

Filmwax Radio, Oct 2018 (transcript edited) Interview on with Lynne Sachs (director) and Cast of Tip of My Tongue Andrea Kannapell , Accra Shepp, Jim Supanick (performers in film)

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

So, a few years ago, I was part of this group of people that met at Lynne Sachs's house in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. And for a long weekend, we occupied this house. And she shot this film. We all were essentially the same age, or born around the same time. And we had, of course, workshopped and discussed the stories we were going to talk about. But she curated our storytelling in terms of where we were, how we sat, or how we moved, and who we were talking with, or to, or what have you.

And then she edited this, wove it together in this beautiful, poetic, lovely film called Tip of My Tongue. It's now available on DVD. Order a copy. You can also get it, if you go to Lynne Sachs's website, I believe you'll probably find a link there, but you can stream it on Kanopy. Kanopy, K-A-N-O-P-Y, is a service that is a streaming service, it's great, actually, you should check it out. It's on the Public Library websites. I think all you need is a library card membership, and you can watch movies for free, up to a certain number every month.

And by the way, I think, and if not all, there's a substantial amount of Frederick Wiseman documentaries up there where you can't really see anywhere else, unless you get lucky enough and you make it to a screening. Upcoming guest, returning guest, Frederick Wiseman.

And then there's a bunch of Criterion stuff there, and my friend Michael Golinski and Suki Hawley's films are up there, or at least a bunch of them. So there's lots of wonderful films up there, fiction and non-fiction both. So check that out, including, again, Tip of My Tongue.

Tonight, if you are listening, and you are in New York City, and you're free at 7:00 in just a few hours from now, as I record this, Lynne, myself, and a few other folks will be at the Filmmakers Cooperative at 475 Park Avenue South, sixth floor for a screening of Tip of My Tongue and a Q&A.

But this is a very special event, because it's not just Lynne and her film. There's also a couple of short works being shown. One of by, of all people, Ken Jacobs, as part of an evening called, The Poetic is Political. And so they're going to be showing some short works, as well as Tip of My Tongue. They're showing, let's see, Ken Jacobs' The Moment's, Evening Boat Ride, which is a nine-minute-long documentary. Also, Erica Sheu's film, A Short History, which is three minutes. And The Tip of My Tongue is an 80-minute film, and that starts at 7:00, I believe. Ken Jacobs and Erica will be there. And Lynne will be there. And I'm going to be there. And so, the Q&A will be following that.

So if you're free tonight and you want to come by, I think there is a suggested donation of \$10. Email Filmmakers Co-op. That's Filmmakerscoop@Gmail.com to secure a ticket for tonight. It's in the Charles Cohen Screening Room at the Filmmakers Cooperative. So right now, though, this is my conversation with the director of Tip of My Tongue, Lynne Sachs, plus three of the many participating people in the film, Accra, Andrea, and myself here on Filmwax Radio.

Speaker 4: I think, at the end, that should come through and just climb out.

Speaker 5: Sure.

Speaker 4: Okay. Let me change shirts.

Speaker 5: You sure you want a-

Speaker 4: What? The skirt part?

Speaker 5: Yeah.

Speaker 4: No, I'm going to wear a different.

Speaker 5: Okay.

Speaker 4: I'll just wear that shirt.

Accra Shepp:

I'm standing in the entryway to my parents' house on the Lower East Side.

Speaker 7:

It's funny, I think that I can remember a smell, but I'm not sure if it's a real memory or if it's something I've invented since that time.

Speaker 8:

Every Saturday when the TV was on, there was always a rocket launching. There was always, "10, nine, eight, seven..." You just walk past the kitchen or whatever and you'd see another rocket taking off.

Lynne Sachs:

And so we began our memory game. As they speak, I listen.

Accra Shepp:

Looked at the clock, and I had half an hour to go, 15 minutes to go, five more minutes to go.

Speaker 10:[foreign language 00:38:07]

Speaker 11:

Then he said, get out. And I had this RC Cola bottle in my hand.

Speaker 8:

The universities were closed, for a cultural revolution. And so, I became a Mom.

Speaker 5:

Didn't know where I was going to be. I was going to be, when I got to be middle-aged, they say, "When you're young, you're all like, 'Yeah! Fight and fire.'"

And you're going to be like... And then you get older. And you're thinking about your pension, and your kids, and your lumbago.

Lynne Sachs:

Everything that surrounds us, becomes part of us.

Jim:

Yeah, I was remembering the last election. No one wanted to come out of their house after it. We were all just like, "Oh, just wake me up in a couple of years."

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Right.

Jim: Now, it's a couple of years, of course.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Just because of depression, not because of some confrontation with pro-Trump people.

Jim: No, no.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Yeah, [inaudible 00:39:39]. Yeah.

