underlying story to all this was that I have epilepsy and she was worried about her poor little epileptic daughter making her way in the world and she was just hoping someone would

either marry me and take care of me or that I would be able to earn a living and I'm sure that's also one of the reasons why she didn't want me to go to art school and this was sort of a subtext, it was never openly talked about.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:08:35](#)):

In fact, growing up, I got a very strong double message. On one side, one part was, "Oh, you're the brightest and the best and you can do anything you want." But that was sort of a generality. It was never, "Lisa, you are good at this." Never, any encouragement or specificity about that. It was more kind of a general thing; we are the brightest and we were the best.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:09:03](#)):

Versus, "Oh no, you can't. You can't do this; you can't do that." Around having epilepsy and being a girl and I wanted to take horseback riding lessons, "Oh no, you can't do that." And we spent our summers at the beach in Bay Head New Jersey and I was diagnosed with epilepsy at age four and I had petit mal seizures and what the doctors said was, "Well, when she hits puberty, it'll either go away or it'll get worse."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:09:40](#)):

And I was hounded as a child. "Did you take your pills? Did you take your pills?" "Yes, yes, yes, I took my pills." And when I hit puberty, it did get worse. I started having what's called grand mal seizures which is what most people think of when they think of epilepsy.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:09:56](#)):

They think of someone all of a sudden getting rigid and going down, becoming unconscious and shaking. That's what I have, tonic, clonic generalized seizures is what they're called and my first one happened in sixth grade at the only public school I went to growing up, Southwest School in Montclair it was a great school.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:10:26](#)):

And so, then it became, "Well, can I still go to the beach by myself?" And so, when you're like a sixth-grade girl and you're self-conscious and so that was difficult, but the compromise we came to, this is what I mean by the double message. They were concerned and worried I'm sure on one hand, but on the other hand, my parents didn't want to be too inconvenienced.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:10:53](#)):

So, I could go to the beach and go swimming by myself if I went up and told the lifeguard that I was going in the water. So, imagine being a teenage pre ... Teenage girl and having to go, you're a heartthrob, it was, "Who's the lifeguard? Does he know? Who's the lifeguard?" Having to go up and say, "Hi Jim, I'm going in the water now." Anyway.

Alison Oswald ([00:11:20](#)):

Can you talk a little bit about your father and his advertising work?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:11:24](#)):

Yes. My father was one of those larger than life characters. He was the villain in the family. He and my mother had quite a dynamic or vibrant relationship. You never knew when he walked in the door whether it was going to be an orchestra that play dada or a thundercloud walking in and everyone waited to see which it was going to be.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:12:08](#)):

And he's very handsome, charismatic, and he worked for mostly over the counter drug companies and was the advertising and marketing executive that would hire the advertising firms that would work for the company and would oversee and approve whatever the ad campaign was or whatever the message was going to be.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:12:47](#)):

And one of the comments about him that was made several ways several times was ... Well, the one that I remember very well was one man said, "Whatever company your father goes to work for, I buy their stock because it will go up." And when my father, I think he's working for Vick's Chemical Company... I don't remember which company he was working for when he quit because he said, "I'm tired of making millions for other people. I'm going to make my own million."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:13:25](#)):

And so, he quit and teamed up with a chemist Herbie [Engelman] and they'd been friends at the Yacht Club and they came up with a substitute ... This was again the 60s and the space program was starting and there was a sugar substitute, but he and Herbie came up with a substitute for I believe, for carbohydrate, and they were going to make fake food for the ... And they, my father, our kitchen ... My father is a great cook.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:14:01](#)):

He was an interesting man because although he's this macho guy, he was a man's man. He played Polo and, but he also was ... His flower gardens won awards and he was a great cook and so our kitchen became a lab with all these strange recipes he was coming up with and everything else.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:14:29](#)):

He was successful, but he really had a substitute for carbs and they were making all these strange things in the kitchen, but the FDA didn't approve it and that's how everything went away and when I got the phone call saying, "Okay, your life is over." There is a history of that before my time.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:14:54](#)):

As I said, I was the youngest of four and my parents were in their 40's when I was born and so they were doing well, it was the whole upper socioeconomic class, Yacht Club, blah-blah-blah, Golf Club when I came along, but my siblings remember my father made a lot of money, lost a lot of money, made a lot of money, lost a lot of money, made a lot of money, lost a lot pretty consistently.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:15:21](#)):

And they have memories of that. This was the first time it happened, and I was 17 I think. So, he was brilliant, but not so good with money or responsible I don't know.

Alison Oswald ([00:15:41](#)):

Can you tell me a little bit about your activities growing up what were the kinds of hobbies you had?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:15:52](#)):

I was alone a lot because all my siblings were so much older, they were their own group and by the time I was six, both my brothers were off at prep school. My sister was being a teenager and so I would go out and we lived often ... New Jersey is a beautiful state and we lived in Bernardsville and New Vernon and Morristown... We lived in some beautiful places and I would go out in the woods and look for the fairies and the brownies.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:16:37](#)):

And I read a lot, I read a lot and I can remember being ... I think I was about nine years old. I remember my life by what house we were living in. That's how often we moved and what house we were living in and what school I was in and so when we were living in the New Vernon house, so I must have been in third grade, I remember sitting on the carpet with an old typewriter in front of me and I don't know what book I just read, but I remember rolling paper into the platen and saying and typing, "I want to be an author when I grow up." And starting to write a story and figuring out how difficult it was.

Alison Oswald ([00:17:28](#)):

Where and when did you meet Polly [inaudible 00:17:31]?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:17:34](#)):

So I was at Kimberly School for Girls in eighth grade, it was my second year there and the class was maybe 15 or 20 girls, I don't know and because I had switched school so often the beginning of the school year, I had learned to scan the class, where am I going to fit in?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:17:54](#)):

Am I going to be the writer? The artist, the kooky ... the clown or the quiet one? I could do it all. Now, I can say that now, at the time, it wasn't quite so apparent to myself, but that's what I did and so I remember looking across the classroom and seeing this new face and it was Polly, and she was just kind of standing back there and I saw her scan.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:18:24](#)):

Now, I don't know if I've ever said this to her, but she was clearly quiet, and she was looking and I knew what it was to be new and for some reason, I just said, "I'm going to be friends with her."

Alison Oswald ([00:18:46](#)):

How long have you been friends?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:18:50](#)):

Well, since then, since then, and there have been periods of time when life took us apart like ... So, I wasn't invited back after ninth grade. So, she went on, did 10th, 11th and 12th grade at Kimberly and I went into this ... I had this strange life because my parents moved into New York City.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:19:12](#)):

So, then I bounced back, all of a sudden, I had this apartment in New York City so Polly and our friend Carol and Julie would, "Oh boy, we know someone who lives in New York City." So they'd come in and play with me in New York City, but then when I went to college before they did, and I had a boyfriend before they did and so then during the college years, we drifted apart because Polly went on a much more, I don't know, exactly how to ... Usual is the wrong word.

