INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR CONNIE BERMAN

Martin Wolgen and Andrew Morris
March 3rd, 2014

Key
MW: Martin Wolgen
AM: Andrew Morris
CB: Connie Berman

Martin Wolgen: This is Martin Wolgen.

Andrew Morris: And Andrew Morris.

Connie Berman: And I’m Connie Berman and they’re interviewing me for their class with Tyler Priest.

AM: I think we’ll start off with where you were born and how you grew up.

CB: Oh, okay, I was born in Ohio. Canton, Ohio and my folks moved to Maine when I was twelve, and that’s where they still live. Because I was already in high school when I moved there I refused to get a Maine accent. I went to college in the Midwest, I went to graduate school in the Midwest, and I’ve lived in the Midwest longer than anywhere else. So, there are lots of ways in which I’m a Midwesterner.

AM: Yeah. Did, uh, did you go to, like for your graduate school and your four years, did you go to Iowa or did you go to a—-

CB: I went to Carlton College, which is in Minnesota as an undergraduate, clearly they wanted someone from Maine because that was geographic distribution, and then I went to the University of Wisconsin for my Ph.D. After that, we had, my husband has a postdoc, we traveled around the world a little bit, we lived in Norway for a year, we lived in Vancouver, British Columbia for three years, and we lived in Washington D.C. for almost ten. And during part of that time I was an adjunct, I finished my degree while we were in Vancouver.

AM: What did you guys do while you were out of the country?

CB: Well, my husband is a physicist and he had a postdoc in Norway. So we lived in Trondheim, which is way way up and learned to cross country ski—

AM: Very cool.

CB: —knit Norwegian sweaters and it was a very interesting year. Very interesting year because you kind of saw the passage of the seasons in that very estranged light and dark sort of situation, it was fun.
MW: This is a little bit off-topic, but you said you went to Wisconsin. I wrote a paper a while back about Malcolm Rohrbough.

CB: Yeah.

MW: He also went to Wisconsin, did you guys know each other there at all?

CB: No.

MW: Oh, okay

CB: No, but he was here when I came. There were a whole, there was a whole number of us at that time who came from Wisconsin, I think. Leslie Schwam, of course is, but there were, maybe there were more than I can think of now. So, anyhow.

AM: You can pick one, it doesn’t matter.

MW: So, what was your family life like, did you have a lot of siblings or?

CB: I’m the oldest of six.

MW: Oh, okay, that’s a pretty big family.

CB: And my sister and I were the oldest and there were four boys after us. We lived in a small town in Maine where our nearest neighbor was half a mile away. Rode the school bus to school and when we came home, I had a horse and I would ride the horse.

AM: When did you guys move from Maine? How old were you when you moved?

CB: Oh, we moved there, we moved to there when I was twelve.

AM: Oh, okay

CB: And, as I said, my parents still live there, same, different house, same farm. And then I went off to school. I got married after I was an undergraduate and then trailed my husband around for a while and then he trailed me here.

AM: Very cool

MW: So, what kinda spurred your interest in history, maybe at a young age, or in college perhaps?

CB: I wanted to be a classical archaeologist and so I started as a classics major. And I didn’t like doing the kind of literary analysis that they wanted me to do, you know? Write a ten page paper on Aristophanes, you know I’d end up—I would write a ten page paper on the history of Aristophanes. So I soon learned that it was actually history that I liked better, and I was particularly well-prepared to be a Medieval Historian because I had those languages which you still need for Medieval History, so that was—
**MW:** What languages were those?

**CB:** Well, I, primarily Latin, because most of the documents I work on are still in Latin. I only very occasionally use the Greek that I studied as an undergraduate. And then I did French then, I’ve subsequently done Italian, some German and from the year in Norway I learned a little bit of Norwegian, Danish.

**AM:** What, what were you studying from here to now, like what, like give a brief summary of what you’ve, you know, some of your—

**CB:** My doctorate dissertation and my master’s were both on books of real estate documents called charters which are one of the things which are very widely preserved in Medieval manuscripts. And they were of, primarily of gifts of land and property to monastic communities. So I wrote my dissertation so I wrote my dissertation on a group of abbeys of Cistercian monks, they’re now usually called Traps in Southern France in the 12th and 13th Centuries and that was partially based on published documents and partially based on archival sources. So I got to travel to France and work in the archives. It was fun. And after I finished my Ph.D. I published that as a book and then I decided to do some work on the nuns in the order, and the book that I started then I’m still writing, and it’s, although I’ve written two or three things in between, I’m still pushing along with that and so its allowed me to go back and look at things in France and I still have microfilms that are from early trips working on this project, so, I'm hoping to finish it this spring.

