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## Erving Always Behaved Like A Guttersnipe, Teasing and Mocking With His Back Against the Wall

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## Remembering Erving Goffman

### **Arlene Daniels: Erving Always Behaved Like A Guttersnipe, Teasing and Mocking With His Back Against the Wall**

This interview with Dr. Arlene Daniels, professor emeritus of sociology at the Northwestern University, was recorded over the phone on February 5, 2008. Dmitri Shalin transcribed the interview, after which Dr. Daniels edited the transcript and gave her permission to post the present version in the Goffman Archives. Breaks in the conversation flow are indicated by ellipses. Supplementary information and additional materials inserted during the editing process appear in square brackets. Undecipherable words and unclear passages are identified in the text as "[?]".

[Posted 05-30-09]

**Shalin:** Greetings, is this Arlene?

**Daniels:** Yes, is this Dmitri?

**Shalin:** Yes, this is Dmitri. How are you?

**Daniels:** Forgive me for being so late. I got home late and was showering.

**Shalin:** That's quite all right.

**Daniels:** It won't matter to you, but I am now squeaky clean.

**Shalin:** [**Laughing**]. First of all let me ask you – would it be OK if I record our conversation and then send you the transcript?

**Daniels:** Of course it will.

**Shalin:** Wonderful. Thanks a lot. I don't know if you had a chance to look at any of the interviews.

**Daniels:** No, I am afraid I haven't.

**Shalin:** That's OK. The setup is very flexible, and it usually goes like this. We start with how you came across Erving's work, the impression Goffman made on you when you met him, and from there on we can take it in any direction – talk about Goffman's scholarship, and so on.

**Daniels:** I started my own memoirs but I can't find the one on the computer. I will start with [how I learned about Goffman]. Before I met him, Erving Goffman was talked up by my professor Tamotsu Shibutani at UC

Berkeley. He had gotten us to buy an early copy of Erving's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. It was printed before it became a famous paperback. I can't remember the name of [the publisher].

**Shalin:** It was first published in 1956 by the University of Edinburg.

**Daniels:** That was it, yes. We bought that. I remember it cost a dollar, some really small [amount]. When we ultimately learned that Erving was coming to Berkeley, we were all agog. Shibutani had set a great store by him.

**Shalin:** When did you enroll at Berkeley?

**Daniels:** I was an undergraduate at Berkeley from 1948 to 1952. And in 1952 I enrolled into the graduate program when Herbert Blumer came. I'd written about that in some of my articles which are around in various resources. I can send you the reference.

**Shalin:** I would appreciate that. I would like to add them to the Goffman archive's section that houses critical assessments of Erving's work.

**Daniels:** I will send you the bibliography. Erving came and spoke very briefly at something called "Sociology in the Sputnik Era," which was given at San Francisco State College. And afterwards there was a little reception at Carlo Lastrucci's house, he was then a professor of sociology at San Francisco State. And I went to that reception with my friend Tom Scheff who was a colleague of mine at the time. We met Erving at the party, and I was quite interested and anxious to meet this little sociologist. I was chattering away quite compulsively about Berkeley and my place in it, what I thought about being a graduate student there. I said so much about the difficulties while Erving sat there very quietly. [And then he said], "I can see how it might be difficult for a shy person like yourself."

**Daniels:** I was so mortified. As Tom Scheff said later, "I saw your head sliced off and roll under the nearest table."

**Shalin:** [Laughing]. Was Erving mocking you?

**Daniels:** Of course he was mocking but doing it very quietly. I was mortified, but I persevered as best I could. I was interested in Erving, very interested, so when he came to Berkeley, I marked him out and watched for him. And at some early social gathering that Blumer concocted, I don't remember what it was, Erving Goffman came up I to me. I was working on my dissertation at the time, and I was having a terrible time with it. It took practically a pound of See's candies to take me through half a chapter.

**Shalin:** [**Laughing**]. That was your self-medication.

**Daniels:** Yes. I gained a good deal of weight. He came up to me and said, "Hello there, Mrs. Daniels. I see you've gained a great deal of weight. Are you not getting along with your husband?" And I took a deep breath. . . . I was tempted to go on and on about my dissertation, but I just said, "I understand that you and your wife are thinking about reconciling, professor Goffman. I wonder if that is wise." And he just laughed. He put his hand around me and said, "Common, kid. I'll buy you a drink."

**Shalin:** Do you remember when this encounter might have taken place, approximately?

**Daniels:** That's an interesting question.

**Shalin:** Erving came to Berkeley in 1958.

**Daniels:** Then it must have been 1958 or '59. That was when I was writing my dissertation.

**Shalin:** OK, quite early, when he just joined the faculty at Berkeley.

**Daniels:** Quite early.

**Shalin:** And the reception you mentioned earlier – that must have also been early.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes. That was when he had just arrived.

**Shalin:** Which means, it was probably in 1958.

**Daniels:** Yes. And that interchange sort of set the tone of our relationship, which was quite challenging you might say.

**Shalin:** Do you mind me interrupting you for a second?

**Daniels:** Sure.

**Shalin:** How do you think Erving take your comment? Did he see your reply as a smart retort?

**Daniels:** He laughed a little. He was pleased that I could, ah . . .

**Shalin:** Have a comeback.

**Daniels:** Yes.

**Shalin:** OK, I understand now.

**Daniels:** So he and I had that kind of a relationship. To fast forward a little, when I was working on my dissertation, I went to a seminar of Erving's, one of the first he gave, and my husband was in this seminar as well. He was taking his degree in hospital administration at that time, his masters in public health. He was bored to death with courses in public administration and avoided them as much as he could and took the seminar instead. One of the courses he took was Erving Goffman's. . . . I think this was his first seminar in social psychology. I don't remember what it was called. I was sitting on it too. And I got to know Erving because Richard wrote a paper for that seminar on his experiences in basic training in the air force.