Alison Oswald ([00:19:55](#)):

Traditional?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:19:56](#)):

Traditional and also focused, that's the word I want. Traditional and focused. She knew what she wanted to do, and she had always been supported. She was getting art lessons; she was being encouraged and supported in what she wanted to do, and she went to Moore and I remember I visited her once at Moore and was so ... She was having this whole kind of traditional life and comfortable in it and I remember going, "Oh."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:20:33](#)):

She was cooking and I thought, "Oh, she knows how to cook." And so, I spent a year at Katharine Gibbs and she was I think at Moore and I got engaged to the first boyfriend and then I broke it off because I felt like, "Oh, I've got my whole life in front of me. I'm too young to immediately get married and settle down."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:21:10](#)):

My first job was at Princeton Theological Seminary and I was a faculty secretary to 10 professors and that was an eye opener. Wow, I learned a lot. I remember this one Professor, Richard [Shaw 00:21:26], I think he was who was a theologian that was very involved with the liberation theology I think it was at the time and corresponding with these theologians in South America and so I was writing ... I was typing not just class notes, but manuscripts and correspondence and he looked at ... and I asked him a question or something, and he looked at me said, "You actually read what you type?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:21:57](#)):

And I thought, "Doesn't everybody?" And he went, "No." And I had had no religious or faith-based education growing up. My mother's mother died when she was 10 and at that point, my mother said, "There can be no God." And so, she raised all ... My mother raised all of us with a lot of good platitudes. Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you and walk a mile in

someone else's shoes before you judge, all these things, but no religion, no organized religion, no faith-based anything.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:22:43](#)):

And so, working at Princeton, I was learning about Christianity for the first time ever. I thought, "Wow, this is really ... This is cool stuff." And so, I had asked all those professors all this stuff and all the students there were men, primarily, they were maybe, maybe there were four women there, I'm making up the number, but you get my drift, studying to be Presbyterian Ministers.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:23:09](#)):

And they were all like 25, 26. I was 20 years old. So, it's like a kid in a candy store, I was like, "Oh my God." I was dating a lot of people and also having these conversations, but also, I also learned about the hypocrisy. I was thinking, "Oh, Christianity is about loving goodness and all this other stuff."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:23:37](#)):

And then I saw what some of the professors were doing amongst themselves in terms of the politics of the seminary and the ones that made passes at me were married and who had, "Oh, okay." So, I learned a lot. I learned a lot.

Alison Oswald ([00:23:59](#)):

Did you have many mentors growing up?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:24:02](#)):

No. No, I can't think of a single one. My sister. I idolized my sister and I would look at her and think that's ... I need to learn from her because she was six years older than I and that was my future. However, in the family constellation and the family dynamics, it was clear to me anyway that she was the pretty one and in retrospect now that we're all adults, I have such compassion for both of us because she was so labeled.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:24:49](#)):

My mother would say to her repeatedly or both my parents would say, "That pretty smile will open every door for you." And she believed it. I mean, how could she not? That pretty smile opens every door for you.

Alison Oswald ([00:25:06](#)):

What would be some words you would use to describe yourself today?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:25:12](#)):

Curious, stubborn. I hope compassionate, smart. I didn't understand that I was smart until I was in my 30's because in school, I was a C student, I was an average student and I think now it's because mostly I was bored. It wasn't until I went to the tutoring school that I understood that I really learned how to learn because I was sitting opposite of a tutor so if you didn't get it, you

had to work through it and get it and if you did get, it you could just write through and that's why I was able to do two years of high school in one year.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:26:12](#)):

But I still didn't get that I was smart. It really wasn't until I was in my 30's and it was because it ... I really did ... No, and it wasn't ... Depression has a much higher incidence among people with epilepsy than in the general population and as an adolescent, I was depressed, and my mother took me to ... Well, and again, I was in a family situation that was a difficult one.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:26:48](#)):

My parents fought loudly and often and it was a scary situation to be in and when my sister married early and got out of the house, and I was left alone, I was frightened and so I stopped talking and that frightened my parents because I figured how can I have power in this situation?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:27:10](#)):

And I just stopped talking and that frightened them and so they took me to a psychiatrist and so I started in on the whole therapy process when I was 13, 12, 13 and that's ... Who's the mentor in my lifeline? I've always sought therapy, looked for a good therapist and not put up with bad ones either, gone and sat down and go, "Oh, no." And found a good therapist because I needed to work through it.

Alison Oswald ([00:27:51](#)):

So, we discussed this in a group interview, but we'll talk about it again. The invention of the jogbra. Can you please give me your take? How and when did it all start? How did you meet Polly and Hinda? You can take them through them.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:28:22](#)):

Well, it really all began when I started running and I started running because I was getting out of touch with my body even more than usual and I was gaining weight and not happy, I was in my first marriage and a friend told me that if I just jogged a mile and a quarter three times a week, I would become physically fit and to me, that meant I would lose weight.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:28:54](#)):

So, I started jogging for that reason and fell in love with it. It became my first spiritual practice really. I connected to the earth again, I connected to my body again. It lifted me up. I totally fell in love with it except my bouncing breasts were uncomfortable and the bra straps were slipping off.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:29:22](#)):

And so, I was uncomfortable. Is this the way you want this to go or do you want me to go right to Polly and Hinda?

Alison Oswald ([00:29:32](#)):

Yeah, take them all.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:29:34](#)):

Okay. So, this was the beginning of the fitness revolution. It had really started very early '70s and this was 1977 I think and my sister who called me and she had just started jogging too and so she said, "Well, I'm uncomfortable." Because we both had ample bosoms.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:30:01](#)):

And she said, "What do you do for your breasts? I mean, it's really uncomfortable. What do you wear?" And I told her the only thing I'd found was a bra that was one size too small and even that didn't work because the straps stretched out and fell off my shoulders I was always yanking them up and it was really distracting and sometimes I even got chaffed because it was small and she said, "Well, why isn't there jockstrap for women?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:30:29](#)):

And I laughed and said, "That is a great idea, same concept, different part of the anatomy, why isn't there?" And she said, "Yeah, a jockbra." We laughed and we thought it was a joke and it was really funny, but when we got off the phone, she says that I said on the phone, "I'm going to do that."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:30:49](#)):

I don't remember saying that, but I sat, I got off the phone, I sat down, I open up a notebook and I go, "What would that have to do if ... Here's a bra made just for jogging. What would it do?" And I wrote down I said, "Okay, the straps would not fall off my shoulders and there wouldn't be any hardware to dig in and it would be comfortable and maybe even breathable, and it would stop my breasts from bouncing." Because I didn't know then, you couldn't do that, you can only minimize the movement.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:31:21](#)):

"Wouldn't it be great actually if I could take off my t-shirt even?" It was modest enough for that because at the time, I had a running partner who was a guy and he'd run ahead of me and take off his t-shirt and tuck it in the back of his running shorts because Vermont could get hot in the summer and I'd be so jealous that he could do it, but that was like a pipe dream I thought.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:31:45](#)):