Jim: Oh, no. It just that we had a sense that there was going to be someone in the White House who had divulged secrets to Russia, would break the law, accept payments from foreign governments.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Well, thank God none of that happened, in retrospect. What?

Lynne Sachs: All right, it's October 18th, which is-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: You're not talking into your mic. This is something you can plug. If we get this up in time,.

Lynne Sachs:

We will be screening, Tip of My Tongue on October 18th at the filmmakers co-operative at 475 Park Avenue South. Very convenient location. And they intentionally chose it because of the upcoming election and all the conversations that we have around politics.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Oh, yeah.

Lynne Sachs: I don't know if you all saw, but I posted the part of the film on Anita Hill...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Oh, very nice.

Lynne Sachs: ... just a few days ago.

Andrea Kannapell:
Very nice, yeah. So relevant.

Lynne Sachs:
That's a kind of residual thing. You can take moments of the film, since we are, it's all about talking about the '80s, right, '70s and '80s, mostly, when we're coming of age and becoming adults. So you have all these potential clips and moments to share.

Andrea Kannapell:
There's a whole powerful segment of the film about women coming of political age and becoming politically aware that culminates in the Anita Hill hearings. It's really a good, really strong section.

Lynne Sachs: Thank you, Andrea.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Okay, so that was the voice of Andrea Kannapell, who is one of the participants, I'm going to call us, in Lynne Sachs's film, her nonfiction film called Tip of My Tongue. And we also are joined today by Accra Shepp, who's one of the participants. And myself, who is a minor participant. And again, Lynne's here.

Lynne Sachs: So glad to be here, Adam.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Welcome back to the podcast.

Lynne Sachs: Thank you.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax: Right, because we talked once before?

Lynne Sachs: You were the first person to dive deep into the world of podcasts. The first person I knew.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Oh, that you know. Yeah.

Lynne Sachs:
Not the first person in the world, but first person that I know.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Well, I was, it turns out early on, compared to the flood that has since, now, there's so many, everybody has a podcast. So I was a little ahead of the game.

Accra Shepp:

Yeah, just stick it to the.

Andrea Kannapell:

Okay, what number is this or what year, what number is this?

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

This will be, well, this is, I started the talk show, because it was not a podcast originally. It was internet radio show, 2011. So this is year seven. It was started becoming a podcast a few years later. But it was still, even then, it was way ahead of the [inaudible 00:42:22] huge number that have since... But-

Andrea Kannapell:

Hey, good idea. Good idea.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah, right. But, wow, yeah. This was, we've shot, well, Lynne, I'm just starting up, you can dive in for background so people understand. You made this film. The idea was, the concept was, get a group of people all together in one place who all have had the experience of just recently turning 50 years old, and come together, and share their memories, and thoughts, and stories about their lives, which we all could relate to. And was that essentially?

Lynne Sachs:

Well, I decided, when I turned 50, I decided that I needed to grapple with living half a century. But also with the history that I had witnessed. And I wanted to understand how that witnessing had impacted, and imprinted on me, and how, as I grew older, how I started to parse out the meanings of those events in history, and whether I could understand them intellectually, whether they were just swirling around me and I was slightly aware of them.

And then I decided to write 50 poems, one for each year, beginning with 1961 all the way to 2011. And in the process of doing that, I became very curious about how other people would interpret those same events, or maybe choose different events, and how what was important to me might be very inconsequential to somebody else. In a sense, I was wondering how our place in the world as people who had lived those years would give us what they call 20/20 vision. I didn't want 20/20 vision. I didn't want us to know what it all meant now. I wanted us to sink back into those times when we didn't have 20/20 vision and when certain things were in focus, and sharp, and clear, and other things receded.

So I decided to try to find people. My goal was someone from every continent, I didn't quite succeed, but I worked on it. And not to talk to just people I knew well, but to try to branch out and to enlarge my field of vision around this kind of investigation.

Adam Scharoff / Filmwax:

Did these, what would you call them, these parameters that you're describing, did they, ultimately, inform your style of filmmaking, how you wanted it to look visually, the film, do you think?

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, that is a great question. Well, I actually did research with each person involved in the film, which is 11 people, 12, counting myself. And I asked each person to choose five moments in their lives, five or more, in which there was an intersection between very public event and how that came to impact your private awareness, your consciousness, your interior.

Accra Shepp:

That is such a big thing to unpack. I remember when you told me that, I was like, "What?"

I understood all the words you said, but I'm not exactly sure what I was supposed to give you. And then we had a really lovely conversation, and then I understood.

Lynne Sachs:

And the delightful thing, both Accra, and Andrea, and yourself, I had never, well, Andrea and I had said, "How do you do?," but we didn't know each other, at all. And so I knew you three in this profound way, very quickly. And that was astonishing. I've never had anything like that happen in my life.