**Shalin:** Richard is your husband?

**Daniels:** Yes. He wrote a paper on the social construction of the career fool. It was quite a good paper. Erving helped me [as] I worked with my husband to get it in shape for publication. So I saw a good deal of Erving, and I went over the paper with him. Richard did not have time to do that. After finishing his graduate program he was a resident – where was it? I guess he was a young assistant administrator at UC Medical Center, and he had no time for school. Making his paper into something publishable would have to be done by me. So I worked with Erving on it. It was interesting. When the paper was completed, at the end of the course Erving was saying, "It's a pretty good paper. It probably is worth 'B++'." I said to him angrily, "What's the difference between 'B++' and 'A--'." He laughed, and he gave Richard an "A."

**Shalin:** It was a full "A," not even an "A--"?

**Daniels:** Maybe it was, I don't remember. You know, it still passes as an "A." As I say, Richard had no more time for that, and I worked on this paper with Erving. So I saw Erving from time to time as I worked on it at this office at the top of the Wheeler Hall. He had an office up there along with the other sociology professors at that time. I really had a lot of ambivalent feelings about Erving. He was very combative, and so was I. We would go over the paper in some competitive way full tilt. But I really had a terrific crush on Erving.

**Shalin:** Was it an intellectual crush?

**Daniels:** Well, I can't remember now. I think it was a combination. I think it was more than it should have been, but of course I was a very conventional young woman and would never dream saying anything about it to

anyone. Still, I enjoyed the jostling with Erving very much. I can remember [that while] talking about the paper we would have coffee and pastries at a little place near the campus that he liked. I was chatting him up, you know, gossiping about the department or sociology. He stopped suddenly, and he said sort of angrily, "What are you trying to do to me?!" I said, "I am trying to make you into a crony" [**laughing**]. He was very afraid of intimacy, I think. Also, Erving was – and I reproached him about it a great deal over the years – not alert to how heavy his position was, how powerful he was. He always behaved like a guttersnipe, you know, teasing and . . . and . . .

**Shalin:** Mocking.

**Daniels:** . . . mocking with his back against the wall, fighting off people. He never understood noblesse oblige; he never understood that his position carried the responsibility or courtesy to those who were in a powerless position. I would reproach him about this all the time in years to come when we were at meetings together and I was rounding on at him for his behavior to somebody. I remember he once told me, although I don't remember when it was in the course of our relationship, "How is it that after seeing you I feel bad about myself for two weeks."

[**Laughter**]

**Daniels:** "I never knew I was getting through. Thank God!"

**Shalin:** Coming from Goffman, that's quite a statement.

**Daniels:** Yes. Well, I would round on him very furiously. I never gave any quarter. There were many occasions – and I will tell you about them . . .

**Shalin:** Please.

**Daniels:** . . . when his behavior was really out of line, and I would call him on it. For example, one of my friends is a sociologist younger than myself, named Joan Emerson. She has written two or three really outstanding papers, one of them is on the sociology of the pelvic examination. It's a classic to this day. She started doing her graduate work for Erving. Now, I don't know what passed between them or what upset her or made her so anxious, but she called me up . . . I was living on the peninsula at that time at Belmont she was in Berkeley. She called me and asked, "Would you please come and get me?" I had no idea what it was. I am a good friend, so I came to get her, and I was driving her down to the peninsula where I lived at Belmont to stay with us. I asked her what the problem was, and she said, "I am not going to have further to do with Erving Goffman. I wrote him a note." I said, "What did you write?" And she said, "I wrote, 'Professor Goffman, your services as

my thesis chairman are no longer required.' Signed 'Joan P. Emerson.' All typed." And I nearly lost control of the car. I mean, that was a fairly wild thing to do. But she was as reckless and wild as he. Whatever he had done, something flirtatious perhaps, whatever it was – it was beyond the pale.

**Shalin:** You have no inkling what it was.

**Daniels:** No, she would never tell.

**Shalin:** But you surmise it might have been something. . .

**Daniels:** Flirtatious, yes.

**Shalin:** Not your routine thesis problems the students have with their advisors.

**Daniels:** That's right. Or it may have something to do with her character. I have no way of knowing.

**Shalin:** Are you still in touch with Joan?

**Daniels:** Oh, yes. I see her all the time.

**Shalin:** It would be great to talk to her.

**Daniels:** I'm not sure she would . . . I'll mention it to her, I am not sure she would. She left sociology behind for another field.

**Shalin:** Maybe there is a way to pass on to her the interviews with Sherri Cavan, Jackie Wiseman, and other Erving's students who offered their recollections.

**Daniels:** I'll ask her if she is willing, and if she is, I'll get in touch with you.

**Shalin:** Of course.

**Daniels:** She pretty much left sociology behind, which I was very sad about because I thought she was very brilliant.

**Shalin:** A couple of people mentioned her name and spoke highly of her.

**Daniels:** She left sociology and took a degree as a therapist to work with children, and then she retired.

**Shalin:** Please continue. So something clearly happened.

**Daniels:** Yes. I used to tease Erving in the later years [about Joan who] took her dissertation under John Clausen. I think it would have been much better if she stayed with Erving. But she wrote a very good dissertation, and she got a number of articles out of it. I would occasionally mention her [to Goffman]. On one occasion I said to Erving, "Well, Joan is doing quite well. She is finishing her dissertation under John Clausen." And he said, "I don't want to do anything with her. I don't want . . . to have anything to do with her." I said, "It's too late for you, Erving. She has already fired you."