**AM:** So, you couldn’t pinpoint something that, you know, like maybe not specifically but, you know, like because, like I know certain, like, I know people like myself, like I can pinpoint something that really sparked me into being, like, you know, what I want to do, you don’t think you could do that?

**CB:** Well, I will say that I hated history in high school because it was so badly presented and was all sort of revolutionary battles and stuff like that. I, I was interested in anthropology so I was particularly interested in the possibility of doing some kind of peasant history in the Middle Ages and as I say I had—I mean, as a young child I spent a lot of summers on my grandparents farm and then in Maine we lived in this kind of rural community and so I was interested in seeing how agriculture affected the landscape and things like that.

**AM:** Very cool

**CB:** My first book is “Medieval Agriculture, the Southern-French Countryside, and the Early Cistercians” so it was kind of—but, I mean I guess the moment was when I recognized that I wasn’t gonna do—I wasn’t gonna go through all this classics stuff in order to get to archaeology and I’m sure I would be really hobbling around now if I had to spend all that time out in the sun and digging and stuff like that. So this has turned out to be a good alternative.

**AM:** So, you didn’t...you haven’t done any sort of field work at all, like for—
MW: Well, you mentioned—

CB: Archives.

MW: Records in France, archives, yeah,

CB: So I would say that on average, at least every two years I go to France and I work in archives and I look at things that look like [takes sheet of paper] is there a picture of this somewhere? Oh yeah.

MW: Oh, so those kind of Medieval tapestry sort of things?

CB: Well, that’s not mine, but this is a plate from a thing I just.

AM: And you look at these actual documents?

CB: Yeah.

AM: That is very cool.

CB: And this one is particularly interesting because, you can almost see it here, these are items that are numbered and at some point they were renumbered, and so you can see in the black, no, you can see in the colored version of this picture that there are two colors of red ink.

AM: Okay

CB: One is the first set of numbering and one is the second. But, but some of those things are published, some are in archives. I’ve done some site visits. I think the issue with a piece of architecture is important and I’m trying to—somehow my graduate students have taken all my copies of that book. For instance, this is something I saw over the summer when I was working in Rome, and it’s actually the kind of end mosaic in a church called Santa Maria in Trastevere, and it has, it’s really, when you look at it from any angle, it really looks like Jesus and his mother are absolutely sitting there like a bridal couple, it’s very nice, it’s the only place this particular iconography is ever used where they’re kind of sitting there equal. But yeah, so I’ve gotten to look at some art and I’ve visited archaeological sites, but I haven’t really done much in the way of excavation per se, it’s mostly been working with maps, working with documents, working with—I have an account book I’m working on from around 1250 that the queen of France had compiled for her accounts from building the church and, so it says how much they paid for a thousand nails or whatever, so I thought it was kind of interesting.

AM: I think it’s what?

MW: I was just saying, this is a little bit back to Rohrbough again, but I read in his documents that he did some work in France and he said the archival system is a little different there than it is here, did you experience that at all?
CB: Yeah archives in France are actually pretty simple because of the fact that at the time of the French Revolution, the entire ecclesiastical establishment was disbanded and all of the documents that were monastic documents, which are the kinds of things I work on, were taken either to the local library, where they might have been forwarded to the national library, or to the local state historical society, the archives of, uh, the department, and in those archives there are two systems, one is pre-1789 and one is post-1789. So in those pre-revolutionary archives people organized things in a series of categories based on A, B, C, D, and most of what I work on is in category H, which is religious orders. G, I think, is bishops and so on, so within those archives then, in the 19th century, people tried to kind of slot them in those kinds of categories, and then, in some places more, in some places less, they began organizing them based on this Benedictine abbey starting with these earliest documents to the present. More recently, because they did all the men’s communities first and then they started with the women’s communities, some of the women’s communities still have their archives organized not by date but by the subject matter that they placed things in. So, for instance, if a monastery has a bunch of estates that they, and peasants, they pay rents, then all of the property acquisitions for that particular estate will be kind of in one folder or one shelf in the archive, and even when they copy them they tend to keep them in that kind of... geographical organization because I guess you keep the deeds to something just like you would today because someone might contest your claim, so that’s the easiest way to find what you actually have. So from those kinds of things, which seem to be—then I’m looking at the occasional reference that says, and this was held in a particular kind of contract in which a peasant and a lord agreed that the peasant would plant a vineyard, and at the end of x amount of time the lord and the peasant would split up the ownership of that vineyard. So once in a while there’d be that reference to that kind of contractual engagement. Sometimes there’ll be references to a share in the produce of a common field that a bunch of people are holding together. So recently I’ve found that I’ve been doing a lot of reconstruction of family histories and, you know I’m giving a paper at the end of this week on women and noblewomen’s power and religious benefactions in northern France and I decided that I have so much information on this that I’m only gonna talk about women whose names were Matilda. So this is the tale of Matildas. So I have some family trees.

