



Linda Gibson
ROBS History Project
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"Hello, my name is Linda Gibson. I was born Linda Gravert. My mother tells me that I was named Linda, because at the time after World War II when I was born, it was a very popular name, and I can contest to that, because all through school and through college, and even today, I meet many women my age who are Linda. Very often I'll turn around in the store when I hear someone called Linda, and I think it's me, but they're not calling me." Linda's middle name is Carol. She said it is probably short for Carolyn, who was a very beloved aunt of her father's. She said that Carolyn was a very fascinating German woman who lived in New Jersey and enjoyed painting watercolors.

Linda said that she is married to her *"partner, companion and soul mate"*, Bob Gibson. He grew up in West Islip. They have been married for 32 years. They met when Linda had moved to Bay Shore to start working in Brentwood. He lived next door in the apartments on Howells Road. She said they were neighbors and that she knew his mother and sister.

She was then asked to speak about her children. Linda said that she had all ready been teaching for 16 years. *"It was July 15, 1985. We decided that we were going to adopt, and that was because our best friends had showed us a picture that night of their baby who was coming from Korea. So, we decided that we would like to think about it. It took a lot of... took a while to... no more than two weeks really, to make that decision that this was perhaps some direction that we should investigate. And we did."* *"Then we applied, and our social worker came*

right after Hurricane Gloria. "The house had down trees at our front yard and all kinds of things, but she came to look at the house to make sure that it was a house for a child to live in, and then the next thing we knew we were going to sessions with her about adoption. Actually, from the time we decided to adopt, which was July 15th of '85 all the way through to our child's arrival day, which was April 22, 1986. It was nine months, just like a normal birth. And, I did write an article for adoption newspapers for the families about my 'quote unquote' pregnancy, and the trimesters that are involved in pregnancy and likened it to what I was going through. That child is a boy. He came at age four and a half. His name is Bill. We talked to my father who was also Bill, to be sure that it would be okay with my dad that we named our son after him. His name is William Thomas Gibson. That's our son. William is for my dad and Thomas is my husband's youngest brother, who is not only our son's uncle, but also his godfather. Bill is 23... Oh, he'll be 23 on November 25th. He's in a five-year program at Rider University. He'll be graduating this coming May 13th with majors in both business and psychology."

The interviewer then asked if Bill was their only child, and Linda replied, "Oh, no, no, no, no. Billy came at age four and a half and only spoke Korean. That was that. He went right away to school. But he attended Mark Country Day School. He was there at the time with Karen Storjohann and Alex Warner's son, Alex. And, we decided that it would be nice to have a second child so that they would have a sibling, especially in future years, in terms of family and holidays and cousins, and so that they would have each other. And, so we started the adoption process again. This time, we were able to adopt a girl, Katherine Jane Gibson, better known as Katy, K-A-T-Y." "I knew that Katherine was quite a handle to put on a little child, a girl that was fluent in Korean, who read spoke and wrote Korean. She was almost six. So, she was quite a dance, because she was living in a children's home for over a year. So, they were doing education school all the time. "She did not know the English alphabet." "Katherine was named... I just liked the name Katy... and it was four letters...I thought would be easy for her to identify on a coat rack, on property at school and to write herself. Then I thought that Katherine might be better, looking ahead, might be better in a business setting for her. The name Jane is my mother. So it's Katherine Jane Gibson. She will be graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Penn State on December 18th in the area of

advertising.” Linda attributed her children’s learning English to a lot of people, the public schools, the family and the community, because their children are very active both in school and in the community like sports.

Linda was born in Mineola in June 1946 and lived in her parent’s first apartment in Manhasset, and in about 1949 they moved to Port Washington to her mother’s grandfather’s home. Linda’s mother was born in Port Washington, and she said that her family goes back generations there. They referred to her mother as ‘Mother the Clam Digger’. Linda jokingly said that that was what they called the people back then. Her maternal grandmother was a homemaker and her maternal grandfather was a carpenter. He worked on the inside of airplanes when they were made of wood back in the 30’s. Her grandfather played the piano and also had an orchestra that played at people’s weddings especially during the Depression. When asked what she learned from her maternal grandfather, she said that when you say you are going to do something, you do it. Her paternal grandfather was in the firebricks business, and they built incinerators in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Later her father went into that business. Linda’s father enjoyed boating and her mother enjoyed sewing. Her mother was also busy with church activities, scouting and her children’s school activities.