[Laughter]

**Daniels:** I was quite pleased to get that in.

**Shalin:** Boy, you were courageous! You stood up to him.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes, I always did that. In fact, on one occasion, and I haven't read about that, we took in a child of a colleague who became our god daughter. The parents were in Norway, and she wasn't doing well in school. We agreed to take her, and she was quite a handful. She came off that plane steaming. To give you some sense of my husband, when she asked, "What are the rules going to be – can I smoke and drink?" I was too horrified to speak, but Richard, without pausing for a minute, said, "Absolutely not! If you have any other questions, feel free to ask." They were off and running. She really met her match in Richard because he could be snottier than she was.

**Shalin:** It was a tough love.

**Daniels:** Yes. But she was quite a difficult teenager. She was fifteen and a half and steam was coming out of her ears. We had never had children, and we had to ride herd on her. It took two adults like us to ride herd on one kid. She was quite a handful. We worked on that, and she always would do things to anger and infuriate us. I was saying something about her to Erving once, and I remember him saying, "Aren't you worried that your husband is going to get into that kid stuff?" Something like that, you know.

**Shalin:** Meaning . . .

**Daniels:** I said, "Listen, if you think my husband is interested in fifteen year old snatch, you are very much mistaken." Erving was sat back by that. I could hear him laugh nervously [**laughing**] at being rounded on in that way. But he didn't offer any further remarks about my private life in our relationship, which of course was entirely professional, although there was chivying in it,

**Shalin:** It was what?

**Daniels:** Chivying – you know that word – c-h-i-v-v-y-i-n-g?

**Shalin:** I don't think I know it. Is it something like jostling?

**Daniels:** It's an English word. It means jostling, joking, and teasing.

**Shalin:** Aha, I understand.

**Daniels:** That's what we did. As I said in my memorial on Erving, I didn't realize how, although he was such an aggravating person, I had really come to love him.

**Shalin:** [**Laughing**]. And you really do love him.

**Daniels:** Yes. Which I realized after he died [**laughing**]. He was really a personage, as I am sure other people told you. In order to have a relationship with him, you pretty much had to be at his back and call and his whim. I remember saying this to him. Once he [told me] he was going up skiing with some of his friends, graduate students from my group, and I said to him, "You haven't gotten friends, Erving, just sycophants." He was a little quieted by that. I think this was true – he didn't have the ability to . . . to . . .

**Shalin:** . . . have an equal footing relationship.

**Daniels:** That's right, to have relations among equals. . . . And of course I wouldn't have anything else, so our relationship was rocky and stormy. There was one occasion [when] he was sitting on the council of the American Sociological Association.

**Shalin:** When he was elected president?

**Daniels:** That's right, and I was at the time on the board also.

**Shalin:** That was around 1981, then.

**Daniels:** Probably. I was at the council meeting, and it was customary at these meetings, at the end of the meetings, for everyone to go out for dinner together. I remember they were getting [ready for] the dinner. The executive secretary was [arranging] that. I said, "I am not going to dinner with you, Erving." And he said – it was funny – "Be nice!" [**laughing**]. I said, "Oh, very well." So I went to dinner, and it was at a Chinese restaurant. We had a big table. I looked at the menu and said, "Listen, I'll order for everybody," cause I understand Chinese food and I thought we would get a better deal if we

ordered a banquette style. And Erving rounded on me – I was sitting near him, and he said, “What are you talking about? Do you know anything about this restaurant? Do you know what you are saying?” And he went into a little tirade. And I went into a rage, “I knew I shouldn’t have come. Erving, this is the last time I go anywhere with you.” I was really chewing him out, and the couple sitting next to him, a sociologist and his wife (I can’t quite remember his name) looked really alarmed. And Erving was just . . . what he would do when I rounded on him, he would just sort of blink and kind of put head to the wind and endure it.

**Shalin:** It wasn’t Russell Dynes by any chance?

**Daniels:** No, it wasn’t.

**Shalin:** Yesterday I spoke to Russell, and he had some interesting recollections about Erving’s last couple years, including one restaurant story.

**Daniels:** That’s interesting because he wrote a very nice obituary. I remember our kidding about Erving on the escalator. He is an interesting man, Russell. But anyway, we were at this dinner, and I don’t remember whether he actually was a secretary at that time and if he organized the dinner. I was in absolute fury with [Goffman], and after all that Erving [chimes in], “What should we eat?” [**laughing**]. But I was too angry by then and said, “Everybody order for themselves.” So they ordered and did worse than they would have if they let me.

In any case, my relationship with Erving when we were on the board was quite interesting, and it created some comment. Erving was not used to sitting on boards, he didn’t quite get it. He would interrupt whenever he wanted to. He didn’t understand that there was a rather rigid system of turn taking. [You have to be] noticed by a secretary and put on a list in order to speak. At one point I [leaned ?] over the table, put my hand over his mouth, and said, “You are not to speak until it is your turn, Erving.”

**Shalin:** He was already president elect at the time.

**Daniels:** Yes, he was president elect. I mean, we had this relationship through the years.

**Shalin:** [**Laughing**]

**Daniels:** I had my hand over his mouth!

**Shalin:** Few people knew how to tame Goffman.

**Daniels:** Yes, I think I did. It didn't give me any access to him, except on those formal occasions. It wasn't possible to have a relationship with him.

**Shalin:** Why not?

**Daniels:** Well, because of the kind of person he was. He was very very wary and . . .

**Shalin:** Controlling?

**Daniels:** Yes, and also very very anxious.

**Shalin:** I'll interrupt you for a second so as not to lose this tangent, but we'll resume in a moment. You said he was anxious – can you unpack it? What was the source of his anxiety? Do you think it might have anything to with his childhood?