But anyway, wrote all these things down and, but I don't sew. Back in Kimberly, Polly and I both took a sewing class and I remember I bought this beautiful royal blue fabric and was going to make myself a shirt, a blouse. Anyway, I got a D- in that class and Polly got an A+ and that summer of 1977, Polly was in Vermont doing the Champlain Shakespeare Festival costumes and she had rented my guest room for the summer.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:32:28](#)):

And so, I had this idea and I thought, "How do I make a bra? I'll just go ask Polly." And so, I went upstairs, and she rolled her eyes because she thought I was crazy for being a runner. She didn't get that at all, but she was really challenged by the design.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:32:53](#)):

She was intrigued by the design challenge of it and so I got her hooked that way and she her assistant at the time up at the Royal Tyler costume, I mean Royal Tyler Theater was this woman Hinda Schreiber. They had gone to NYU together and Polly had introduced me to Hinda and when Hinda saw what Polly and I were doing around this bra, Hinda was very enthusiastic about it and Polly was not.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:33:29](#)):

Polly was doing it for me and because she liked the design challenge, but I knew that I didn't have Polly's attention forever and Hinda was very ... She was a skier; she'd grown up in Stowe skiing and she got it and I thought ... And this is an interesting thing that now I've looked back at and thought, "What was it in me that didn't take what Polly had ... Was able to make, the prototype and just go forward with it alone?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:34:10](#)):

But that was not in me, that is not who I was or even who I am today. I had to have others ... I had to enroll others and I don't know if that has to do with the epilepsy thing or just who I natively am, but so I ... "Hey Hinda, want to help with this?" Because I instinctively knew that it was something that she would stick with and Polly even after we had the prototype and we were sitting on my living room floor talking about what are we going to do with this, blah-blah-blah and women for women and we don't want to do corporate America or the male ... I don't want to put today's words on what we said then.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:35:05](#)):

But we were clear that we didn't want to do the competitive, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah stuff and I had this vision of friends working with each other and doing our own thing and I was thinking because my marriage was ending and I thought, and I didn't have a driver's license, I thought, "This would be a good little mail-order business on the side to help me through school ..."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:35:35](#)):

As I had gone back to school, and that was unusual in those times. There were no other 28-year-old women up at in my classes. I mean, the older returning student was a new thing in 1977 and most of them were women, by the way.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:35:52](#)):

So, my graduate studies were going to be ... I was going to continue into graduate school in educational administration to try and create programs for older returning women going back to school because so many of them had married early, had children and now going, "Oh, I want to go back to school."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:36:16](#)):

And so even in that way, I was a bit pressured. How do you say that word prescient? Yeah, P-R-E-S-C-I-E-N-T. And that's what was in my head that I was going to do, and I thought, "This jog

bra would be a nice little mail-order business on the side that I could do to make a little money to help me through school."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:36:42](#)):

So that's how I met, I met Hinda through Polly and sure enough, I mean, and oh, so sitting in my living room floor at the end of the summer of 1977 after we'd made the prototype, Polly was clear, she said, "I'm a costume designer, I don't want to go into business."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:37:03](#)):

She said, "I'll help you." And Polly and I have always spun off of each other with mischief and ideas and creative collaboration and gardens, whatever and she said, "I'll be in New York, I'll help you, I'll help you find stuff and find people with ideas." And she said, "But I'm not going to go into business." And so, she's clear about that and I knew that.

Alison Oswald ([00:37:27](#)):

So that's a great segue. How did you and Hinda start the company?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:37:34](#)):

Well, I started the company because what when they left, Hinda went to South Carolina to teach costume design, Polly went back to Manhattan to do to mount an Off-Broadway play which was a big deal and I'm sitting there, I've got my part-time secretarial job, my stained glass studio in my basement and this prototype and I thought, "What do I do with this? How do I turn this into a business?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:38:01](#)):

And somehow, I gotten the idea that I could license, sell this prototype or license it to some big company that already existed and would just put it into their stream, whatever it was and the ... And I said, "But who's doing it? Am I doing it?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:38:19](#)):

Well no, I can't because Polly had turned it into reality and then what about Hinda who helped? She'd been enthusiastic. So, I decided to incorporate, someone told me that was what you would do and so I went to a friend who is a lawyer, Bob Roesler and he advised me to, "Yes, incorporate and send out shares."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:38:47](#)):

So, I sent Polly and Hinda and myself, I sent us each ... I issued 100 shares to each of us equally because I had a conversation at the time with remember, again, it was the '70s and we were not going to power ... I was not going to power trip.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:39:10](#)):

I had this idea that power and being powerful was just about oppression, that being in power was a bad thing and even though the lawyer said, "Are you sure you don't want to keep the majority?"

I said, "No, no, no, no, we're equal. We're women, we're equal, we're friends, we're all going to be equal."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:39:29](#)):

And so, I said, "Send me \$100 so I can pay to incorporate, and I'll send you 100 shares so that each ..." We were all poor. So, they each sent me \$100 and I put in I think \$113 because I had savings in my savings account, and I sent them each 100 shares and I paid Bob to drop these incorporation papers and then we had this ... First it was Jockbra Inc. and then it changed to SLS, Inc. for Smith, Lindahl and Schreiber Incorporated.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:40:06](#)):

Then I went to my brother-in-law who was the only person I knew in business. I think he worked ... I don't know if then he was working for Ray Cam or somebody, and he was in sales and I said, "Help me think this through. How do I do this?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:40:20](#)):

And he said, "There's some company called International Inventors, Inc. and they were going to take any inventor's idea and help monetize it and find the right company to work with and do a patent search and find all this other stuff at this tiered way. You paid them \$250 to sign up with them, and then more for them to do the patent search and then more for them to do the marketing and yada-yada."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:40:49](#)):

And Dick thought this was a good idea. So, we had talked about it back and forth, back and forth. Meanwhile, Polly and Hinda were nowhere around. I incorporated it in October of 1977 and that's when ... I think that November, that Thanksgiving is when I saw Dick at the family Thanksgiving thing and he had the International Inventors contract and he had signed it where it said signature of the inventor and then I said, "You can't do that. You're not the inventor."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:41:36](#)):

He goes, "Well, I was just helping." So that was a big blow up. That was a problem because I felt like he was trying to be and do something that he had no right. He had no right to sign that as the inventor. So, he got very upset and he had paid \$250 to these people and I had said to him, "I'll look at the contract ... I'll think about it, I'll look at it, we'll talk about it at Thanksgiving."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:42:06](#)):

And so, I was really shocked and taken it back and it was hard for me to say, "You can't do this." To not just go, "Oh, okay." And especially because his response was to be angry and upset at me and say, "Well, I'm trying to do you a favor here and it caused a problem."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:42:37](#)):

But and I don't even know where I got the \$250 to pay him back. But I did and we didn't do any business with International Inventors or anything, nothing, nothing and at this point, my husband had left the apartment, we were separated.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:42:58](#)):

It was a separation, it went on for a while and I was frightened and confused and at a loss and I had this prototype and I was worried frankly about what was going to happen to it and I'm packing stuff up and spending some weeks at my girlfriend's apartment down the street.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:43:27](#)):

Frankly wondering how I was going to get groceries because I didn't have a driver's license, do the laundry because our apartment didn't have a washer and dryer. We went to the laundromat and so I took the ... I thought, "Well, Hinda hasn't done anything yet really."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:43:49](#)):

So, I took the prototype and I sent it to her in South Carolina and said, "It's your turn. See what you can do with this because I've incorporated, the inventor's thing didn't work, your turn in essence. Okay, can you take this to the next step or something?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:44:11](#)):

Well, and she did brilliantly. I mean, brilliantly. She found JD and Carolyn Moore. She took it around his doors down there and found this little outfit that was willing to produce samples and she talked to her father who is willing to loan the money to do it.