AM: Is that one of your favorite things to study then is, like, women throughout, like, this time period?

CB: It wasn’t how I started but, but there’s a real gap there, particularly because in this religious order, the Cistercians, everybody denied that there were nuns. Well, in the 12th century there weren’t a lot of nuns. In the first half of the 13th century there were more houses of nuns found than houses of monks. It was really a very popular religious movement, I guess you could call it. So, you know, there was this untouched topic, right? But, the other thing I’ve come to recognize in this particular study of these houses of nuns and their documents is how much it is noblewomen who were supporting them. Women who are lords of the castle while their husbands go off and get killed on crusades, lady lords, I call them, the word is the same.
*Dominus* or *domina*, and to just, to say lady doesn’t make any sense. So, that’s one of the things I’ve been working on more recently, so and, but the interesting thing about it is, you find yourself sort of, you know, you go off on a new, a new topic and at the same time you’re always skipping back to the older ones when something comes up. This article I was showing you, this picture from this, this just came out this year, is actually regarding a book I used in 2000, so I have a sort of more thorough investigation of it here, so.

**AM:** One thing that I kind of would like to go back on, because we’re gonna put all this in a sort of a portfolio for all the people that have been interviewed, like, kinda go back to, you know, where you grew up and, like, I have a little bit more questions about that if you don’t mind like where you went to high school like random information like that.

**CB:** I went to high school in Maine. It was the first consolidated school district for…in Maine, towns and townships are the same, they have, they’re run by a public meeting every year, and so this was four towns that got together and consolidated into one school district so that my high school class had 100 students, there were 400 students in the high school. And then, you know, I did French and I did Latin in high school. I did physics instead of home ec. That was the choice, you couldn’t do both. I wasn’t allowed to do shop, I wasn’t allowed to do mechanical drawing, and I wasn’t allowed to do typing because I was in the college track, and only the secretarial track could do typing or shorthand. So, things, I think, have changed a little bit about that since. And then, you know, I really kind of wanted to get out of New England as fast as possible, so I went off to Minnesota for college.

**MW:** What was kind of your path to Iowa maybe? You said Minnesota, then Wisconsin—

**CB:** Yeah, okay. So, my husband finished his degree two years before I did and then we went off to Norway for a year. Not having such an idea of how far it was from Norway to Paris, it didn’t occur to me that there would be any problem about finishing my dissertation while I was there. And then he got a post-doc in Vancouver, and while we were there I finished my degree, and eventually he got a job for the naval research facility in Washington D.C., so we lived in Washington for almost ten years, nine years it was, and I taught as an adjunct at various places, I collected unemployment, collecting unemployment in Washington D.C. is 8th Street Northeast, which is not a very safe neighborhood. I, I had a carol, a desk in the Library of Congress, there are a couple of floors of desks that were designated for scholars to work and you were supposed to show up at least four times a week and I was teaching at Catholic University. I would drive to Catholic, I would come back at about three o’clock in the afternoon, and at that time, the Capitol police would let us park on the Capitol grounds, and none of these barriers three o’clock in the afternoon, their traffic was gone, they knew we were going off to work in the Library until six or something, so, I got a lot of work done there. It was a very nice community of people, some of whom I still know, and, so I taught at Catholic, I taught at Georgetown, I commuted up to Barb College and taught for a year there, taught at Georgetown again, it was while I was teaching at Georgetown that I got an interview here and, you know my husband was kind of, he was close to
being invested in a Navy retirement and, so, I guess sort of came out, well, you know, “Well, I’m not sure I want this job,” when I was offered this job, well they said, “Well, do you want to bring your husband out to see it?” He says, “I grew up in Minneapolis, I know exactly what it’s like!” You know? So, but it was when I was offered the job, our son was two, we didn’t quite see how we were gonna bring him up in the D.C. public schools, and we were very much in favor of public schools. Both of our parents, both of our dads had been on school boards and so, we decided we were gonna have to move out to the far suburbs instead of the new suburbs, so, here we are, right?

