

Interviewee: Geraldine Brophy  
Interviewers: Andressa DeLeon Guimaraes and Kaelin Lozier  
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Geraldine Brophy was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1944 to Katherine and John Brophy. She is the eldest of two daughters. She is the mother to two sons; one from her first marriage and another from her second. Geraldine attended Southern Connecticut State University and got her bachelor's degree in education. At 48 years old, after she had met and married her second husband, she went back to college at Boston College and received her master's degree in social work. After graduation, she proceeded to work at Harrington Hospital as a psychotherapist and later opened up her own private practice. Geraldine talked about how as a child, she and her family moved around quite a bit. She explained that it made an impact on her. After her divorce from her first husband, she took it upon herself to pack up with her child and move to the city of Worcester and later moved to Auburn where she currently resides. Geraldine discussed the significance of her childhood and the life lessons she has gathered from her mother and marriages. She shared how her experiences and decisions applied to and shaped the different jobs she held throughout her life including motherhood.

**ADG:** We are completing an oral history project of the lives of Worcester women for our Women's Studies class. We want to focus today on your experiences with Worcester and your life experiences.

**KL:** Do we have your permission to record our interview?

**GB:** Yes, of course.

**ADG:** Thank you.

**GB:** You can name me, I don't care, I've got nothing to hide.

**ADG:** So, first question I guess, what is your full name-- including both married and maiden name if applicable?

**GB:** Geraldine Marie Brophy.

**ADG:** Where were you born?

**GB:** Hartford, Connecticut.

**ADG:** Have you ever been married?

**GB:** Twice.

**ADG:** So, what's the name of your current spouse?

**GB:** Paul Bramer.

**ADG:** Thank you, so, the Women's Studies class we are in, we are focusing on roles and women, also through marriage or relationships in general. So what were the roles within marriage that you saw growing up? And once you were older what did they look like if they changed? Or with your parents in comparison to yours or something like that?

**GB:** Roles I saw growing up, were mainly my parents, I was born in the olden days, so roles were very traditional. People didn't color outside the lines. And my parents had traditional marital roles. Mom was a housewife, she stayed home, took care of the house, took care of the kids. Dad went to work, he was a traveling salesman so he was not home a lot. And Mom wore the pants in the family.

[Laughter]

**ADG:** Could you see the change overtime, like in your own personal life or later?

**GB:** Uh no, she always wore the pants in the family. Very definitely.

**ADG:** Did you take that example into your own relationships later?

**GB:** In my first marriage, yes, because it was the only model I had at being a woman. What the hell did I know at twenty years old? No insult intended [she gestures to the two of us, and there is laughter] So, yeah, I thought I would kind of call the shots even though this was the peace moon child generation, this was the age of Aquarius, so things were supposed to be equal and consensual, but the bottom line is, you act out what you were taught. So, my first husband was an alcoholic, so he didn't know how to push back. Together we crashed the marriage. It lasted thirteen years and it wasn't 'til I realized he was an alcoholic, because when I divorced him, it was like, "Well, okay I've gotten rid of the problem, now I'll get into my life." Just to show you the depth of my naïveté . But when I met husband number two, thirty, forty years ago-- he was an alcoholic as well, I guess that was when I realized that the problem wasn't out there [waves her arm out and around], the problem was here [she rests her hand on her chest]. Having said that though, my husband's been sober for thirty-two years. It's unfortunate that my first husband couldn't get sober because he was a marvelous intellect, marvelous story teller, a wonderful

musician, an artist. He couldn't let go though. Husband number two like I said got sober, so that was fine, so that was when I began to realize that I needed to change how I looked at things and how I looked at relationships, and it's been a wild ride.

**ADG:** Did you have any children?

**GB:** I have two, one from my first marriage, he's fifty years old, lives in Las Vegas. My second one, he's thirty-one, he lives in Phoenix.

**ADG:** Do you have any grandchildren?

**GB:** No, I have a grandpuppy [laughter], and I'd be glad to show you the picture of him.

**ADG:** What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with in your family background?

**GB:** I identified heavily with Italian because my mother is Italian and French Canadian heritage. And a lot of the relatives we visited in Massachusetts were her relatives who were Italian from the old country and they were very Italian. Very weird, I always had the creeps going there.

**ADG:** Tell me more about your parents-- did[they teach you] any life lessons that resonated with you? Or, yeah, I mean anything that stuck with you?

**GB:** [laughs] Yeah, my dad was always fond of saying that the only prejudice he had was against stupidity. And it was he, ironically enough, and I don't know where he got it from-- but it as he who gave me the Serenity Prayer, and my father was always an egalitarian, he always tried to shoot down the middle, make it be fair for everyone, even though life itself wasn't fair. And, I kind of took that into myself. My mother, the lessons she taught me were the ones I had to forget and let go of. Although ironically, her two loudest mandates were, "Do it yourself or die trying" or "always think of yourself first, don't trust anybody." And when you put that into a Buddhist or loving-kindness framework, it's very true because they do tell you to put your face mask on, in the airplane, before you help anyone else. So, I kind of, unconvoluted that lesson and I learned to take care of myself but in a healthy way, not in a stingy selfish way.