Alison Oswald ([00:44:39](#)):

So, let's talk a little bit about the patenting process. You have this failed venture, this international venture and when did you make the decision to seek a utility patent on the bra?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:44:56](#)):

I remember being told that patents on garments were pretty useless, that they're easy to break. You just change the thread, change the seam, change ... So, their primary purpose was for marketing reasons that when you have patent pending, it means any competition that wants to jump in or copy you, they kind ... They have to wait until the patent pending has cleared and they can see how to break it.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:45:33](#)):

And so, the reason to get a patent is just for that to get a leg ... A few miles ahead of the competition. So, it wasn't worth our time to get a utility patent, but a design patent would serve the same purpose. So, by my memory is that our first ... The patent that we applied for was for a design patent and that's why we did it.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:46:05](#)):

I mean, in my head, that's why we did it was all a marketing ploy and also saying something about the legitimacy of it as being different from lingerie or a regular bra and that ... Again, this is Lisa, the marketing mind and that's why we did it because I fully expected all they had to do literally was changed a seam, a couple inches this way or that way or the thread and it's a different thing.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:46:37](#)):

That's what I understood at the time. So, but try and ... Then you start opening up the Yellow Pages looking for a patent attorney, how do you ... Again, there was no Google, there was no computers, it was like, "Okay, how do you find a patent attorney?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:46:56](#)):

And there were none in Burlington, Vermont and I started looking around in Vermont and then as I've said before, when you start a business, you do everything, you do everything and that day I happened to be taking, I don't know, something to the post office or buying stamps and standing in line at the post office and chatting as I want to do.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:47:28](#)):

I talked to everybody and the guy in front of me also had a small business and we were talking and he asked me what my business was and I told him it's the jog bra and said, "Oh, that's so interesting." And somehow, the thing about patents came up and he said, "Oh, well no, here is no patent attorney here in Vermont and even if there was, what you want to do is go right to Washington, D.C. That's where all the patent attorneys are, that's where all the real ones are, just go right there."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:48:00](#)):

And I said something about, "Well, isn't that expensive?" He said, "It's worth the money, you'll save money in the end because they know what they're doing." And he whipped out a little piece of paper and wrote down, "This is where you go, Browdy & Neimark, Roger Browdy is a good guy, good guy, call him up." So, I, "Thank you. Thank you so much." When I got back to the office, I called Roger Browdy.

Alison Oswald ([00:48:25](#)):

How involved were you in the process?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:48:27](#)):

Totally. I mean, I called Roger and started the whole process and figured out a way to do, we had to fill in and then we had to have drawings, so I called Polly to make ... To do some drawings and right up until and again, this was ... All the paperwork had to be done because there again, no computer, no and I just remember it was a big thing on my to-do list and then just the back and forth, back and forth until I don't, I would have to look at my notes to know.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:49:19](#)):

I get confused about those early years, but I had the opportunity to go to Sri Lanka and a friend of mine was living there and said, "Oh, come visit." And so over I thought, "Well, over Christmas and New Year's." Because you can't go to Sri Lanka for a short period of time.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:49:43](#)):

So, I thought, "Over Christmas and New Year's. that would be a clear two weeks, two and a half ..." I think I went for three weeks and so I made up a list of things that could be put off and things that needed to get done that I could handoff to Hinda and the patent was one of them.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:50:06](#)):

So, at that point, Hinda took over because you had to keep responding to whatever they needed, Roger needed and so at that point, Hinda followed up on the patent.

Alison Oswald ([00:50:18](#)):

So, in the company, can you talk a little bit about the work culture in the early years and how you and Hinda divided the responsibilities?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:50:48](#)):

Hinda, well in the early years, right off the bat, Hinda and I had a breach of trust. In August of 1978, Hinda left South Carolina and came to Vermont and on her way to Vermont, she had stopped in New York and bought Polly's shares, 80 of Polly's 100 shares without my knowing which, okay, but it was when she refused to equalize the shares to then ... First of all, I was surprised when she paid money for them and I kind of said that, "So really? Okay."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:51:43](#)):

But when she persisted in remaining, saying, "Okay, now I'm the majority shareholder." I went, "Whoa." So that breach of trust created a toxic working relationship and because it started an ongoing argument. I said, "But this was my idea."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:52:08](#)):

And she said, "So what?" And then once her father lent us money, she would say, "But it's my money." And I would say, "But it's my idea." And that kind of went back and forth and I didn't think until years later that what I should have been saying is, "But we're paying him back."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:52:35](#)):

Because of course, in those early days, we weren't paying him back yet and it alone, but I wasn't thinking that way, you're in it, you're in it, you're not thinking that way. So that was a problem and my perception was that she had changed her because when I met her in the summer of '77, she was sparkling and she was upbeat, she was a yoga teacher, she was happy, she was women for women and when she reappeared in late summer of '78, she seemed to me to be angry and like a different person.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:53:24](#)):

And I kept thinking it was going to ... I honestly kept thinking it was, that was going to pass, and it didn't. So that made our working together difficult and also, and I was not in a good place because I was just coming out of this difficult marriage and I, again, hindsight, isn't hindsight wonderful?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:53:55](#)):

Hindsight is wonderful because now I look at it and go, "Oh my god." I went out of the frying pan into the fire, out of one difficult relationship into another difficult relationship, but because one was a marital situation with a man and this was a business relationship with a woman, at the time, I didn't know to go and get help sooner for myself.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:54:21](#)):

At the time, I just had a lot of shame that I wasn't handling it better, and anger, I had a lot of shame and a lot of anger. But on the other hand, I'm stubborn. I'm staring at her and it's like, "Well, I'm not going to give up and I ..."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:54:42](#)):

First of all, my living room was full bras and the orders kept coming in and the one thing that Hinda and I always shared was we wanted ... The jogbra was our baby and we wanted it to thrive, not just survive, but thrive.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:55:01](#)):

And that was always there. So, off we went, and I have always been a people person. So somehow the sales and getting people to help us mostly went my way. Luckily, she was fine with keeping up with the production in the factory thing which I could never have done.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:55:29](#)):

It didn't interest me. I don't know why it just didn't and so as the business progressed, that tended to be where we spent our time like and the whole ... That argument, that particular argument did not get put to bed until 1982. So, from '78, '79, '80, '81, '82 when we finally did equalize the shares.