AM: Was it, like, the job you have now, was it the one you were offered then, the exact same?

CB: Well you know, you were offered as an assistant.

AM: You work your way up.

CB: Yeah, and this was, in fact, the first tenure track job I had ever gotten.

AM: Really?

CB: So, and it was nine years after I got my Ph.D.

AM: What year was that?

CB: That I got my Ph.D. or that I got the job here?

AM: We can do both.

CB: I was actually, I was hired in December of 1987 and we got here in the Fall of ’89 because I had an NEH fellowship for the following year, and so yeah. And I’d gotten my Ph.D. in ’78.

AM: In, I forget sorry.

CB: History

AM: Yeah, history, okay.

CB: So it was long, even then, you know, it was kind of a good year for getting a job. So, it was, but, this department offered me kind of a deal I couldn’t turn down, which was that…I already had a book out, I could come in as an assistant professor and come up for tenure and promotion to associate in the second year that I was here, so they got a chance to see my teaching. And so, they would count everything that I had done, so it was kind of a catch-up step, that I was catching up for those years I hadn’t….And then, um, and then they let me come up again in two years for full professor. So, we came in the fall of ’89 and I was a full professor in the fall of ’94, I think.

AM: You got something? No, how many different classes have you taught here? Like—
CB: Okay. I have taught Western Civ., I have taught Medieval Civ., there are now two parts of it, A and B or whatever, I’ve taught both of those. I teach a course on the history of the Medieval church, I do a course on medieval social and economic history. I’ve done a course on…Medieval food. And I’ve done a whole bunch of undergraduate colloquium. I’ve also taught, excuse me, about one, one course per year that was a graduate course. So, I’ve taught source criticism from Medieval historians, I’ve taught a readings course on Medieval women, I’ve taught a readings course on Medieval social and economic history, and I’ve taught both and then a seminar on either of those. So then the seminar is, readings tends to be you trying to cover a field primarily in English, the seminar will have some work in original sources and a paper for that. Usually people in that seminar will be coming and either they’re working on a Master’s or they’re working on a project that’s like a chapter of their Ph.D., it’s their projects tend to be focused on what they…what their longer term plans are, but sort of taking that interest in history on women maybe. I had a guy in last semester who was, who works on 19th Century German women, and he did something very nice on women, on medieval women poets in Germany or something like that, so there’s some, there’s kind of a tie-in, right? So, there’s probably been colloquia on Medieval food, Medieval chronicles, Medieval social history. I can’t, they probably all fall into some kind of range like that, but they all change, so, the course is hardly ever the same course.

MW: So, you’ve obviously got a pretty acute interest in Medieval stuff, but is there any course that you especially like to teach or any courses you have—

CB: Oh, okay, well I think that my, in a way, that the undergraduate course I like the best is called Medieval Social and Economic History, and I’m gonna be teaching that in the fall, and I’m gonna be using a new book because a friend of mine has just published a history of the medieval environment, and that kind of covers many, if not all, of the topics I would cover in this course, so I’m really excited about that. It’s like…he’s interested in things like fishing and mining and stuff like that, so it’s good.

AM: Who is that? Does he teach here?

CB: No, his name is Richard Hoffman, and he recently retired from York University out of Toronto. He came, was it? I guess last spring, he came, he gave a couple of talks here, and we gave a graduate student meeting, with him and Tyler, so there are kinds of things they're talking about that are kind of the same, so that was really very interesting. So I've gotten kind of interested recently in environmental history, particularly in mills, water and wood powered mills. I'm also particularly interested in medieval flooding, and how that compares to the kinds flooding we have around here. Jackie Rand did a course last year on the environment, where she has these posters that show how the land is sinking and compacting, where we get more and more run off, and I actually used that for a conference presentation about medieval economic history, because it's just the same as in Iowa.
**MW:** What about the University of Iowa has, maybe not kept you here, but what are some of the things you like about this particular place?

**CB:** I would say that what I really like is the department—At times I've felt that the department was in kind of a conflict, it was sort of staving off the rest of the university with the increasing sort of administrative stuff that was going on. But it has been a department of incredible respect for one another, and also a department that was pretty interesting. I mean the year I came, I was standing in the hallway, meeting two other new women faculty members in the department, realizing we had just doubled the number of women in the department, and that was pretty exciting.