**Daniels:** I don't know anything about that.

**Shalin:** Or with his Jewishness?

**Daniels:** I was one of his teaching assistants when he first taught one of the great social psychology lectures, and he would just be drenched in sweat by the end of the [class]. It made him very anxious. He was very good, and he was very well prepared, but you could see that social life in general was something that was difficult for him. He felt threatened by it, you know, anxious in it. You could see that from the perspiration on his upper lip in the social situations.

**Shalin:** Was it some kind of a fear of failure? [Did he have some sort of an impostor complex?]. I am thinking of his *Presentation of Self* which tells us how eager we are to mask our backstage.

**Daniels:** I think he felt threatened by closeness, and I don't know quite why. The kind of relationship that we had was quite manicky and lively, especially toward the end of his life [when] he became much nicer.

**Shalin:** Really?

**Daniels:** At the end of his life when he remarried.

**Shalin:** When did he remarry?

**Daniels:** What?

**Shalin:** Do you know when he remarried?

**Daniels:** I don't remember but it was late in his life. He met somebody.

**Shalin:** That must have been Gillian.

**Daniels:** That was his first wife.

**Shalin:** No, his first wife was Angelica Schuyler Choate.

**Daniels:** Yes, Angelica something. Gillian Sankoff was his second wife. She was in linguistics at Penn. He married her.

**Shalin:** You don't remember when.

**Daniels:** No, I don't.

**Shalin:** His first marriage happened when he'd studied at the University of Chicago, around 1950.

**Daniels:** That might well be, yes.

**Shalin:** Did you ever meet his first wife?

**Daniels:** Oh, yes. She was a very nice woman. I went to their house for something and I went with my friend Tom Scheff. We had some business to do with Erving. She was very nice, you know, made social gestures, which Erving ignored.

**Shalin:** Like what?

**Daniels:** You know, "Please come in. How are you?" – that sort of things. She was very well mannered. She comes from a very wealthy family. I met her brother; "Choate" was her name.

**Shalin:** It's a very well known name in New England, the family going back to Mayflower.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes. I think it was a terrible burden to Erving that she committed suicide. I think he had some responsibility for that.

**Shalin:** You think so?

**Daniels:** Oh, yes.

**Shalin:** Is this something you observed or something you speculate about?

**Daniels:** This is a speculation. I didn't know either of them well enough to know what their relationship was, but I remember when Erving was separated from Angelica and they were courting again, he said, "It's exciting. The courtship is exciting."

**Shalin:** Do you know when that happened? Was it in the early '60s?

**Daniels:** Yes, I think so. I think it was then.

**Shalin:** They weren't living together.

**Daniels:** Yes, and that was difficult because they had the son Tommy.

**Shalin:** Did you know Tom?

**Daniels:** Ah-h, no. I didn't.

**Shalin:** OK.

**Daniels:** Maybe I met him once. No, I don't think I knew him at all.

**Shalin:** I spoke to some people who knew Erving during the time he did his research at St. Elizabeth's . . .

**Daniels:** Oh, yes. I knew somebody who knew Erving [in this period], guy who is now dead, [his] name is "Erwin Lynn." He was a sociologist specializing in dentistry. And he did some work on the new drugs when they were coming.

**Shalin:** I have learned from Melvin Kohn that when Erving left for Berkeley, Schuyler had stayed behind with Tom for quite a while.

**Daniels:** That might well be, yes.

**Shalin:** And so, at Berkeley they weren't always together either.

**Daniels:** They weren't. Is Mel Kohn still alive?

**Shalin:** Oh, yes. I had a nice conversation with him.

**Daniels:** Very good. I'll go to the meetings in San Francisco and maybe I'll see him there.

**Shalin:** He usually comes to meetings. Going back to what you said about Schuyler, you feel her suicide might have something to do with Erving.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes.

**Shalin:** Was it that he was difficult?

**Daniels:** Incredibly difficult! And incredibly competitive! And incredibly aggressive! I don't know what she was like, but I think the relationship was desperately wrong.

**Shalin:** You had a chance to observe the two of them together?

**Daniels:** Yes, just very briefly.

**Shalin:** Anything in particular you've noticed when you saw them together?

**Daniels:** They were not interacting at all. She was exerting herself to be polite and hospitable to guests, and Erving was paying no attention.

**Shalin:** To guests or to her?

**Daniels:** To the whole occasion.

**Shalin:** OK, he was not engaged in niceties . . .

**Daniels:** Oh, no, no. He would never do that. On a later occasion, after she had died, Erving was still . . . I think he was still living in their house on Reseda [?] wherever it was, up at the Berkeley hills. I went there with a friend of mine, another sociologist who is now dead, named Morris Daniels, who was no relation to me but who I was working with. And we went to Erving's house, and Erving was being nice to Morris but dismissive of me because I didn't have any publications at that time, or whatever.

**Shalin:** Who was dismissive to you?

**Daniels:** Erving. Morris is a very genial, nice person, he never had any [abrasive] side to him. He said, "Hallo, Erv." You know, just playing down home, and Erving said, "Would you like any refreshment? I will offer it to you, but I will not offer it to her." And I said, "Nonsense," and I went to the refrigerator and picked a Comice pear (which I like very much) and ate it [laughing]. There was some business about research, but I cannot remember much about it.