Andrea Kannapell:

Well, it was really remarkable to come here for that first storytelling where you taped it and you were taking notes. And you just wanted these stories. And it wasn't clear at all what was actually, to me, it wasn't clear what was going to happen with those stories. So, there was no pressure to produce a, I was just like, "Oh, she wants some stories. I have a lot of stories."

And then this right, actually, in this room, or was it in that room? It was one of these two rooms that we're sitting in right now, right? This room, the basement kitchen. And you had the big tape recorder set up, and that was a little daunting. And then you just wanted to hear the story and you were paying such attention. And I was so grateful that this story that I had, these pieces of stories for my life, were worth your attention. And that your attention gave them even a certain value to me that they didn't have before. And I think that this whole project has given value to certain experiences that I've had and enabled me to hear other people's stories. And it's not a logical relevance, but it feels like an emotional relevance that is accorded to everyone's story.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

So interesting. You were referring to some of the pre-interviews.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah. The initial research

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Right, where you invited people here to your home, where we're sitting right now, in your home.

Lynne Sachs:

One at a time.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

One at a time. And we shared, I think we already had some back and forth through email or on the phone, but when we came, we came prepared with certain stories from our lives that have stuck with us or that were important. And it's interesting, these are stories dying to share, but I didn't even know how to present them. I didn't know what the core of them or what the frame of it was. I just knew there were these moments and these feelings, they're vague and blurry. And so it gave me a reason to figure that out a little bit more through our conversations. It was nice. It was like, "I do want to talk about these things and they matter to me. I don't know if they matter to anybody else." But they created who I am.

Lynne Sachs:

As you're talking, I'm sitting here remembering your stories about summer camp, for example. And I've never met anyone who could take summer camp, the notion of summer camp is to feel very far away from the swirl of public events. To be in the woods. But when you told your story about summer camp, it was all about, in a sense, the inverse of that. That summer camp was a place where you became politicized. And that was fascinating to me. Something that's so much about this early childhood moment, and yet you gained this awareness.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah. And there's no way to relay that experience to people who haven't gone through it.

I had a house guest this last week who is in the film business as well, but he came in to the city and he stayed with me. He was there for years. So he gets it. It's a nice thing to be able to have that experience with other people. Going there, we were going home. The rest of the year, it's all about trying to maneuver through people that didn't understand us in a life that wasn't really supporting the kind of weirdos we are. It was difficult to figure that out in a place like Queens.

Lynne Sachs:

I wanted to go back to, you asked me about the visuals, and I felt very committed to not having what we call talking heads, just sitting in chairs. And I also felt that by having you

all tell these stories in somewhat awkward, somewhat physically unfamiliar, but also playful environments, that it might make you feel a little bit liberated. And so for example, I filmed with Andrea in the bathtub, in water without a shirt on. And I don't know-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Why weren't you wearing a shirt?

Andrea Kannapell:
In the bathtub.

Lynne Sachs:
Well, because she was in the bathtub.
Andrea Kannapell:
I was in the bathtub.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
I assumed to Lynne. Oh, you meant her...

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
... Andrea.

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah, yeah. Andrea, right.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
She was not wearing-

Lynne Sachs:
But I don't know. I was wondering if being in that context or your body not being in a comfortable chair, but being in something that was both familiar, which is a bathtub, but not familiar in front of a camera gave it-

Andrea Kannapell:
Not familiar with five people in the bathroom with you.

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah. And whether that charge brought out something in the story.

Andrea Kannapell:
Well, it definitely brought out the storytelling because, and who was it I was telling the story to?

Lynne Sachs:
Sarah.

Andrea Kannapell:
Sarah. I was telling the story to Sarah. But there were other people watching. But she also had a very steady gaze and extremely attentive, like she was truly listening. So yeah, I think it knocks you a little bit out of any, none of the stories I told are stories I tell. I have some stories I tell, but those are not the stories I tell, normally. So I don't have a practiced way of telling any of the stories. And the-

Lynne Sachs:
That was really critical that these weren't stories that had been practiced.

Andrea Kannapell:
No.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
What?

Lynne Sachs:
They weren't the stories that most of us tell at the dining room table, and people say, "Oh yeah, we've heard that before."

Andrea Kannapell:
Yeah. Yeah. Nobody had heard that one.

Accra Shepp:
No, and in point of fact, when I watched the film of you recounting the story in the bathtub, you seem so fully possessed by the memory that perhaps, I would like to imagine that you, at first, were aware of the five other people, but by the time you're in the story, you are gulping for breath as you recall the moments. And what I tell my friends, I don't give away good parts about it. I say, "Your heart will be in your throat." That's what I tell them.

Andrea Kannapell:
But I thought all of the situations were, there was the one where you and Shira-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Meaning me.

Andrea Kannapell:
Yeah. You, Adam, and Shira, and...

Lynne Sachs:
Jim.

Andrea Kannapell:
... Jim...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Jim.