There are ways in which we go about doing things in the least efficient way, but the one that keeps people happy is that there is really a sense of having meetings where we really listen to one another, we haven't made up our minds, we're really about to consult, and it's been a department where everyone is working on very interesting and vibrant projects, and if anything, I don't know whether you'd find another department where there's so little fighting. Really, I think the Europeanists have been given a major sort of role. I mean a lot of departments, particularly of this size would be overwhelmed by the Americanists, and this one hasn't. And that's been really nice. Some of my colleagues may say that we've been overwhelmed by the Medievalists, but that's a different story.

I probably didn't tell you, but I'm actually beginning a phased retirement, and much of the reason for that is because I'm finding the University has become so hostile to the humanities, and to the sort of vision of how research and teaching should support one another.

**AM:** How so?

**CB:** Well, I mean I guess what's objectionable is the kind of business model in which people count up how many students you have in your classes and how fast people are getting their degrees, and where there's a tendency to judge based on student satisfaction surveys, rather than looking at sometimes the best teacher is the one who's hardest, possibly the students hate, but they still learn. And the whole business is not about producing satisfied customers, because that's not what education is about, so that's been kind of discouraging. But the other half of it was that I've been training a bunch of graduate students, and it's been harder and harder for them to get jobs. I mean I've had extraordinary graduate students over the past probably ten years or more, but they've really struggled, and I don't know that the ones who are finishing up now are going to be able to find jobs in academia. I have one who is working with me who says, 'I'm taking management courses, and I'm going to go into some non-profit. And he's writing a dissertation that's got lots of numbers and I think that will be an attractive thing that he can offer. But it's really hard to recognize that you can't expect that your students are going to replicate the kinds of jobs that we're kind of lucky enough to get. You know, the sort of being in the right place at the right time to get a job like the one here, which was, as I say, a little bit like offering me to be
pope. After all these years that I couldn't get a job, and finally all of a sudden this one came up. And it's been a great place to raise a kid; he's now twenty eight, making plans to get married, and I'm sort of zipping up my mouth, learning to be the mother of the groom. And at this stage, I'll be able to have more time for my work, and that's really good.

**AM:** Who are some of your favorite people to work with over the years?

**CB:** Well, some of them aren't here anymore, but one of them I was just thinking about today because I'm on a book prize committee, and her book is one of the two contenders, and it's very hard to be on the committee when the book you're advocating is the best, but it's also by a friend. But, I adore Cathy Komisaruk, and Omar. She teaches Guatemala and he teaches sort of western borderlands. I like Tyler a lot, and I've only begun to know Landon Storrs. But, you know it's all the old people, with most of us gone, but I really like Paul Greenough; I really like Paul, and I like Mérieam Belli.

**MW:** What have you seen, since you've come here, what have you seen change about the University or maybe the department?

**CB:** Well that will actually bring up one of my favorite people, Colin Gordon, who is the administrator for 'par excellence.' But, I think that our relationship with the dean of liberal arts has changed a lot. And I think it's changed primarily from the moment when a scientist became the dean of liberal arts. Linda Maxson was a biologist, and now Djalali is a physicist, and that seems to be the way that the whole institution is shifting. It used to be that there were people in the humanities and the graduate college, and not so many anymore. Also I think the University has become more lawyerized, where everything has to be in triplicate; and there are so many reports you have to fill out, and you guys have no idea. There are things like “Did you get paid by anyone else other than the university for any kind of work in excess of five days a year?” And you have to do all this stuff, or there's, “How much of your time is devoted to research, funded research,” which is like what scientists get, “teaching and administration?”

I mean all this kind of stuff; there's just a thousand of these things coming up! Every month I have to fill out an attendance slip.

**AM:** For what reason?

**CB:** Oh I don't know, you get this calendar, you're supposed to mark any days that you've taken for vacation, any days for sick leave, but if I come and teach my class even though I have laryngitis, should I take my sick days on days when I don't have class? You know? So there's a lot of that sort of counting. It's similar to counting how many students you have in your class, or how many were satisfied, but they shouldn't all have A's, there should be the right grade distribution. you know that's not—

And I'm sort of a number cruncher, I come from a family of accountants, but it's pretty creepy. Yet this was a department that when I came it was full of these sort of numbers historians, like
economic historians, sort of quantitative history was something that this department was big in at the time. It's just a lot of things that get in the way of you and the classroom. And some of them are real and useful, and some of them are crazy. I'll give you another instance. When we moved back into this building, all over the place there were signs, “no eating or drinking in the classrooms.” I'm sorry I'm not going to be an enforcer on that, and I may very well come in with my cup of coffee. And it wouldn't be such an issue of enforcing if you only had restrooms that have paper towels! But it's taken a long time to get those restrooms with paper towels down to the bottom floors, you know.