What were Linda’s earliest childhood memories? *“Oh, playing store at my grandmother's house. I used to have a doll carriage, and I would go over to her pantry, and I would take out the boxes and the cans, and I would set them up on this old red coffee table. Then when I learned to write numbers, I used to write on the boxes, numbers, and I remembered that my grandmother believed that she had paid the price of something that I had written. She couldn't believe that she had, but she thought that the store clerk had written it. So I must have been very young, probably four or five. I probably remember that, because we talked about it so much. Especially I think I remember that because we get together as a family every year, so many times a year, with my cousins and everything, and I'm the oldest of them all. So, we share these stories so that we don't forget.”*

Linda was then asked to speak about her siblings. *“I have a sister four years younger than me. Her name is Arlene, and she lives here on Long Island in*

Greenlawn. Now she's an RN. She works at St. Francis Hospital. She is very happily married to Mike. Her son is 26. He's going to be a commercial pilot, and their daughter Amy is 23. She is currently right now as we speak today student teaching in Smithtown in the music department there. She's in the middle school. She attends McLean School of Music, and she's going on into her Master's after student teaching." Linda is the oldest. "I have a brother. He's 10 years younger than I am. His name is William, also named after my father. His middle name is Clinton named after my maternal grandfather. So he's William Clinton." "He did write for the Anton press for years and years covering community functions, and he used the pen name William Clinton. Well, when Billy Boy came along, my brother needed to change his name, actually was to his benefit that he went back to William Gravert. He also is in the teaching field, so to speak. He teaches how to use computers, to professionals who have other people use computers for them, such as many doctors and lawyers want to know how to use a computer, but in their professional life they have other people using it for them. So, he goes to their homes or their offices and teaches. He's known as the Computer Tutor. He also is an adjunct professor at Hofstra. He teaches the computer sciences. His wife, by the way is a teacher, Carolyn. She teaches in Valley Stream Schools. They have two children and live in Babylon."

She was then asked to describe what it was like growing up in her family. Her response was, "Wonderful!" I wouldn't change a thing at all. I was the oldest. It was wonderful. I think it's because my sister at the time was four years younger than I was, and that was when children had bedtimes, very set bed times, and, my sister would go to bed earlier than I did, and I would have Daddy all to myself. In fact, I had a nickname. Yes. Now I remember. He was Captain Video and I was Ranger. I remember that, definitely."

Besides her mom and dad, and of course her grandparents she was asked if there were any other adult influences that were important during her formative years that were not family. "I would say there are too numerous to mention, and the reason is that because I lived in Port Washington, there were friends of my mother's and my father's from childhood. Many of the people were not family related, but they were known as aunt Peggy instead of Mr. and Mrs. I still refer to

them as Aunt, or I just can't move to call them by their first name. It's not appropriate. That's the way I was brought up."

Linda's background is German and English. Her father's grandfather came from Hamburg, Germany.

Linda was then asked, 'Who was the most influential in your life to help you decide what your career path was going to be?' *"My mother's Aunt Malleus. She was a teacher all her life in Queens for the New York City Schools. She was an elementary teacher. I was always fascinated by what she had to say about what she did professionally. My mother occasionally would drive down there, and I would get to go into a classroom. It was kind of exciting. She herself had many students that were very successful later in life and would write her a note or call her and come to see her and tell her what influences she was in their life."*

'When did you make that big decision that you wanted to be a teacher and began to prepare? When did you know?' *"Probably about 10 or nine, because my sister and I shared a bedroom, and we had two double beds, and I used to set up the double beds. I used to set up and play school. I had an attendance list. I had all kinds of things pretending. The thing is that I grew up in a family where it was assumed that we were going to college."*

'What was the toughest decision you ever had to make?' *"To break off an engagement with my college sweetheart in my sophomore year."*

'Who is one of the most unforgettable teachers that you had, either in elementary school, high school or college?' *"Louise Greenfield. She was my algebra and trigonometry teacher. Back then it was the two together...Intermediate Algebra Intro. That class was made up of not only 11th graders, but there were some that were repeating the course, and everybody got through. That woman was like, amazing!"*

'Was there a favorite indoor or outdoor game that you liked to play as a child?' *"Oh, Hide and Seek. Yeah, we had all ages coming out to play in our*

neighborhood. I grew up in a neighborhood with a lot of children and a lot and a lot of great places to hide."

Did you ever get a gift from a student that you remember? *"Oh, sure. Well, oh, I know what it is. Okay. I've received many, many Christmas ornaments as things that could be hung on a Christmas tree. So, what we have is a separate tree taken out every year, and then I decorate with different items. I mean the tree is loaded. I've written on them or I've attached stickers. I write down the child's name at the time and the year, and the grade, because I've taught 4th 5th and 6th. So it started to get confusing. So I have a student tree."*

Linda's first paying job was at the Republic National Bank where she hand sorted debits and credits on the adding machine. There were no computers back then.

Linda was asked if there was a family holiday celebrated that was really important to her family or one of the biggest family holidays that they celebrated? Linda said it really wasn't a holiday, but when she and her siblings gave their parents a party for their 40th Anniversary. That was a really big celebration. She said her father died in 1986, so they didn't get to celebrate their parent's 50th.

Linda's favorite subject in school was social studies, and she didn't really have a least favorite subject. She liked all of her classes. Her father had taught her to go through life with a positive attitude, so she felt that you just take each class and *"just get through it and do it."* She said that you should *"set long range goals, and that you see the light at the end of the tunnel, but you make it attainable."* Her goal in high school was to get to college and when she got to college, she made new goals. Linda said that she gets through life by setting goals like *"what I'm going to do today, what I'm going to get done by next week...by next month..."* She said that she and her husband have had life goals that they have slowly been achieving.