Andrea Kannapell:
... were getting up periodically and moving around a sofa and sitting back down again, while Jim was talking about having trouble finding a job.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Right.

Andrea Kannapell:
And you had a very different experience during the economic downturn, and you had a different experience. It was just a, I loved that, that it's like these inexplicable moments did not interrupt the storytelling at all. They enhanced it, somehow, which, I guess, is an argument to see the film because I don't think you can explain it.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Well, I'm going to jump in only to say, one of the main reasons, that catalyst that brought us together is that the film, which has already played in innumerable festivals around the world, and premiered at MoMA's, very prestigious Doc Fortnight last winter, it is now available digitally through a DVD.

Lynne Sachs:
It's available on DVD, and digitally, and it's actually also, I'll say, on Kanopy.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Which is the library's.

Lynne Sachs:
You all know what Kanopy is? Yeah. So that's actually the quickest way that anybody could see it.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Didn't know that.

Lynne Sachs:
Because to be on Kanopy means, if you have a...

Andrea Kannapell:
Library card.

Lynne Sachs:
... library card, like the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library, or probably the Memphis Public Library, or the...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Oh, she had us in Memphis.

Lynne Sachs:
... Louisville Public, hmm?

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Or Louisville, where my house guest was from.

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Are you from Louisville?

Andrea Kannapell:
I'm from Louisville. Who was your house guest? I bet I know them.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Mark Rabinowitz. He's living there now. He didn't grow up there, though.

Lynne Sachs:
Oh.

Andrea Kannapell:
Oh, okay. Well.

Lynne Sachs:
Anyway, most, or lots and lots of public libraries now have Kanopy with a K, and Tip of My Tongue is there.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
You share good company, Frederick Wiseman's entire library is on Kanopy.

Lynne Sachs:
It is? Well, we're on Kanopy.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
That's fantastic. I didn't know it was available on Kanopy. So go to K, Kanopy and check it out if you have a library card, if you don't, a library card-

Lynne Sachs:
Especially if You don't have a DVD player, as many people don't.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

As many people don't.

Accra Shepp:

Or you take out your DVD player and find out it doesn't want to work anymore.

Lynne Sachs:

I'm happy that I made a DVD because I wanted...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

It's beautiful.

Lynne Sachs:

... I wanted people to have things to put on their shelf.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah.

Lynne Sachs:

And I like an object.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Me, too. Just tell me who did the artwork, since I put on my phone's, it's on my phone's, what do they call it? The-

Andrea Kannapell:

The wall or something?

Lynne Sachs:

The wall.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Wallpaper? No. the-

Andrea Kannapell:

Wallpaper.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

No. What comes, yeah, it's the wallpaper.

Andrea Kannapell:

The locking screen?

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

It's the wallpaper.

Lynne Sachs:

The design of the DVD was created by Rebecca Chapas, who is my assistant and also my former student. So she took the scene with Andrea in it...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah, the tub scene.

Lynne Sachs:

... and did what they call rotoscoping. And then she embellished. Not you, because it looks just like you, but she embellished the bathtub. Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

You have fins.

Lynne Sachs:

So, it looks a little bit like Marat/Sade.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

I joked about this at our MoMA opening night, that the way it was shot, the framing of the shot was that it goes about halfway, the tub is about half, you don't see half of the tub, the empty part. So I just had this image when I was watching that scene at the end of your monologue, the camera pans and I'm sitting in the tub with you on the other side. I don't know why. I just have this fantasy. Nothing untoward, I promise. But I just liked the idea of at the end, like a visual joke like that.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, I was actually wondering if you would like to hear some of the stories that they tell, some of the events. I really love Accra's story about the lenticular ring.

Andrea Kannapell:

Oh, yeah. That's a great story.

Lynne Sachs:

And I bet, if you heard us say, "There's a story about a lenticular ring," most people will not be able to guess how that crosses with history. But it does.

Accra Shepp:

Yeah. I was just really amazed, because the memory is so slight, when I was six years old, I got a 3D ring, a plastic ring, as a gift, and it was a picture of Martin Luther King.

And then when you moved it slightly, it said, "I have a dream."

And when you're six years old, of course, it doesn't take much. A gift is a gift. It's like, wow. It's like you're super excited. And I was. Unpacking the memory for Lynne, I was vexed by all this ambiguity, trying to tease out what I actually knew as a six-year-old, and what I might've known later on as an adult. And there were parts of the memory that were very clear. I could see where I was standing. I knew where the events had unfolded and the light it was in. I knew that the thing had happened. But I was just like, I knew something had happened to Martin Luther King. Did I know he had died? I

seemed to somehow recall that I did know. But at six, I wasn't yet watching the evening news, so I would've missed the whole assassination.

But yet, I didn't miss, I knew this is where the essential conflict came in. So it was funny. I didn't want to misrepresent the memory. And so I was super careful to frame the ambiguity as part of the memory.