Alison Oswald ([00:56:22](#)):

So, you divided the responsibilities up a little bit. As I understand, neither one of you had a business background? Where are you going to get help with some of these issues and starting the company? Where are you reaching out?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:56:38](#)):

Well, about the business background, I did actually have some business background because of my father's ... Being aware of my father's comments, ongoing comments and also, having been a secretary. I mean, I was a secretary. In almost every area. I've been a secretary in social services, in businesses and in educational facilities.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:57:09](#)):

So, I knew about and in graduate school, I was studying systems and organizational development and all this kind of stuff. So there, I did have some ... I knew the areas that I didn't know. At least I knew the labels and I knew how to do filing.

Lisa Lindahl ([00:57:33](#)):

I didn't have some not really particularly sophisticated or elevated, but I did have some background. What was the second part of that question?

Alison Oswald ([00:57:48](#)):

Where did you go to seek additional help in moving to Burlington?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:57:55](#)):

Oh, well, we had to have lawyers for just legal shmeal stuff and accountants. I mean, I knew right away from my Katharine Gibbs training where I had to take, do accounting which was ... I knew we had to have a bookkeeper right away and so through those threads, through those pathways, then it was like, "Well, who can help us with this? Well, who can help us with that?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:58:19](#)):

And very early on, we hired a general consultant, Dick Koehler, Richard Koehler. He was brilliant. It was like having our private business tutor right there and it ... And we just built him into the budget because who else is going to teach it?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:58:39](#)):

I mean, neither one of us really ... We had these financials; we were getting these reports. Well, how do you read them? How do you understand what they're really saying? Well, Dick taught us. He said, "Well this. This means this and this means this, and this is how you read it."

Lisa Lindahl ([00:58:57](#)):

Thank heavens and I'm fond of saying, "I flunked arithmetic, but I can read a profit and loss statement and a balance sheet." So that's what we did. I mean, Dick was helpful for years.

Alison Oswald ([00:59:15](#)):

Can you talk a little bit about The Mountain Group?

Lisa Lindahl ([00:59:18](#)):

Oh, I love The Mountain Group. So, but they didn't come along for several years later. One day, my phone rang and it was a guy I knew who had his own business and he said, "There are a bunch of us that get together every month to talk about stuff that's going on in our businesses and who do we as business owners really talk to about our problems?"

Lisa Lindahl ([00:59:48](#)):

You can't go to your ... You can't talk to your employees about what would be fair to pay myself and we've been thinking, we don't have any women, we don't have a woman's voice so I thought of you and so do you want to come and join us?"

Lisa Lindahl ([01:00:03](#)):

And I thought, "Yeah, that sounds really great." So I walked across the hall and told Hinda about it because I thought it'd be good if we both did it and this was a great group of you say small

business owners, but over the time, the period that we met, we would meet once a month either in a restaurant or some ... Whoever hosted got to pick the location and the topic.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:00:38](#)):

So, whatever was going on in their business, like it might be how to do ... Whether or not employee profit sharing was a good idea or what insurance issues were being faced or what as an owner, you should be taking out or other ways to take money out of your business or employee problems or all this kind of stuff.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:01:06](#)):

And it was confidential. It was understood that what was talked about there, it didn't go anywhere else and some of the people ... Some people stayed pretty consistently, other people came in and out. Was it Ben? Ben and Jerry came in and out briefly.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:01:29](#)):

Will from Gardener's Supply was there for quite a while. Boy, this is my stroke brain kicking in. It was a really interesting and good group and for the most part, Hinda for a long time, Hinda and I, we're the only women there and then in the ... Toward more recent years, there have been more women.

Alison Oswald ([01:02:05](#)):

So, you talk about ... Did a lot of the marketing, did some writing for the company. Can you expand on that a little bit and talk about how you got the advertising and marketing going and what really [inaudible 01:02:20] role was for you?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:02:34](#)):

How do you talk about something you just have a knack for? I just have a knack for it. So ...

Alison Oswald ([01:02:43](#)):

Well, walk me through your process with marketing. If you were going to try to have me sell your bra and [inaudible 01:02:50].

Lisa Lindahl ([01:02:51](#)):

Well, the first thing you think about it is ... Well, the first thing I think about is what is the unique selling proposition? Why is that sweater different from any other sweater on the market and if it isn't, then why are we even here? Go home and make a sweater that's different.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:03:08](#)):

I mean, or why do you love it and then let's talk about that and then how can we talk about it in a way that's interesting. "Support by any other name is not the same" for instance or "the brains behind the bras" or, and Barbara was great and that she like me, she had a sense of humor, and wryness and she liked to be a little outrageous.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:03:38](#)):

I mean, Barbara, her first husband was killed in Vietnam and her ... Then she married again and had a child, so she had two daughters by her first husband. She married again and had a son with that man and they divorced and she was this really strong, outrageous, you know one of these outrageous and she would poker night at her house and drink ... Be drinking straight, whatever it was, I don't know because I don't drink alcohol.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:04:09](#)):

I mean, I'll have a one glass of wine once in a while, but she'd have some dark amber liquid and played poker, at high stakes and make you pay. I mean, if you and I would lose and she was just a force to be reckoned with at that and when I think about it now, and that time and that place, that was like the early '80s.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:04:35](#)):

And she would push us. She would push us. One of the campaigns we did. Oh, this is interesting. Anybody here familiar? There's a novelist out now who's quite popular, Chris Bohjalian. He wrote *Midwives* and *The Sandcastle Girls*, and I think series or movies coming out now about, *The Flight Attendant* that he just wrote.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:05:07](#)):

Well, when he came to Burlington, Vermont, he worked for Barbara Sandage as copywriter and he worked on our account and I believe it was him who came up with this idea about, "Send us your old ... If you have an original jogbra, send it to us and we'll send you a new one."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:05:39](#)):

Because we were trying to get back original jogbras because by now, it had become a ... We got that it was going to be really successful and we'd sent one to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of the ... For their costume collection and it had been one that Hinda found in the back of our closet or something and, but we didn't have any others to send out. So, Chris said, "Well, let's do this whole campaign." Anyway, I don't know how to talk about how I do what I do.

Alison Oswald ([01:06:13](#)):

How did you meet Barbara?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:06:19](#)):

Oh, when we were first starting, a lot of people came and knocked on our door and were pitching themselves to us.