**Shalin:** Is Morris Daniels still alive?

**Daniels:** No, he is dead. You know, Erving could be so unreasonable. It was a dark night, we were reflected in the window of his living room, and he said

to me, "Stop looking at yourself! You are paying too much attention to yourself." I must have been looking at the reflection in the window. I paid no attention to him at all, and I think it was then that I got up to go and get myself a pear. Erving would just sort of pick on anything, start screaming at you, "Stop admiring yourself in the window!" You know, Morris was just puzzled by it, paid no attention to the fact that Erving and I were engaging in terrible bickering, which we usually did. When we left, I left in a huff, wouldn't thank Erving or anything like that. And Morris Daniels did that part [?]. But Erving and I did not meet often, you understand, just around professional matters. I would call him from time to time when he left for Pennsylvania or send him cards when Richard and I were in Europe.

**Shalin:** Would he reply?

**Daniels:** No, these would be gestures just I would make.

**Shalin:** He wouldn't reciprocate.

**Daniels:** No, he didn't reciprocate. I remember once we were in Paris, there were a lot of copies of Erving's work in translation there in some book store, so I wrote him about that. You know, "You are on the shelf here." But my relation with Erving was sporadic. I just tell you what I remember.

**Shalin:** That's exactly what I hoped for. What you are telling me is fresh; certain themes are familiar, of course, but the way you handled Erving is quite unique.

You know Tom Scheff.

**Daniels:** Of course!

**Shalin:** He wrote about his relationship with Erving in his recent book where he recalls doing his dissertation with Erving.

**Daniels:** Yes, he also interviewed me about my relations with Erving.

**Shalin:** How long ago?

**Daniels:** Oh, a couple of years ago.

**Shalin:** His relationship with Erving wasn't like yours, in that he couldn't take Erving on the way you did.

**Daniels:** Erving was a very difficult person, and he could be reckless. For example, there is one story – it [might be] apocryphal – I heard it from

Shibutani. Shibutani took him out to dinner at one of his favorite Chinese restaurants in the city (I used to go there with him, the Dali Yuan). Morris Janowitz was visiting, and Bill Kornhauser was along, and Goffman was along. There was some aggressive action among them. Morris Janowitz was a very aggressive man; I had some encounters with him too. And Morris Janowitz picked up a bowl of sub gum or noodles and threw it at Erving. And Erving picked up a bowl of noodles and threw it at Morris.

**Shalin:** You haven't witnessed it personally, just heard about it.

**Daniels:** That's right. I did not see it. Of course Shibutani complained afterwards that the waiter, who always was very solicitous to him, was very suspicious of him after that.

**Shalin:** I can imagine.

**Daniels:** That party made such a mess. But it sounded like the kind of things they would do. Morris Janowitz was another very difficult and aggressive man himself, a sociologist of some note, but also quite a terrible person, I thought.

**Shalin:** Maybe we could talk about Morris Janowitz someday. I have expanded the Goffman project to include other people of his era, for the contributors keep bringing up names and paint a broader panorama of that period. But please continue.

**Daniels:** Yes. What I wanted to say was that when Erving came to Chicago, he was just a young man from Canada, and sociology was terribly important to him. One of the apocryphal tales I've been told is that Everett Hughes once gave him a "B" and Erving Goffman wept.

**Shalin:** Was it after a comprehensive exam or . . .

**Daniels:** In a course.

**Shalin:** And Erving cried?

**Daniels:** Yes. And some of the people who knew him . . . perhaps you should talk to Dave Gold, who is old and retired; he still lives near the university where he taught in Santa Barbara.

**Shalin:** I don't think his name came up. I just spoke to another person who knew Erving, Joe Gusfield.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes! Joe Gusfield – he knows great anecdotes about Erving.

**Shalin:** And also Bob Habenstein. I don't know if you knew him.

**Daniels:** Ye-e-e-s, of course.

**Shalin:** He is now 94.

**Daniels:** My God! He is still alive.

**Shalin:** Do you know how to find Dave Gold?

**Daniels:** He is emeritus at Santa Barbara.

**Shalin:** I'll try to locate him. So what about Dave Gold?

**Daniels:** I'd heard some stories about Erving as a graduate student from him.

**Shalin:** The second-hand accounts are valuable as well. They let you see how memories work, how reputations are formed and transmitted. Even third-hand accounts are interesting.

**Daniels:** Dave Gold would tell what graduate school was like there.

**Shalin:** Any of the Dave's stories?

**Daniels:** I can't remember beside what I've just already told you. . . . I knew certain things about Erving from Blumer [who] of course hired him to come to Berkeley.

**Shalin:** I think Blumer came to Berkeley around 1951.

**Daniels:** No. Well, maybe.

**Shalin:** And then he hired Erving and a whole bunch of other professors.

**Daniels:** Yes, later. Blumer was very eclectic. He hired qualitative people and quantitative people and historical [sociologists].

**Shalin:** Do you know Charles Glock?

**Daniels:** Who?

**Shalin:** Charlie Glock. He was a chairman of the sociology department at Berkeley.

**Daniels:** Yes, he hired Charles Glock.

**Shalin:** Charlie sent me his memoir about Goffman and Blumer.

**Daniels:** Did he? I would like to see it.

**Shalin:** I hope you can access our web site.

**Daniels:** I will look at it. I haven't done it yet, but I will do that.

**Shalin:** You mentioned hearing Blumer's story about Erving.

**Daniels:** Well, I remember telling Blumer my stories about Erving. Blumer was saying [that] Erving's theories of presentation of self were so curious. [His point was] that Erving wrote about the self as an actor, but he was himself an uncontrollable actor. He didn't behave as his theories would indicate he might.

**Shalin:** Was it Blumer's wording that Erving was an uncontrollable actor?

**Daniels:** Yes. Blumer and I were on a plane together, going to a sociology meeting, I guess. We sat together, and I told him my various [Erving's] stories, which he was interested in, and he said it was so curious that Erving had all those theories but behaved so differently from them.