But you were just saying something earlier, where you actually wanted to address that in the film. And I hadn't known that until just this moment. So I was like, "Oh, yeah, I did that."

Lynne Sachs:

And I also love that you didn't give yourself an extra, a wisdom that you might not have had at that time. You never said that you completely grasped the gravitas of it. You kept yourself at that age, like [inaudible 01:00:17], there's an ability to stay in childhood. Which, for me, was really, really important.

Andrea Kannapell:

Yeah. And I was just thinking what it gave me to hear that story. Because one of my stories is about the Kennedy Assassination. And I was younger, maybe three, and watching it on TV. I am from Louisville, Kentucky. I grew up in a very rural environment. Louisville, that was 1963, by the time I was five or six, racial tensions in the United States were hitting a peak. I was protected from most of those things. But I knew that there were things about race that you did not talk about, but I didn't know what they were, because you didn't talk about them. That wasn't something I could find out about. And I feel like there's a part of me missing from not knowing the rest of the story. And your story gave me a little piece of another world, in a quiet way, in a very, not in a political way, not in a, "I already know what this message means and that's why I'm telling you the story."

Just in a, "Here was my experience."

And I can't say why that, I find that so valuable. It's just that it's so true. There's no ulterior motive in telling any of these stories. They just stand on their own. And, for me, many of these stories filled in gaps of the bigger experience of the time. And in that way, the experience of being in the film and the experience of seeing the film has given me a sense of my generation, which is a bunch of people. Everybody's like, "I didn't know what to make of that."

Here's the strange thing that happened. Here were all the elements of it. And I feel so much enlarged, and we actually are collectively a generation in a way that I hadn't previously experienced.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Accra, where are you from? Where did you grow up?

Accra Shepp:

Well, born in New York City. Lived here till I was 10. And then we decamped for Western Massachusetts after that. So we left just before the city slid into oblivion in '72. And then I returned after I graduated college.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Okay. But you're a New Yorker. We could just-

Accra Shepp:

Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

And Lynne Sachs grew up in Memphis, Tennessee.

Lynne Sachs:

Indeed.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Where there is a Jewish population, people should know.

Lynne Sachs:

Surprise, surprise. There is.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Well, yeah, in Atlanta, very big Jewish, it's not the only southern city.

I think one of my anecdotes, I can't remember, I don't think it made the film. I think the one that made the film was the Reagan, the heady times in the Shartoff family. It was like-

Lynne Sachs:

Actually, will you tell that story?

Andrea Kannapell:

Yeah. That's the one you guys were telling right as you were circling the sofa.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah. Was it about my Dad's-

Lynne Sachs:

Sure.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah. Well, it's funny because all my stories, weirdly, they all seem to come from camp in some way. But those years. This one, I was already a counselor. But I remember in the '80s, I guess it was mid to late '80s, and I just remembered being on the phone, calling home for whatever reason, and from the office at the camp in Vermont. And my

Dad was very happy, he was flourishing financially. And he shared it and he told me what he was making that year. He never had such explicit conversation. I knew that they were middle-class, we never had to worry about anything and things were much cheaper to live then.

And he said, I was just like, "Oh, Jesus, that's much larger. I had no idea."
So it made me think about, after, I was thinking about how my Dad is one of those people that was flourishing as a result of the economy, even though my parents were very, very anti-Reagan and anti-Republican, vehemently so. And so, it was this interesting thing to be benefiting from that economy, while at the same time, really hating what he stood for, Reagan. And that's what I talked about, I believe.

Lynne Sachs:

And I really appreciated your candor when you talked about that story because, especially in documentary, people have a hard time talking about moments in which they're flourishing. It's much easier to complain and to-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah, when you're broke,

Lynne Sachs:

When you're broke, and it seems like you'll engender some kind of sympathy.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

And you can shake your fist. So it's so straightforward. The narrative is so straight...

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

... and so simple.

Lynne Sachs:

That's so great that you said that because then...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Complicates it.

Lynne Sachs:

... it put in contrast to Jim talking about his desperation just to have the most menial jobs, and that he also was trying to figure out what his relationship was to registering for the draft, and all of these ways he felt dehumanized. But you're all really just young people trying to figure out how to be.

Andrea Kannapell:

Yeah. You have a particular look in your eye when you tell that story.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Me?

Andrea Kannapell:

You, Adam. That, yeah, the light comes in your eyes somehow. And I can't presume to know what you actually were thinking, but what I took away is the possibility that you were hearing Jim's struggle and there was a little bit of a, "Wow, that did not happen to me."

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

What was his, refresh memory, I got to go open my DVD.

Jim:

Looking for work. No, I remember

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

What year, though.

Jim:

'81.

Lynne Sachs:

'82.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

So really, he was a young guy, just a kid.