Alison Oswald ([01:06:31](#)):

Let's shift to another project that you've worked, your compression comfort bra. Can you talk about your partnership with Lesli Bell and how that one came about?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:06:44](#)):

Oh, I'd love to. So, I ... When we sold the business to Playtex, I was clear that after the transition year, I was leaving and so I've been retired from Jogbra for a while. Quite a while actually,

anyway. Lesli heard through the grapevine that the jogbra lady lived in Vermont and Lesli lives in Williston, Vermont and she is a physical therapy, a Doctor of Physical Therapy and she was treating breast cancer patients who suffer from lymphedema which is swelling under the skin that often happens as a result of breast cancer.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:07:37](#)):

When they mess with your lymph nodes, the lymph node can no longer do its job and therefore, the fluid backs up. I knew nothing about any of this until Lesli came to me and said, "You need to help me because I have been Jerry-rigging old jog bras to give compression to some of my patients."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:07:58](#)):

And it's not adequate. You need to help me. She said, "You need to help me make a compression garment for breast cancer survivors." And she showed me some pictures of these women that I couldn't say no. How could I say no? Looking at, I mean, they were red, they were swollen, they were suffering, and I thought, "I do not want to go into business again. I don't want to go into an entrepreneur ..." But I couldn't say no.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:08:26](#)):

And so, I sat down with her and she told me what the product had to do. It was almost the reverse of what ... Because she told me. "It's got to do this, it's got to do this, it can't do that, it can't do that. It's got to cover here. It's got to cover here; it's got to do this."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:08:41](#)):

And we were in my studio and I ... Because by then I had another studio and I started drawing what it could look like, what it needed to look like and Lesli sews, she can sew. So, she said, "And the fabric needs to do this, and it needs to do this and it can't do that."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:09:01](#)):

So, between us, we came up with what it ... What the fabrication needed to be, and she said, "But where do you get this stuff? Or how do you get it made?" I went, "I might know some people." So, I picked up the phone and called some people who were still at Jogbra and asked if they would help me and they said yeah.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:09:24](#)):

Because at that point, I didn't know who any of the suppliers were anymore or anything and so I got some names and so a couple of people came over and helped us out and we found someone to manufacturer, we found someone to grade patterns and we came up with this device and again, naively we thought we could sell it to breast cancer survivors online and they'd be happy to have this thing to finally work, not correct because they all wanted insurance to pay for it and that meant ... And also, the FDA had to approve it.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:10:03](#)):

And so, we had to get FDA approval and we did and it's ... We also went through a patent process. It has a utility patent and it's a great product.

Alison Oswald ([01:10:17](#)):

Can you talk about a little bit more about working with her as a partner and the differences? I mean, this is a second company.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:10:26](#)):

She's great. Lesli is great. She is a force, also she is great. She is one of the most upbeat, positive and articulate people I have ever met. She now speaks all over the world about truncal lymphedema and when we started this, the term truncal lymphedema really wasn't used.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:10:46](#)):

Until then people the medical community acknowledged that there was lymphedema in the hand, in the arm but somehow magically it stopped up here. They weren't acknowledging that it came into the chest wall and the back. At least, that's my understanding and so Lesli, she is and she's funny and she can translate all the medical jargon into everyday language that anyone can understand, and she does it in a way that is also funny and engaging.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:11:23](#)):

She has she will have whole rooms full of people laughing and whatever terms that she talks about how some forms are like spaghetti in gelatin and things like that. She's brilliant. She is really brilliant. I keep telling her she needs to write a book and she says, "I don't write. I don't write." I said, "Dictate it." But she's a lovely person.

Alison Oswald ([01:11:52](#)):

And is the company still in existence?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:11:55](#)):

Yes, the company is still in existence. It's called Lightning2 DBA Bellisse, B-E-L-L-I-S-S-E and the product ... So, we ran the company together for ... I told her when we started, I said, "Look, I'm only good for three years. Five if we're having fun."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:12:15](#)):

And so I helped get it manufactured setup system, got it through the FDA and the patent process and set up the marketing and distribution systems for a while, we did distribution out of Vermont, but then I just couldn't do it anymore and Lesli also thought that she would stop being a physical therapist and move into this business.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:12:42](#)):

But Lesli is truly a gifted healer and I don't say that lightly and she hasn't stopped doing that. Thank heavens. So, she still has a private practice in Williston, Vermont and so we realized that when I said, "Look, I cannot be doing this anymore."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:13:05](#)):

And she wasn't going to step into it. So, what we did is the product is now ... We licensed the product to a company called JoViPak, J-O-V-I-P-A-K who was also, the woman who owns that company is also a physical therapist and a friend of Lesli's.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:13:25](#)):

And so, we licensed the product to them and then just a few years ago, they got sold to Jobst. Do you know Jobst? J-O-B-S-T and they're like the premier name in any compression garment like all the stockings and the sleeves and all that, that's Jobst.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:13:48](#)):

So now I just ... I'm still, Lesli and I are still partners in Lightning2 DBA Bellisse, but the product all goes through Jovi and out of the every day.

Casey McAdams ([01:14:07](#)):

I'm going to pause for 15 seconds to change battery. Sorry.

Alison Oswald ([01:14:12](#)):

We'll sort of backtrack a little bit so to decision to sell Jogbra to Playtex. Can you talk about that decision a little bit?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:14:30](#)):

Yeah. There are a few layers to that decision for me. One was that the business had become much more of a business than a creative endeavor for me and we were also because of our size and the fact that we kept growing, we were looking at having to borrow a lot of ... Having to get into a lot of bank debt.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:15:12](#)):

So Hinda and I were going to have to sign a lot of bank debt to continue growing and it wasn't a choice. I mean, you cannot choose not to grow and survive and also, there's ... I wouldn't call it a burnout factor per se as much as the existential question, what am I doing with my life?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:15:55](#)):

And periodically, each one of us would hit a wall and get frustrated and lean over to the other one and whisper, "Sell." And the other go, "No." And that would go back and forth, over the years this would happen and often it me saying, "Sell." And Hinda going, "No, no, no."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:16:22](#)):

Because we were so successful, we knew that that was always an option or a possibility that we might one day sell the company, but we didn't ever go into it thinking of an exit strategy and the whole concept of an exit strategy was one that only I think it came up in the Mountain Group somewhere along the way, but we weren't really thinking about it.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:16:46](#)):

But my phone rang one day and it was a gentleman who had been a buyer of ours at J. C. Penney in our very shortly-lived venture into private labeling which was not a good idea, but he was a lovely person and we got along well and so I was glad to hear from him and he had moved over to Playtex where he had a different position and he called to see if there is some way he had heard about our phenomenal growth and was so glad we were doing so well and, "Gee, is there some way we might help each other out?"

Lisa Lindahl ([01:17:37](#)):

And I went, "Gee, what does that mean exactly?" "Why don't you come down to New York and we'll talk about it." Which turned out to be code for, "We're interested in buying your company." And so, we didn't go looking to sell actively.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:18:01](#)):

They came to us and we immediately did what we always do. We hired a consultant to help us think it through. There's a lovely guy named Ed Kiniry, it was one of the things he did as a consultant and he told us right off the bat, "It's rare that your first dance partner is who you end up marrying." But that is in fact what happened and not right away.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:18:32](#)):

Playtex made us an offer and we said no. It was a real learning process. If running a business was like getting my MBA in business, selling, it was like getting my PhD. It was an unbelievable learning process, all the different kinds of deals, all the things that you take into consideration.

