

Elizabeth Kaplan

Gruber Miller

Women in Antiquity (CLA-264)

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#### American Culture Mother Interview

Arlene Lavender Kaplan is an eighty-two year old widowed grandmother. She is a currently retired banker from Deutsche Bank Group and is living in a residence home for the elderly called Kendal on Hudson in Sleepy Hollow New York. Arlene is the mother of two sons, Lee Michael Kaplan who is fifty-five and Jonathan (Jon) Harris Kaplan who is fifty-three. She has four grandchildren, two from each son, three granddaughters and a grandson ages ranging from two to eighteen. Arlene has had a good education. She graduated from Port Chester High School in 1944 and the State University of New York in Albany (SUNY Albany) in 1948 with a Masters degree in mathematics and a degree as a certified financial planner and belonged to the sorority Alpha Epsilon Phi.

Arlene, being retired, does not have a daily schedule but throughout the day she tends to work at the computer, socialize with the other residents and is an avid reader. She is also involved with the residence council where she lives, specifically working with the treasury regarding the bills and donations. When her sons travel to New York on business they visit with her and have dinner, lunch or some other meeting. With Arlene's children living elsewhere and her husband passed away, her responsibilities around her apartment are not much besides making her bed, breakfast and lunch, and doing laundry. She spends her holidays visiting her family, usually her sons and their families who live in Chicago, Illinois and Boston, Massachusetts. There is also a New Year's party at Kendal, where she lives. Arlene does not earn any money because she is retired but uses the money she has to travel. She recently returned from a long vacation on a river boat cruise to Belgium and Holland with a friend of hers from Kendal.

Arlene's values are very simple. She believes to be good woman or a good man, that they should be independent, considerate and kind. She does not believe there should be different things that men and women should do saying: "Men and women should be totally equal but unfortunately the world isn't like that." There is nothing that she would like to do but can't because she is a woman. When asked the question, do you think it is better to be a man or a woman? She had an answer that would be similar to my own answer, saying "It isn't better to be either, you're born into either and you make the most of it." Arlene doesn't believe there is a specific age or tradition for when a girl becomes an adult. She believes that a girl becomes an adult when she takes on the responsibility of taking care of herself physically and mentally. At first when I asked her how her life changed when she became an adult, she didn't have an answer but with more thought she answered she became an adult when she became more independent and dealt with life as it came.

Unlike most girls of her age, Arlene did not look forward to marriage, explaining that it wasn't important if she got married or not. She met her husband Bernard "Bernie" Kaplan by chance at some camp she did not elaborate on, when she was twenty-three. Bernie heard Arlene talking with her friends one day at the camp they were at, and was interested in what they were talking about. He sought her out the next day and they met, ended up dating. Arlene married Bernie when she was twenty-four, a year after they met, and she had her first son when she was twenty-six.

Arlene did not have any girl children but would teach her female grandchildren to be independent and not to be dependent on a man or let society influence them, which is something she has taught her twin granddaughters who are currently eighteen and is something they practice daily. She intends to teach her youngest granddaughter this as soon as she is able to comprehend that concept. Arlene has taught her sons to be independent and not to be dependent on a woman as well as how to respect women. She has also has taught them to treat everyone with kindness and how to value

themselves and would teach her grandson this as well when he is old enough to understand these values. Her children are out of school and her twin granddaughters are in college and her younger granddaughter is in preschool but her grandson is not old enough to go to school. Arlene did not name any specific women friends but they are the ones she has met at school, various organizations and from the place she lives.