Andrea Kannapell:

Yeah, yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Trying to figure he was.... Because I could have just-

Lynne Sachs:

The Reagan years lasted a long time.

Andrea Kannapell:

They did last a long time.

Lynne Sachs:

So when we say the Reagan years-

Jim:

Oh, actually, no, no, no, that's right. Reagan was elected '84. So it would've been '84, '85, '86.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, okay.

Jim:
Right.

Lynne Sachs:
Right.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
'84, '92.

Lynne Sachs:
Then I made a mistake. Yeah. I said '82.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
'92 to-

Jim:
No, because I got to college in 1984, in that fall, he was the President, the brand new President who was going to undo the world that I knew.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
No, but that was the second election.

Lynne Sachs:
His second.

Jim:
Oh, it was his second?

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yeah, because it was '84 to '88. Bush '88 to '92, Bill Clinton, '92 to 2000.

Jim:
That's right, that's right. That's right.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
But yeah, I was living in Boston at the same time, and I remember the, "Well, I won't allow his young age and lack of experience to be an obstacle," whatever he said about Mondale. "Well..."
But it's funny, my only other anecdote-

Lynne Sachs:
You do a fine impersonation of Ronald Reagan.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

"Yes, yes. Thank you."

My other thing was that, the other story I wanted to tell though, and I appreciate that you wanted me to tell that other story that I wasn't comfortable talking, like doing, but I have a much easier time building this very nostalgic, emotional story about Nixon resigning and being also in summer camp as a kid, though, when it was Upstate New York. And being in the dining hall.

And the thing that also is different, or that goes against the typical narrative, is that in this hippie commie camp, and it really was just that, it was like pink, red diaper, all the way. And there were like 50 kids, and we were all barefoot, and just skinny-dipping, and singing folk songs. And one night, they called us into the dining hall and we all sat there. And the program director turned on the radio and we all listened to Nixon resign. And I was a kid of nine years old. And I looked across the room and there was one of the counselors, again, hippies, college students, crying. And I don't know why she was crying. She should be in a good mood. Richard Nixon is finally resigning. And it took years of that memory in my head of seeing her cry where I was able to figure out why she was crying. And what it did to the country and to all of our-

Lynne Sachs:

And actually, it's interesting because Sue Simon talks about that, too. And I think it takes a certain kind of wisdom and sophistication for us to realize that we can have empathy even with those people we hate most. We can still understand them as human beings.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

I didn't look at it that way, though.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh. Okay.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

But I could be wrong. Maybe she was.

Jim:

No, I was reading it, I think more like you were understanding it, that, he was a human being, but he also symbolized something for the country that had been undone and was unclear that it could ever be refashioned again. He might've broken it permanently.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah. And that it was a devastating, yeah tearing of the innocence.

Lynne Sachs:

It was a tearing, yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

And it was also in the midst of the Vietnam War and so much else. And who knows what this woman, this young woman, had experienced in her life? I have no idea. I don't even remember who it was.

Lynne Sachs:

Well, I wanted to say there are a few things in the film that have come back cyclically. And it's really horrible. So, the shootings in high schools.

Andrea Kannapell:

Oh, yeah, yeah. All that.

Lynne Sachs:

So when Columbine happened, Columbine happened, two teenagers walked into their Colorado high school and started shooting. And I know exactly where I was when that happened. I know I was sitting on a couch. I was in Philadelphia, I was teaching. I had to be there overnight. We were watching the reports come in. And it never occurred to me, ever, that that would be more than once in a lifetime.

Andrea Kannapell:

Mm-hmm.

Lynne Sachs:

And it is numerous times. And it's become worse. And there's a number of other stories in the film, currently we're living through the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh. And we're having to face his-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

[inaudible 01:11:53].

Lynne Sachs:

What?

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

I'm sorry, go ahead.

[inaudible 01:11:56]

Lynne Sachs:

We're having to face his-

Jim:

Mendacity.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah, his mendacity and his, I don't know what you, sexual exploits, and his irresponsibility, and his manipulation of a situation in these political ways. And it's so close to what happened in 1991 with Anita Hill. It just makes you shiver.

Jim:
It's worse.

Andrea Kannapell:
It's worse.

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
I think it's worse.

Jim:
Well, I was-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Because there wasn't, 20 years before, that same thing happening, where we-

Lynne Sachs:
We didn't learn a lesson.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Right, on top of that.

Jim:
It also embodies a good deal of the legacy of ill will from Nixon, because Kavanaugh belongs to, for lack of a better term, a cabal of right-wing ideologues who feel that because the score has not been evened, that the ends always justify the means. And so. in his confirmation as an appellate court judge, he lied to the Senate, I believe, on three occasions.

Lynne Sachs:
Oh, I didn't know that.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yeah, and they're talking about impeaching him just for that.