And there were decorator police when we moved into this building! I have a chair over there that I rolled down the sidewalk from seashore, where we were temporarily housed, because it had been bought for me specifically for my back; and I wasn't going to give it up. But it's a darker blue, it doesn't fit the décor, and the decorator police, they were going to get some kind of an award for how this building was the best restoration there had ever been, so they made all these inconveniences.

AM: That's crazy. I can't imagine telling someone to change their chair just so the room could be pretty.

CB: Then there were some of those stackable chairs, similar to classroom ones only they don't have an arm; we carried those back because we weren't allowed to have them, all chairs had to be like this, [pointing to ones we were sitting in.] And of course if I want to have a meeting with students in my office where there aren't enough seats, having that stack of chairs in the corner was a really good thing.

I mean I like my office, when I came here I shared an office, but anyhow it's been an institution, not a department, but an institution that has gradually been driving some of the best colleagues away.

AM: Really?

CB: I had a friend who has just went to Australia. You know the friend from France who has just written this book, she left here because her husband was a brilliant mathematician, and they offered him, not a regular position, but said he could teach algebra, and he was smarter than any of them. So he was insulted, went back to his job in France, and eventually she went there too.

AM: Why do you think that is?

CB: Well part of the problem is that it's in a small town, and it's frequently difficult to find two jobs, and spousal hiring can be a bit contentious. So that's lead to a lot of people not staying as long as they could have otherwise. There used to be a really good program of support for faculty; a three year grant, one semester on, one semester off, called a faculty scholar. Everybody will talk about this one, at every interview, and the slack was taken up by your colleagues. I had one and we spent a year in England, in Cambridge. It was a wonderful year, our kid was eight, every
school vacation we'd go off and rent a car, and he was only unhappy if we hadn't seen a castle
that day. But for younger colleagues who were sort of promised that that was going to be there at
that stage, all of a sudden that program has been cut, although it didn't really cost the University
anything. That you could support this primarily by other people taking a few more students in
their classes. So it was both a more laid back and more generous institution when I first came,
and less so now. And a little less predictable too. I mean It's time to have your semester of leave,
you fill out an application, and the presumption was that if you came up with a reasonable
project you'd be funded; not anymore. I think spending a lot of time with disgruntled junior
faculty is hard, not so much for me as for them.

AM: What would you recommend to these graduate students who want work at an institution
like this someday?

CB: It's not gonna happen. There are going to be no jobs. I mean, anything you read, they're
replacing tenured faculty with adjuncts. I was on a committee, an American Historical
Association committee that published this volume on basically graduate education in history in
the 21st century. And this involved an elaborate survey, and site visits to about fifteen or eighteen
graduate programs across the country and a big survey of best practices and so on. But what you
can see from the measures that came out of that, keeping track of how many jobs there are per
year, that increasingly, the number of Ph.D.’s hasn't gone down very much, but the number of
tenured positions has, and this awful thing happened when suddenly there was no compulsory
retirement. One cannot tell a faculty member to retire, and they had an interview on NPTV about
a year ago in the DC area, they were interviewing these professors at places like George Mason
and the professors said, “Why should I retire? I'm doing a good job, my students are getting as
much as they'd get out of anybody's classes. I may be turning eighty, but what does that matter?"
But what does that do to the next generation? You know? And it's sad for me because here I am,
I'm over sixty I'm ready to retire, and I know that nobody is going to replace me, and none of my
students will replace me; in some senses we've already hired a replacement, so I end up feeling
very guilty about training graduate students, knowing how hard it is for them to get jobs. The
little disguised statistic in this is that as of around 2000 when we were doing that data, about two
thirds of the Ph.D.’s in history were going to men and one third to women, but the jobs were
going about half and half. Women had twice as much of a chance getting the job as men going
into the field, because of a long history of history departments having no women, unless there
was a person who had to work on fine manuscripts and that was okay for girls to do.

So if there's anything else you could do better. Unless you say you're going to farm in Iowa
without inheriting a farm, but other than that, try everything else first.

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