Her favorite season is summer, because she loves going in their above ground pool. She loves the beauty of the foliage of summer. They also have a 30 ft. sailboat that they enjoy.

Her favorite aroma is vanilla. It reminds her of the vanilla cookies that her mother used to make. Her mother was a good baker.

She was then asked to name all of the schools that she attended. She went to Main Street Elementary School in Port Washington from kindergarten to 5th grade. When they moved, she went to Flower Hill School for 6th grade also in Port Washington. Grades 7 to 9 she attended Carry Palmer Weber Junior High School and grades 10 through 12 she went to Paul D. Schreiber High School. She studied undergraduate at N.Y. State University at Plattsburgh. Her parents felt that it was good for her to go away to school. She said she always remembered what her father said when she left to go to college. *"Linda, remember, you are never going to come home to live again."* It took her a while to understand that. She said, *"It didn't mean that I couldn't come home to the house, but that I was going get back that Thanksgiving Vacation as a different person, and he knew that would happen."* *"He realized that it would be under different circumstances with my independence, and probably 'cockyness'."* After she graduated from Plattsburgh, she came home and started teaching in Brentwood. She got her Master's Degree in Education at Hofstra University in 1973.

Linda was asked if she could remember what the proudest moment of her life was. She said that it was that she and her husband got married. She felt so proud that he had chosen her to be his companion and life partner.

She started teaching in Brentwood in 1968. She had sent out a lot of resumes for districts Upstate and on Long Island. It was her father who mentioned that he had a chief engineer, Frank Ginoni, working for him who lived in Brentwood and that his wife was President of the PTA at northwest Elementary School. The word was passed on that the district was looking for teachers. Linda applied and was interviewed by Dr. Nannini. She was hired and assigned to teach 4th grade at East Elementary School, but in August, she was told that there would not be that class, so she was hired as a permanent sub for a year. She really

didn't like it that much, but she did say it was a good experience to get to know all of the schools.

'How would you say that Brentwood is the same or different from other school districts?' *"First of all I'd say that Brentwood is like all others in that the children are children, and that parents are the same. They are loving parents and they want the best for their children. All children are children and need to be educated. Every child is a little person unto themselves."* *"Brentwood is unique in that it is a cross section of society."*

Who were some of the first people that Linda met when she first came to Brentwood? Her first year she worked as a permanent sub, and her second year she was assigned a permanent position at Northeast in 5th grade. The principal was Charlie Black. When she had worked there as a permanent sub, she had decided that she would like to work there full time. She worked at Northeast continuously for 32 years. She remembered Harold Gruber, Vinny Zolo, Joe Bissell, Virginia Roman and Camile Patriki. She was very active with Mike Garamone and Henry Muller when they started the outdoor education program. They helped set up Nissequogue.

Besides the job description, what was your own purpose? Her response was, *"To see a smile on each child's face every day when they realize that they can do it."*

Linda was a member the BTA and served as a Delegate when Jack Zuckerman was the President and then after that Joe Hogan. There was a time when they were excessing people, and there were "give backs" and things like that that the union dealt with, and she tried to explain to the younger teachers the importance of keeping Art, Music and Gym prep periods.

Her first year's salary was \$6800, and she thought it was the best. She remembered speaking with people teaching in other areas, and they were earning much less.

When she was asked what accomplishment was she most proud of, she said the outdoor program and setting up Nissequague State Park.

Linda retired in June 1999 and just felt that it was time.

She was asked if she had any roll models growing up, and Linda said Jacqueline Kennedy.

An historical event that occurred while she was teaching that she felt was important was the coming down of the Berlin Wall. She felt it was important for the world itself and for the people in East Germany to have a chance to live a better life.

She was then asked what she missed and didn't miss the most about teaching. She said she missed the smiling happy faces of the children. She missed the children definitely. Jokingly she said that she didn't miss the green walls in hallways.

Was there anything that she would have liked to have accomplished, but ran out of time. At one time she had thought that she would go into administration, but once she had her own children changed her mind.

If she had a magic wand and could make 3 changes in public education, what would they be? She said she would like to see more State Funding, more realistic elementary education standards and that *"all teachers need to project to children that education is the key and that there is hope in their life."*

She was then asked to complete the following statements in one word: "Brentwood students are..." Her response was *"Fabulous"* and "Brentwood teachers are...." She responded, *"Awesome"*

What advice from her own personal experience would she give new teachers starting out? Linda said, *"I think what they should be doing is picking the brains of the experienced people. Learn all they can from them. Get in their classrooms, jot down some of the things you see in the classroom and make a*

sketch of bulletin boards and displays. Learn as much as you can from these people. They are experienced. They know what teaching is about."

How would Linda like to be remembered by her students? Her response was, *"that I came across to them...help them understand the things that they needed to learn by using 'manipulatives'... that I didn't just stand in front of the class and talk at them... that I worked with them and because, one of the things that I always lived by is 'Tell me. I forget; Show me, I remember; Let me work with the materials, I understand.' What I always wanted them to do is understand their world around them."*