**Shalin:** That's what I find so intriguing. His theory and his life seem to feed on each other, but they also contradict each other.

**Daniels:** Yes.

**Shalin:** I believe that Erving's entire corpus is crypto-autobiographical. From his early article on manipulating class symbols that he wrote when he'd dated Schuyler . . .

**Daniels:** I never read that.

**Shalin:** . . . who came from a high society . . .

**Daniels:** Yes, and he was a guttersnipe.

**Shalin:** So this provincial boy from Manitoba married into a family that new something about class.

**Daniels:** I haven't read that, I really should.

**Shalin:** The article is on our site. I'll help you find it. But back to Blumer, he was interested in your observations.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes! He was very interested in the stories I told. He was a good friend to me, and I was a great admirer of his – later in life. Earlier I was a very rebellious and wicked student [**laughing**].

**Shalin:** Wicked?

**Daniels:** I was his student, and I'd written about that too. I have to send you [my stuff].

**Shalin:** I would love to see any of your recollections that are in print. I am sure you will find interesting what Jackie Wiseman, Sherri Cavan, and others have to say.

**Daniels:** Did you get any stories from John Irwin?

**Shalin:** Yes, he sent me his memoir.

**Daniels:** Very good!

**Shalin:** It is posted on our site.

**Daniels:** And John Lofland – you also have him.

**Shalin:** John Lofland has published some things about Goffman, and that's what we have.

**Daniels:** I haven't seen it. I disapprove of John Lofland, but in any case it doesn't matter. I was a little older, I came earlier in Goffman's career than they did. I was in that first crop. I took Erving's seminar [but] I was only auditing it because I was already a candidate for the Ph.D.

**Shalin:** Who did you write your thesis with?

**Daniels:** I wrote my dissertation with a very nice man named Hanan Silvin. Shibusaki was by that time fired.

**Shalin:** Was he? I thought he failed to get his tenure at Berkeley?

**Daniels:** That's right, he didn't get it. And I [entered ?] as a qualitative sociologist and came down as a survey researcher and did my dissertation with a man called Hanan Silvin, who is now dead also, but he was a very nice man.

**Shalin:** How do you spell it?

**Daniels:** H-a-n-a-n. Se-l-v-i-n. He would be very peripheral to your study. I wrote a dissertation in which I had very little interest, which was not in my own field. It was a survey research. I got through, but I was a disappointment to Shibutani, because my master's thesis was much noted, although I didn't know it at the time. Afterwards I heard about that.

**Shalin:** You might have heard about Rodney Stark.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes!

**Shalin:** He contributed a memoir as well.

**Daniels:** Did he? I am surprised. I didn't realize he would have much to do with Erving.

**Shalin:** He didn't, but he interacted with him at Berkeley, as well as with Schuyler.

**Daniels:** That's interesting. I didn't know that.

**Shalin:** But go ahead.

**Daniels:** As I said, I was there much earlier than Rodney or Bob.

**Shalin:** They were there mostly since the early '60s while you started in the 1950s.

**Daniels:** '52 was when I started graduate work.

**Shalin:** Just as Blumer came in.

**Daniels:** Yes, and I finished just as they were coming in. I finished in either '59 or '60. I am not sure.

**Shalin:** That's when you defended your Ph.D. thesis.

**Daniels:** Yes, that's right. And it was a thesis on dentists. It was workmanlike but not the kind of work for which I am known.

**Shalin:** Did you interact with Erving when he was dying?

**Daniels:** No. Well, yes I did, because I tried to be supportive when he couldn't come to the meeting and Joan Huber [took over as] a vice president. I sent him a letter or a card or something, and I got various people on the council to write on and sign and sent it to him. And I talked about it

with him. I called him up. He was very pleased. He said it was such a nice letter. He was very glad to get it.

**Shalin:** Would you remember roughly when it was?

**Daniels:** When he was dying.

**Shalin:** He died in November of 1982. That must have been the summer of 1982 or thereabout.

**Daniels:** Yes, it was at the end of the summer, after the meetings.

**Shalin:** The meeting was probably in August.

**Daniels:** In August, yes.

**Shalin:** Do you know who read his address?

**Daniels:** I guess it was Joan Huber?!

**Shalin:** I recall reading somewhere that it was John Lofland who read it.

**Daniels:** I am not sure that his address was read. I seem to think it was just published later.

**Shalin:** It was published in 1983 in ASR. . . .

**Daniels:** Anyway, I was talking to him on the phone and he was saying things like, "Gee, it would have been something to have the great suite at the hotel!" And I said, "Erving you are in this terrible condition, why are you even thinking about things like that." Cause this was not a proper thing to say. When I got angry with him, he would say, "Now now, pussy." He was [trying to be] soothing to me because I'd gotten so angry. So I'd just start exploding at him at any time, and I was exploding at him then . . .

**Shalin:** Was it a kind of cooling the mark out that he did on you?

**Daniels:** Yes. Well, he was soothing me, you know. Really, what I was saying, and I didn't put it that roughly, but what I was saying was that at the time like this, at a time when you are dying, you might think about more serious things.

**Shalin:** Sounds like he was kind of wistful, imagining the meeting he would miss.

**Daniels:** Yes, yes.

**Shalin:** It must have meant a lot to him. How do you explain that the man who showed no interest in organizational niceties suddenly decided to run for . . .

**Daniels:** Exactly, that's what I said! I said, "I didn't vote for you, Erving. I don't think you are appropriate."

**Shalin:** [Laughing]

**Daniels:** I wanted for Elise Boulding to be elected. That would have been better. Of course, Erving was elected. In any case, he sort of had to feel his way around. And I don't know why he wanted that, but he did. He would have been an interesting president if he had lasted [laughing]. We used to have run-ins on the board. Towards the end I did go out to have a dinner with him one more time. That was the meeting in Washington, I think.

