



“Driving While Blind”

Fabled Asp Audio-Archives co-created with the StoryCorps Listening Project
<http://storycorps.org/>

Laura Bock in conversation with Sally Goldin on March 19, 2009
(Recorded at the San Francisco StoryBooth, located in the Jewish Contemporary Museum; Interview ID # SFB000237)

LAURA BOCK: Here was this Jewish feminist conference, and the workshop that I saw I immediately was the Red Diaper Babies. Why don't you explain what it is?

SALLY GOLDIN: It's a Red Diaper Baby are those children whose parents belong to the Communist Party. Thus, the red diapers.

LAURA BOCK: Uh-hm. We grew up in the '50s.

SALLY GOLDIN: Yeah.

LAURA BOCK: Late '40s and '50s, when it was a really, really scary time to be an activist, communist, socialist –

SALLY GOLDIN: Right.

LAURA BOCK: ... trying to work for social justice movements. My family – we were – I was taught to be afraid of the FBI coming to the door.

SALLY GOLDIN: I mean, I also had that. You know, don't open the door. The FBI could come and take you off to jail, you know?



LAURA BOCK: Uh-hm.

SALLY GOLDIN: But my parents, they never hid anything. And my mother ran for state senate on this – on the ALP, with W.E.B. DuBois. You know? It's like –

LAURA BOCK: Say what the ALP –

SALLY GOLDIN: American Labor Party.

LAURA BOCK: My parents, the advice I was given when I went away to college was, “Don't get arrested for anything. For drunkenness, or drugs or anything else. Save it for something that, you know, is a cause.

SALLY GOLDIN: And wasn't in college that you lost your sight?

LAURA BOCK: No. That was in graduate school.

SALLY GOLDIN: Oh, graduate school. That's right.

LAURA BOCK: Yeah, when I went to graduate school, and suddenly after my first year back east, in Massachusetts, everything went black. And I lost my entire sight. My entire vision went away. Fortunately, a bit of it came back. So basically, for all these years, since 1971, I've been legally blind. I use one of those white canes, and with red tips. And I get around pretty well, and there's still things I can't do. I totally miss driving – still, after all these years. I totally miss picking up book and reading.

SALLY GOLDIN: [*laughs*].

LAURA BOCK: Myself. Although the funny thing is, Sally, when I came out as a lesbian in '81, suddenly I was able to read six or seven lesbian romance novels. And then my vision went away.



SALLY GOLDIN: And then you got to drive in Hawaii.

LAURA BOCK: Yeah. So I got to drive once. Sally and I were in Hawaii, on a vacation, and Sally always knew that I wanted – I just missed driving. I want to drive one more time. And at one point, we were in a rural area, and Sally –

SALLY GOLDIN: Small country road.

LAURA BOCK: And Sally pulled the car over and said, “Okay, let’s do it.” And I said, “No. No.”

SALLY GOLDIN: You know, I just felt –

LAURA BOCK: In the moment.

SALLY GOLDIN: ... this is something she has wanted to do for so long. So she gets into the driver’s seat, and I – you know, (*indiscernible*) to where the brake and this thing was.

LAURA BOCK: But I had driven before I lost my sight, and I was a good driver.

SALLY GOLDIN: Right.

LAURA BOCK: So I buckled up.

SALLY GOLDIN: And she used to tell me that she was a good driver.

LAURA BOCK: And I did things like adjust mirrors. I couldn’t see through the mirrors, but I adjusted mirrors.

SALLY GOLDIN: (*laughs*).



LAURA BOCK: Then I took the key that was still in. I found the key and I turned on the motor. Vroom-vroom-vroom. Oh, my God, my heart went. And I was gripping the steering wheel, really hard, with both my hands. And I said, “Okay, Sally, tell me when.” She said, “Okay. Now.”

So I pulled out into this road. Now, the good thing about the day it – the road had recently been blacktopped, with a bright white line in the middle. And there was also a bright white line on the edge of the road. So I just thought I’d have to stay within two lines, right? And I was driving and driving, and then suddenly, I said, “Ahh, Sally, I think I’m going really, really too fast.” And she said, “Laura, you’re going 15 miles an hour.”

SALLY GOLDIN: *(laughs)*.

LAURA BOCK: And then I said, “Sally, I think there’s a car coming up behind me. What’ll I do?” And she said, “Just calm. Just keep it – what you’re doing. They’ll go around you.” And the car did. I don’t think I was breathing the entire time. And then, finally, I guess you saw a sign that says a right or left turn only?

SALLY GOLDIN: Well, it started to curve.

LAURA BOCK: The curve. And you said, “do you think it’s time that maybe you pull over and we change places?” I said, “Oh, my God. Okay.” So I didn’t know how much lip of the road I had, you know? And so I did pull us over into a lot of weeds and off the road, but we didn’t get stuck. It was the – one of the highlights – you could forget intellectual, you could forget movements, victories. That was one of the highlights.

[end]