Alison Oswald ([01:19:00](#)):

So, you moved to Playtex with this decision to sell. Can you talk about the time that you spent at Playtex? I'm interested in like the work culture there versus the work culture at Jogbra.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:19:14](#)):

Well, I think I went into that transition with my eyes way more open than Hinda and maybe it's not fair for me to say that because I'm not her, but because my father had worked for corporations all his life, because my brother-in-law did because my, my eldest brother had, so I went into it with the idea of ... We have a lot to learn from them and a lot of opportunities that they will give us.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:20:07](#)):

But we also have something to offer them. In terms of our channel of distribution which they knew nothing about, sporting goods and in terms of who our customer was, this younger, athletic woman was not ... I didn't think was Playtex's premier customer.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:20:37](#)):

Now, so I came into that relationship thinking, "I am the steward of the Jogbra brand, and I am going to fight." I didn't think of it as a fight, I am going to be the steward of the Jogbra brand. Oh dear. It was not welcomed, and nor did I have ... Nor did I feel I had Hinda's support in that and after all these years of both of us looking out for the baby, that was a big surprise.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:21:30](#)):

Well, and I shouldn't have been, but that was a big surprise. It was like ... And in retrospect, I've looked at it like ... This was the daughter and we'd married her off and I was not getting along with the in-laws and I had a really hard time with that culture.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:22:00](#)):

It was such the male, we know best, pat you on the head and if they could, on the butt as we went out the door. I could not, I would not just smile and blink and say, "Yeah, I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it, wouldn't do it."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:22:25](#)):

And they hired a particular ... They hired a person from their side to be their transition person who was so outrageously chauvinistic that my jaw was just on the ground the whole time. I mean, he even said to me, I mean, he actively and what's the word I want?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:23:00](#)):

He played Hinda and I off of each other. He went out of his way to do that and I watched that happen and say, "Oh, I don't want to be here." I write in *Unleash the Girls* one particular thing he said to me which was, referencing Linda who at the time, it was, I don't know if she's putting henna in her hair or something, but it had a red tinge and he said, "I've always had a soft spot for red headed Jewesses."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:23:32](#)):

And I sat there, and I couldn't believe he was saying that to me. I mean, on so many levels, even in 1990, I couldn't believe he was saying that to me and I just kind of sat there. I said, "Okay."

Alison Oswald ([01:23:56](#)):

How long did you stay at Playtex?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:24:01](#)):

Well, I had a contract to stay ... I forgot if it was for one year or two. I forget. And I say for the duration of my contract and the President of Playtex Apparel Don Franceschini came and he was a delightful person. I liked him very much and he asked me to stay after that and offered me a generous salary to stay and I said, "No, no."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:24:36](#)):

And because I was calling my own bluff like, "Who am I beyond this jogbra thing?" Because to me, it's like it's just a bra. What am I really going to do with my life? What am I really going to do with my life? Who am I as an artist?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:24:51](#)):

Because remember, all this time, I had been writing. I have been writing in my journals. Well, not periodically at this point, but what happened to Lisa? The visual artist? Who was I? Was I just about this is bra business? I couldn't believe that was all I was.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:25:12](#)):

I wanted to find out what the rest of life was going to be about and so I told Don, I said, "I'll never be as wealthy as you are." I remember this because he looked at me and he said, "My wealth is my family." And that just, that really got me.

Alison Oswald ([01:25:38](#)):

So, let's shift a little bit to talk very openly about epilepsy. Can you talk about your work with the Epilepsy Foundation and some of the stuff that you're doing?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:25:51](#)):

Oh, well, I served on the Epilepsy Foundation's Board for nine years and was really happy to do so. In fact, when I couldn't be on the board anymore, it made me very unhappy because I felt like my work was done. But they only allow you to have three terms so and what I ... I was so amazed to ... Up until that point, my epilepsy although had been a pretty private affair, I kept it under wraps because there is a stigma still attached, and people really don't understand it.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:26:38](#)):

Partly because epilepsy manifests so differently. It's hard. You can't generalize about epilepsy. There are many different kinds of seizures and it's unpredictable. So people with epilepsy often pass as like anybody else and the general public I think finds it difficult to deal with, but so it was very private for me until I went and with the Epilepsy Foundation, there's a whole community of people that knew about epilepsy, talked about it openly and it was fabulous.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:27:18](#)):

So, imagine my surprise when I discovered I was the first person with epilepsy to actually sit on the board. This was 1991 and the work I did there was to finally bring legitimacy to the gender differences in epilepsy and epilepsy treatment.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:27:46](#)):

For years, women had been reporting that their seizures were greater around their menses and for over 100 years, that had been dismissed as, "Oh, that's not real. That's not real, that's not real." And all the studies done around it were said to be insignificant.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:28:07](#)):

With the help of one of the staff members there, a really wonderful young woman ... Young at the time, woman, Liz [inaudible 01:28:15], we pulled together different experts from different places and I literally over a weekend made enough phone calls to raise enough money to bring all these people into a hotel in D.C. to do a white paper to say it was like different doctors and different social workers that had to do with either psychosocial issues, gynecological issues, general well-being.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:28:46](#)):

I forgot all the different ... Liz pulled them all together. It's just like, "All right, these are the people we need." Brought them into a room, we talked about all their different experiences, put

together a white paper that talked about the need for women's research and the differences in their treatment modalities and what's needed and started the whole women and epilepsy initiative. So, the research was done that was statistically significant and important, and now, it's taken for granted. Oh, yeah, which I love.

Alison Oswald ([01:29:22](#)):

So, you're not with the foundation, but what do you do with the community still?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:29:28](#)):

So then after that, a few years later, I started working with something called the Epilepsy Therapy Project which then in ... which tries to fast-forward research and then bring it to market and I was on their business advisory board.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:29:50](#)):

Then a couple of years that I was with them for a few years and then a couple of years ago, they merged with the Epilepsy Foundation which really ramped up the foundation's research push. Now, what do I do? I just am me. No, I'm just me, although, that's not true.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:30:12](#)):

Now I'm just speaking with some people at the foundation who are interested in doing some work around emotional well ... Health and epilepsy and that gets back to what I said earlier about the higher incidence of depression at the epilepsy population.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:30:37](#)):

But general emotional health which is a real thing which has to do not just with having epilepsy, but then the meds, the medication that goes along with it. You never know whether it's a medication side effect or how your brains operate. You just, you don't know and ...

Alison Oswald ([01:30:56](#)):

You referenced epilepsy in your book as a shadow teacher.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:31:01](#)):

Yeah.

Alison Oswald ([01:31:01](#)):

Can you explain that?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:31:04](#)):

Well, what I mean by that is that those things that are ... Appear to be negatives in our lives, appear to be not helpful or in the way are often teachers and so I say shadow teacher because you think, "Oh, damn. I don't want that. I wish that wasn't part of my life."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:31:31](#)):

But it's teaching you so much and epilepsy has been that. It almost, the silver linings to having epilepsy are thick in many, having to be a creative problem solver. When you can't drive, how do you get around? You have to look at the bigger picture, where are the train routes? Where are the bus routes, how do you get from A to B?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:32:04](#)):

In my case for years I was ... If I was going to have a problem with seizures, my pattern was waking up in the morning would be a high-risk time. So, I would have to have enough time in the morning to check in and see, "Okay, anything going on here?"