Jim:
It's well-known. And during his Supreme Court nomination, before the accusations of rape came down, he lied twice. The lie that I most vividly recall was something to do with some documents that were stolen from the Democrats that were passed to him. And he lied, he said he never got them. And then when it was shown that he did receive...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

They used them.

Jim:

... he said, "Oh, I didn't know they were stolen."

But the initial lie stands. He said he never got them, but he did. So the fact that he didn't know they were stolen, immaterial.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Right. But even then, besides the lie about it, he also chose to use them...

Jim:

Yes.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

... knowing that they got to him in a circumsection.

Jim:

They were marked confidential...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Confidential.

Jim:

... clearly.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

He wasn't supposed to-

Jim:

He's clearly not supposed to even see them.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Anybody ethical would have returned them, found out where they came from, and made it public. He used them. And then lied about it recently.

Jim:

And so that was his appellate...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

[inaudible 01:14:22].

Jim:

... nomination. And that evidently stretched on. Andrea, you may know, for two years, I believe it took for his appointment?

Andrea Kannapell:

No, I don't know.

Jim:

Because he was so embattled as an appellate court judge, this is nothing new for the man.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah.

Andrea Kannapell:

But I think one of the reasons that we care so much about this case, we would anyway, I'm sure, it's riveting. But I think because we do have a sense of the history we have, and we had that experience of a President, when it emerged what Nixon had actually done, it was stunning. It was unthinkable that a President would not hold himself to a higher standard and would lie, and would manipulate, and would organize crime to support his own power structure. We know more about what he was willing to do. And now we know more about what other Presidents have been willing to do.

Kennedy doesn't look as good now as he did when I was young. In some ways, many presidents don't look as good. But I think that betrayal, the betrayal of realizing how much Nixon had lied, and cheated, and had been criminal, was a ripping. It was a real ripping, painful thing. And I can't say that there were probably many people in the United States who had already been ripped to shreds by the power structure and knew not to trust it. But most of us seem to have started off with some kind of trust. And the betrayal of that trust is another commonality that I found. And it has made me hyper-vigilant about official misconduct.

Lynne Sachs:

I wanted to say one other thing about Anita Hill. When I was editing the section of the film on Anita Hill with my assistant, and who was also the editor, Amanda, she was 26, 27, when we were working on it. And I said, "Oh, this is the section about Anita Hill." And she said, "Well, who is Anita Hill?" And she's very, very educated young woman.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Really intelligent and astute, yeah.

Lynne Sachs:

It's just that the story, it hadn't had a chance to come back yet.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

So this is a great opportunity. Why are people complaining?

Lynne Sachs:

Right.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Take your lemons and you make your lemonade. I don't understand.

Andrea Kannapell:
Everybody knows Anita Hill now.

Lynne Sachs:
Finally, Anita gets her day in the sun.

Jim:
Not enough sugar to make that sweet, ever.

Lynne Sachs:
No, no, not at all.

Andrea Kannapell:
And she finally got Biden's apology.

Lynne Sachs:
Oh, that's right.

Jim:
Really?

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yeah.

Andrea Kannapell:
And the comeuppance, because his campaign for the presidency is totally shadowed by his performance in those hearings.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Oh, it's plenty of time for it.

Jim:
There's a lot to be said for being able to apologize and being able to acknowledge that you're wrong.

Lynne Sachs:
Yes, that's a very good point.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yeah, I agree with that. And I think it's also, there's still plenty of time.

Lynne Sachs:
What if, and this wouldn't happen, but what if Brett Kavanaugh had said, "I made a mistake, I was a stupid 15-year-old."

Jim:

Well, then it would be different. It would be entirely different.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah.

Jim:

But then he probably would-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Still wouldn't be appropriate.

Jim:

He would've also had to have not lied about the other things he lied about. But he wouldn't be on the hook for this if he had said that, I'm saying.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Right. Yeah.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

It's the manipulation of the truth.

Lynne Sachs:

Manipulation of the truth.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

That's the problem. The biggest problem he has. And this is the highest truth, truthiness, most truthiness spot of all of the truthiness places there is, is the Supreme Court. Right? He is the last person you want on the Supreme Court.

Jim:

Really. And it's so interesting. The true dilemma of him being elevated to a Supreme Court Justice is that, people worry about Roe V. Wade, that's the tip of the iceberg. He would undo just about everything. They have already decimated the Voting Rights Act. We could see things go back to 1945. Strom Thurmond would be proud.

Lynne Sachs:

Definitely. So I just want to say I only have about seven more minutes.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

Yeah, yeah.

Lynne Sachs:
Is any other-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yeah. Well, again, let's repeat that, well, clearly a sequel is in order. We know that, Turning 55.

Lynne Sachs:
Well, I've had the chance for some delightful sequels because I've had a chance to travel...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yes, you have.

Lynne Sachs:
... with both of you. We went to Pittsburgh and we went to Northern California. And that, in itself, has been-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
You're pointing at Andrea and Accra, yeah.