**Shalin:** That must have been a year before.

**Daniels:** Yes, he was president elect then.

**Shalin:** That must have been in 1981.

**Daniels:** And we were all at a dinner, and I think Mel Kohn was there too, and some other people I wasn't too fond of. Erving and one woman [was there] who was on the council at the time, her name escapes me right now, but she teaches at UCLA, I think. She is a pretty fancy sociologist, and she is married to a sociologist.

**Shalin:** If you recall her name, let me know. Perhaps I can track her.

**Daniels:** She and Erving and I had a wonderful time; we walked back together to the hotel after the dinner, laughing and talking and having a great time. Erving and I were of course jostling at one another, and she was admiring it, listening to us and enjoying it. Erving and I were like excitable babies together. We would laugh and scream and insult one another and joke and jest at a pretty high level, I guess. She was interested.

**Shalin:** He really enjoyed bantering with you, and the fact that you could take him on his terms.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes. He loved that. . . . He really liked me. And I miss him to these days, to tell you the truth. There aren't many people like that. And of course I am not allowed . . . You know I am not a spring chicken, I am 78 now, but in those days I was an "enfant terrible." I started one of my articles like that, "I used to be an enfant terrible and now I am an eminence grise."

**Shalin:** Now you are a part of the establishment.

**Daniels:** Yes. My dear Richard tells me, "It's not your place to call yourself an 'eminence grise'." And Richard was always after me about my behavior with Erving. He said, "You really shouldn't engage in that kind of behavior with him."

**Shalin:** Richard didn't mind it?

**Daniels:** I beg your parson?

**Shalin:** Richard was giving you warnings . . .

**Daniels:** No, he was trying to get me to behave better, to behave like a mensch, like a grownup. My husband is very very good that way. My character has been improved by my being married to him for so long, although I am not perfect yet [**laughing**].

**Shalin:** He also met Erving.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes, he was in his class.

**Shalin:** Would be interesting to get his take on Erving. Did I speak earlier to him?

**Daniels:** Yes, he spoke to you when I was [busy].

**Shalin:** Maybe I could speak to him someday.

**Daniels:** You could, but he didn't pay much attention at all that. He wasn't a sociologist.

**Shalin:** But he talked to Erving, and he talked to you.

**Daniels:** Yes, he talked a great deal, and he was always cautioning me not to behave so wildly. As I said to other people about my husband, the reason I have so much . . . ebullience at my age, is that I had a long and happy married life. I had always known that no matter how badly I behaved, to put it metaphorically, I can throw myself anywhere in the world, and before my head hits the cobblestones, my husband would catch me and tell me, "I told you not to do that, darling!"

**Shalin:** What a wonderful metaphor.

**Daniels:** But he would catch me, and he always has.

**Shalin:** You are lucky.

**Daniels:** Yes, I have been very very fortunate.

**Shalin:** Arlene, do you mind if I go back to your first encounters with Erving? How would you describe his physical appearance, the way he dressed, and so on? What was his height, for instance?

**Daniels:** Well, you know that he was very short, very little. And I was quite surprised when I saw him to find that very boyish Jewish guy. He looked like some of my relations, really. I think he was as feisty as he was in many ways because he was very short, terribly short. And I said to him once when I was visiting him in Pennsylvania (I stopped there once on my way to somewhere else), I remember saying this to him, which made him nervous and he pretended not to hear it, "You are called 'little Erving' not because you are short in stature, but because you are mean spirited."

**Shalin:** Who said that?

**Daniels:** I said this to Erving. He pretended not to hear it, but I know that he did hear it. He could be . . .

**Shalin:** Did people really referred to him as "little Erving"?

**Daniels:** People did say "little Erving." He hated it! But he was very short.

**Shalin:** I heard estimates of Erving's height ranging from 5'1 to 5'8.

**Daniels:** Much closer to 5'1 than 5'8.

**Shalin:** Something like 5'3, 5'4.

**Daniels:** Oh, yes, he was very short. But he was very muscular and very aggressive. There is one apocryphal story I have. The truck driver parked [in a way that] he blocked Erving who couldn't get out. Erving let himself into that truck and pounded on the horn until the truck driver came out. And Erving really chewed him out something terrible. And the truck driver was apologetic instead of pounding Erving into the ground, and moved his car. Erving was really . . .

**Shalin:** . . . mad about it.

**Daniels:** Erving was in his way quite macho, you know. He didn't want to have anybody to take advantage of him. That's what I was reproaching him for. In his fear of being taken advantage of, he was taking advantage of

people. And I would tell him about it. He was always afraid of being taken . . . I would point that out to him in tipping: it is much easier to tip over than to tip under.

**Shalin:** What kind of tipper was he?

**Daniels:** That's what we were arguing about. He wanted it to be exactly right. He didn't want to put anything extra on. I would say, "In your fear of putting something extra, you would sometimes not put enough."

**Shalin:** Was it that he was stingy or just upholding a convention?

**Daniels:** I don't know. I think he wanted to be just right. But I pointed out that that would make him being stingy on occasion.

**Shalin:** What kind of dresser he was?

**Daniels:** Well, I don't recall too much about it. He dressed somewhat informally . . . in pale linens, I recall. I don't recall much about his dress, although when he taught, he always dressed formally. And his lectures were great, I enjoyed them very much.

**Shalin:** Could you give me a sense of his lecturing style? You attended some of his classes, what kind of teacher Erving was?

**Daniels:** Oh, yes, I was in his first seminar, and then I attended his great lecture course in '58.

**Shalin:** Did you take any of his classes for a grade or just sat on it?

**Daniels:** I never took his class for a grade. I was already a candidate before that. He was brilliant, absolutely brilliant!