Lisa Lindahl ([01:32:28](#)):

And be able to either change my day, cancel my day or just figure it out and I didn't always do that successfully. One time I was in Vermont, and we'd sold to Playtex and there was a meeting in New York City, a design meeting with Playtex in New York, "Wow, I got to go."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:32:52](#)):

Hinda was already in the city, I guess. Anyway, at morning I got up, I got dressed. I went to the airport, I got on the airplane I knew I was in trouble. I thought, "Just let me get to the meeting because you never know about the timing."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:33:09](#)):

I was in a cab on my way from whatever airport into the city and I had a convulsion, grand mal convulsion in the backseat of the cab and my aura was strong enough. I tried to remember the name of the cab driver and the number. I woke up in Bellevue Hospital on a gurney and my briefcase was with me, my wallet. He hadn't even taken the fare out of my wallet. People are good.

Alison Oswald ([01:34:09](#)):

So, here's a question that I'm anxious to learn the answer to.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:34:14](#)):

Yes.

Alison Oswald ([01:34:14](#)):

Do you still run?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:34:20](#)):

No. I wish I did. Every time I see a runner, my heart goes thump, thump, thump with them. Both my knees went out. First one and then the other. In the early '80s, mid '80s or it was early and of course, I went to doctors and said, "Oh, what can you do about this?"

Lisa Lindahl ([01:34:52](#)):

Nothing, nothing and every few years, I go back to the doctors and say, "Get new knees? New knees?" And they all say, "No, you're not a candidate, you're not a candidate, you're not a candidate."

Alison Oswald ([01:35:05](#)):

What is your physical activity or outlet?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:35:09](#)):

I walk, I swim in the ocean. These days mostly I do nothing if the truth be told. Now that I'm 70, wonderful.

Alison Oswald ([01:35:25](#)):

What advice would you give to young women today that want to invent or start a company, be an entrepreneur?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:35:40](#)):

Well, those are different things, inventing and starting a company. I mean, you don't ... Do you get what I'm saying? I mean, inventing is just for the joy of it in my mind. I mean, it's new or in different way to do something or get it done or if you want to monetize it and start a company, but my advice for anyone, not just young women, for anyone who is starting a company, do it because the purpose behind what you're doing is important to you.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:36:19](#)):

To me, it seems so self-evident, but I think needs to be said never. Never start an entrepreneurial company because you want to make money. It's not going to get you through the hard times and there will be difficult times. You have to ... I strongly believe you have to start a company because you're passionate about the service or the product that you are providing.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:36:51](#)):

You just love it, or you really believe in it or something, something because if you're just doing it because you think, "Hey, it's going to make me a lot of money." The sweat, blood and tears it takes, it's not ... It's not about them.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:37:18](#)):

Having money be the final goal isn't going to get you through those days. I mean, neither Hinda nor I started this company because we thought we're going to make a lot of money. I mean, not at all, ever. It's interesting. Oh, but for women, excuse me, but for women specifically, my advice would be listen to yourself.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:37:47](#)):

Listen to your heart and your gut. I'm a big one for asking advice for everybody. Listen, to what everybody has to say, know that there will always be naysayers, there will always be people to tell you can't do it or not to do it.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:38:05](#)):

You can listen to them, but then go away, go for a walk on the beach or out into the forest or your room or wherever it is that your sanctuary is and listen to yourself. Sift through all of that and listen to yourself.

Alison Oswald ([01:38:22](#)):

What are your current creative projects? Are you painting? Are you sculpting these days?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:38:31](#)):

Currently, I'm trying to get through with all this book promotion to stay here for a lot of time, but I recently had a stroke and that has impaired my ability to do assemblage with my left hand is a little impaired. So, but I'm right handed, so I can draw and paint and the easy answer to your question so in my studio, I have two huge pieces of wood and I'm going to on which I'm going to mount two large mirrors and I'm building a 2020 sculpture is what I'm doing.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:39:28](#)):

And I'm going to invite friends in to help complete it and I'll send you a picture when I'm done. It's too hard to kind of describe what it is, but and I'm just waiting for time to actually build it and I just think I just decided this past week that what I need to do is if I schedule the day that I need everybody to come in and help plug in the last bit, then I've got to have it done, have it at least so that they can.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:40:03](#)):

Maybe that's the way to do it. Anyway, so these two huge mirrors are going to be the zeros of 2020. Anyway, that's what's on my ...

Alison Oswald ([01:40:18](#)):

Is there anything that you want to add or a question you feel we haven't asked that you would like to talk about?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:40:26](#)):

Yes. Yes, I want to talk about beauty.

Alison Oswald ([01:40:29](#)):

Go for it.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:40:29](#)):

You know me.

Alison Oswald ([01:40:30](#)):

Yeah.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:40:31](#)):

So, after I sold the business and had opened my ... Created studio space for myself and I was asking myself what really matters. What really matters and the answer that came, I was standing in front of a window and the natural world was outside and I heard a Blue jay call and I was transported back to when I was a child and I had heard a Blue jay call.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:41:16](#)):

And when I was a child, what that done for me is I had immediately, I was maybe this tall and I had immediately become one with everything around me. With the trees and the leaves and the air and the light and the Blue jay. There's no separation between me and all of that and it's the sense of oneness and I remembered that, and I thought, "The answer about what really matters is that oneness." And how do you get there? And the answer was beauty.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:41:58](#)):

When we remember and experience true beauty, not glamour. I mean, in our current culture, we think glamor and glitz is beauty and it isn't. Glamor is ephemeral. It's what's trendy today. True beauty is eternal. It's concrete, it doesn't change and we all, everyone has an experience of it, and I've had people say to me, "Oh, you're so naive. You're so first world. What about people ..."

Lisa Lindahl ([01:42:28](#)):

I'm not naive, not in the least. Everyone has an experience of beauty. In fact, and that experience is what unites us all because it's available to everyone all the time and we have allowed so many distractions to get in the way of that experience.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:42:58](#)):

Well, it took me 10 years to figure out how to say what I just said, and I went back to graduate school and this is not new. The Navajo, the Diné culture was centered around the experience of beauty. Physics knows this. There's a lot of science around this and we now, just we have to reclaim true beauty.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:43:28](#)):

Our culture, the Western world as well as the Eastern world. We need to reclaim true beauty in order to shift the current paradigm and get back on track. We are not helpless little individuals at the ... Being victims of what's going on out there.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:43:57](#)):

We are nodes on the oneness and if we practice beauty, we can shift the paradigm and so the book *Beauty As Action* although this is not perfect, is it actually has practices because this is all blah-blah-blah until you say, "Well, how do you do that?"

Lisa Lindahl ([01:44:19](#)):

And so that's why I wrote the book. It's like, "Okay, this is how you actually do it. This is how ..." And it doesn't cost anything, you don't have to go out and buy any. This is how each one of us can practice beauty every day and it's not new. It's just sort of casting in the light of beauty, reclaiming true beauty.

Alison Oswald ([01:44:41](#)):

Thank you. Anything else? [inaudible 01:44:46]?

Lisa Lindahl ([01:44:46](#)):

That's it.

Alison Oswald ([01:44:47](#)):

Thank you, Lisa.

Lisa Lindahl ([01:44:49](#)):

Well, thank you. Thank you, Alison.

Casey Adams ([01:44:52](#)):

Get room tone. 30 seconds of silence starting now.