Lynne Sachs:
Excuse me, Andrea and I went to Pittsburgh with Sarah. And Accra and I went to the Mill Valley Film Festival, which is happening right now.

Accra Shepp:
Oh, that's right.

Lynne Sachs:
So that was exactly a year ago...

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
A year later.

Lynne Sachs:
... that we were there.
And the thing is about making a film is that it's a gift on multiple levels. We've had reunions in community gardens...

Andrea Kannapell:
Yeah, yeah.

Lynne Sachs:
... over dinners. And every single time the conversation becomes so deep. There's no fluff. Because what we have together, we know comes from this very layered-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Yeah. The seeds of our relationship.

Lynne Sachs:
The seeds of our relationship are like-

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
We're planted deep in the ground, really fertilized.

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
So now, yeah, it's a real meaningful, rooted type of thing.

Lynne Sachs:
And it's totally different from the reunion you might have with your high school buddies.

Jim:
Well, it's fascinating what you said at the top where you said that you just plunged into all of our lives, into the most intimate details. And it was fascinating hearing you, Adam, and you Andrea, talk about what these stories represented. In some sense, I felt that the validation of having someone listen officially, was an act of completion. And I was really struck by that because, for me, I was struggling to imagine that I had anything to say.

Lynne Sachs:
Oh, well, I just wanted to add one more thing, which was 9/11. So there are so many things that happened. And the September 11th happens every year. So I feel like I have my own experience, but I have collected your experiences, too. So somehow it's like a dream, "Did that really happen to me or did it happen to you?"

Jim:
Oh, my.

Lynne Sachs:
I know that I wasn't as close to the towers as either of you.

Andrea Kannapell:
Yeah, I was-

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah, you were pretty close, both of you.

Andrea Kannapell:
Yeah, very close. Yeah.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah. Well, I hear it in the film and I hear, it's just in my consciousness. And that's part of finding community, when we collect other people's stories and they give a deeper meaning to something.

Andrea Kannapell:

I think through this film, I see the way we function as a bridge among eras. And we all started in our chunk of whatever that era was, and in the environment of that era. But that era was the beginning of the media age. It was the beginning of mass culture, but we still had the experience. Our childhoods were not that. Our consciousness was formed by something far more private and far more immediate. And I see us confronting over and over again, through these stories, a massive wave of cultural change that we have all...

What I really like is that everyone met that with a great deal of humanity. There's nobody ranting in rage in this film. People are, they're reliving what they experienced and they're being heard. And it's very powerful to watch people listening in this film. I think you can't walk away from this film and not be a better listener. You might or might not be a better storyteller, but you're definitely going to have the sense that you hearing someone else is an extremely valuable thing.

Jim:

Oh, you just made something click in my head, because I've heard Lynne refer many times to the fact that she wanted to create an active listener in the frame for the audience. And now I understand it, hearing you say that, because when Lynne was listening to you tell your stories and Adam tell your stories, Lynne was the official listener. But to have that reified, to have an official listener taking something in and be visually compelling, invites the viewer or gives the viewer permission to be that listener, as well.

Andrea Kannapell:

Yeah. I've asked different audiences, when we've done Q&A's, before different audiences. I've said young people in particular have really resonated with us. And I think it's because it's the idea that your experience really is meaningful. You might not see it at this moment in time, but your experience is meaningful and you can't figure out what it is until you tell it to someone else. And until you listen to other people telling what happened to them.

Adam Scharoff / Filmwax:

Tip of My Tongue is currently available on DVD. Where do they order that, can we get that?

Lynne Sachs:

The Tip of My Tongue DVD is at the Filmmakers Cooperative, Canyon Cinema, and also Cinema Guild.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
They can order it, though-

Lynne Sachs:
They can order the DVD. If it's home video, it's really cheap, maybe \$25. And if it's an institution, you can order it through Cinema Guild. And you can also just find it online streaming through Kanopy.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Kanopy with a K. But Okay. It's not on Amazon, is it? Like for the DVD, if you want to just buy one?

Lynne Sachs:
The Amazon-
Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
I don't know. Is it?

Lynne Sachs:
That's a good question.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Can they go to your website's and is a link there?

Lynne Sachs:
They can go to my website.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Okay. [inaudible 01:26:11].

Lynne Sachs:
Yeah, LynneSachs.com.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Okay.

Lynne Sachs:
But also, they can go to Cinema Guild.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Oh, Cinema Guild's website. Okay. They're the distributor for the DVD?
Thank you, Andrea Kannapell, Accra Shepp, and Lynne Sachs.

Andrea Kannapell:
Thank you, Adam.

Lynne Sachs:

Thank you, Adam Shartoff.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:
Thank you.

Accra Shepp:
Thank you.

Adam Schartoff / Filmwax:

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