**Shalin:** Any elements of his teaching style stand out in your memory?

**Daniels:** He would use anecdotes a lot. He would call up scenes, and then of course you could challenge him from the audience, [as] I did frequently. About how much you could tell from this sort of things that he would use as examples. I remember once he told us that you could tell a lot about people from the kind of cars they drove, from their appearances. I was a stickler and said, "Well, they could inherit things like that." And he smiled at me. I mean, I was far out with my example. His lectures were very good. My husband took his course and thought he was excellent. I must say, although there is no question Erving was a brilliant man, and he strove to excel at whatever he did, when he dressed – and by the way he was a natty dresser –

he dressed stylishly and carefully. I don't remember much about it, but it was a well thought out appearance.

**Shalin:** There was aforethought in his presentation of self.

**Daniels:** His courses were brilliantly constructed. And I have to say, I really admire him a lot. I didn't realize it so much when he was alive, but he was an incandescent spirit. I admired that a lot. And he was so brilliant, and he was also like me in that he was excitable. I mean, we would both slide out of control so easily. I was talking to him on the phone once about a visit by Ronald Lang who was a guest at this research institute where I worked. I was very impressed with Ronald Lang, and I had arranged for meeting with him and a sociologist who was visiting at the time, the woman named Yee Chuang Lu. I called him up and said, "Dr. Lange, I would like you to meet Dr. Lu, we'll all be together, and I started laughing hysterically because of the idea of all these doctors. I said to Erving, it was like, "We three doctors went to sea in a pea green boat" – I was thinking about the *Owl and the Pussycat*. I don't know if you know that work. Anyway, when I snapped out of control, Erving would snap out of control. The things that I thought were funny, were things that he thought were funny, you know, grotesque or inappropriate. He would laugh at the same things that I did, and we did get along famously because of that.

**Shalin:** Do you know how he was as a grader?

**Daniels:** Hard. He was also in some ways – and I disapproved of that a lot – very judgmental. He was not exactly malevolent but . . . There was one woman in the graduate school dressed oddly like a Shepardsess or something, and she was very provocative in a day when there wasn't much of sexual activity. I don't even remember her name now, but he thought she was an inappropriate graduate student, and he got her thrown out. He pursued her, he was vindictive about that.

**Shalin:** He chased her out of his class or out of graduate school?

**Daniels:** Graduate school.

**Shalin:** Just because of the way she dressed?

**Daniels:** It wasn't that. Well, she was odd, she really was. Her views of sociology were odd, but I thought there was plenty of room in sociology for odd.

**Shalin:** Strange, his entire life Erving was studying oddballs.

**Daniels:** Yes. He had very high standards for the profession, and he would hold students to his requirements. People like Sherri Cavan who wrote her dissertation with him – you know her . . .

**Shalin:** Yes.

**Daniels:** He put her through all kinds of things, which she would master. She was a good student. She is a brilliant woman, I think, but crazy as a loon. Anyway, I never see her any longer. Never mind about that. . . . I don't want to bad mouth Sherri Cavan. She is a good sociologist, or Jackie Wiseman for that matter.

**Shalin:** What kind of politics do you think Erving subscribed to? How did he see the student movement at Berkeley?

**Daniels:** I don't know. I don't think he was interested in that sort of things.

**Shalin:** He wasn't.

**Daniels:** Not that I know of. No. And I really pretty much told you everything I can think about Erving at this moment.

**Shalin:** We should wind it down.

**Daniels:** Yes, I am tired.

**Shalin:** Maybe some other time we could talk about Shibutani and Blumer.

**Daniels:** Oh, I would love to talk about them. . . . I loved them both, and I worshiped Shibutani. In many ways Shibutani was my father.

**Shalin:** Maybe we could chat about him next week.

**Daniels:** Yes, I would be glad to talk.

**Shalin:** Arlene, this is marvelous stuff, and I am grateful to you.

**Daniels:** Well, I am glad to talk about it, and since I am very [slow ?] writing my memoirs, maybe I should leave it to you.

**Shalin:** Once you get the transcript from me, you will have the bulk of your memoir in place, and you can always add more.

**Daniels:** Yes, I will go on my computer, but perhaps not today, and give you my bibliography.

**Shalin:** If you come across any kind of mementos related you Erving – letters, papers, and so on – please let me know.

**Daniels:** I am not into keeping stuff, but I will [look]. I will let you know if I find anything.

**Shalin:** Thank you so much.

**Daniels:** You're welcome, and it was nice to talk to you, Dmitri.

**Shalin:** It was nice talking to you, too.

**Daniels:** Bye bye

**Shalin:** Perhaps someday I could talk to your husband as well.

**Daniels:** Yes, I will mention it to him.

**Shalin:** OK. Thanks a lot.

**Daniels:** Bye bye.

**[End of the recording]**

## **Addendum**

Arlene Daniels offered these recollections during a conversation in San Francisco, August 14, 2009, and approved posting them in the Goffman Archivws.

[Posted 08-17-09].

When Gertrude, wife of Philip Selznick, died, Erving made a casual remark to Arlie Hochschild, "Gertrude finally lost her stutter." Arlie told Goffman that such comments were inappropriate.

In the 60's I have heard that Goffman had casual affairs with graduate students and young faculty in the profession. I had something of a crush on Erving but there was nothing between us. When I'd mockingly move close to Erving with my bosom heaving, Goffman would say, "Arlene, don't be like this." Once I visited Erving in house in Philadelphia and jokingly removed my shoes, saying, "It's comfortable here; I better put on my sleepers." Goffman got upset and nervous.