**ADG:** Where have you lived during your life? Did you always grow up in Worcester?

**GB:** No. No, Worcester is the last place I landed. I was born in Hartford, my dad moved us to Toledo, Detroit, New Haven, Middletown, and he landed, finally, in Cleveland, Ohio where my sister presently resides. When they moved to Cleveland, that's when I was set to go to college and that's when I said, "I'm not moving to Cleveland."

**ADG:** In the different cities you've lived in, did you-- was the neighborhoods the same, generally, or were they different?

**GB:** Yeah, they were. Middle class, white neighborhoods. Nothing distinctive about any of them.

**ADG:** During any time of your childhood, did you have any experience that kind of set you in place as a girl? Kind of one that stereotyped you, you know “you’re a woman, you don’t do this” or anything like that?

**GB:** I wouldn’t have known, at that time of my life, I wouldn’t have known. I went to public schools, all-girl Catholic schools, so the whole thing about sexism really didn’t come to the fore ‘til I was married and it was in the mid to late 60s, I was married, you know? And of course, although I never advocated for the bra burning, I was never--I was never that deep into that whole “Women’s Lib” thing because I think, partly because of my father’s mandates about fairness and there’s always more than one side to the story. So, I never burned my bra. [Laughter] I empathize, but I’ve never burned my bra. I have since stopped wearing them because they’re horribly comfortable! [more laughter].

**ADG:** You weren’t born in Worcester, so when did you arrive?

**GB:** So let’s see, 1981? So that’s how many years ago? Thirty-nine years ago? Something like that?

**ADG:** And how old were you?

**GB:** Well, I was just newly divorced--well, I wasn’t NEWLY divor-- well, I guess I still was, thirty five? Somewhere like that.

**ADG:** And why did you decide to move to Worcester?

**GB:** I was newly divorced. I had no strings except my son, no reason to tie myself to Connecticut, other than my son. Made a few mistakes along that five year path. I had a college friend who was living up here with his wife and he encouraged me to move up, so I did. I met my second husband and then, here I am.

**ADG:** What part of the city did you live in? Or have you moved around Worcester and kind of settled somewhere?

**GB:** When I originally moved up here, I lived with my friend and his wife so I lived in Worcester. But then I needed a place of my own so I found a place in Auburn and I’ve been in Auburn ever since. So, since 1982, maybe, or the end of 1981.

**ADG:** Do you think that any of -- when you first arrived, did you notice any, challenges in the city itself? And have you seen it change overtime, or is it the same?

**GB:** Well, Worcester is an old mill town, and for thirty years or so that I've been here, its efforts to change that image and commit to the modern century have failed abysmally. I've got new hope though, with the restructuring of downtown, I have seen a little more activity on the main street and not just the homeless wandering the streets-- I am seeing engaged people walking the streets. The shock to me in Worcester, when I learned about how many colleges were in Worcester and that it had no college town feel whatsoever, there are no little-- there's nothing for the college crowd in this town that I can say. And I grew up in New Haven, and I went to college in New Haven, so, that was definitely a college town, you know? And there was all kinds of things, you go to Amherst, that's a college town. So, I'm still surprised that that ambiance, does not exist here.

**ADG:** Do you think that's what makes it distinct about Worcester? That it's not a college town? That it adds to the character? Like, that's what makes Worcester, Worcester?

**GB:** I don't know, I like the little college boutiques and shops, sorry! [Laughs]

**ADG:** What would you say makes Worcester, I don't know-- [Interrupts]

**GB:** It's location, it's in the middle-- practically in the middle of the state, it's at the crossroads of all the major highways, you can get to almost anywhere from here. And so far, driving is not as bad as Boston, but it's changing.

**ADG:** So, what do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been like generally?

**GB:** You know, I really wouldn't have a clue. I have a way of going through life without paying much attention to what's going on around me in kind of a global sense. I'm more focused on what I want to do, how I'm going to get it and working that way. I've never personally experienced, and maybe it's still my naïveté, I don't know, a lot of sexism or gender issues or job issues. Jobs, I've always held and I've held a looooot of jobs. I never knew what I wanted to be when I grew up so I saw nothing wrong with doing whatever I wanted to do. So I started life out as a teacher, tried real estate, I was a potter for a while, I was an office manager, I sold advertising for Worcester Magazine, worked as a bank manager; had my own business house cleaning. And then at the ripe old age of forty-eight, I went back to college and got my master's and my MSW [Masters of Social Work] spent nineteen years helping other people sort out their problems. So, in my career, I didn't experience a lot of prejudice or sexism. I wasn't looking for it. The closest I came was the director of psychiatry at the hospital that I worked at the time, I was in the emergency room doing emergency psych-evals and the director had--had a pension for coming in and telling off-color jokes, racist jokes, the left politicians in this day and age would definitely go crazy. It never bothered me because I never took it personally; it wasn't about me, it wasn't

aimed at me; it was meant to be funny-- sometimes I thought it was funny, other times I thought it was just crass. But, it never--I never felt like I needed to get up on a soap box about it.

**ADG:** Well, leading in to the work, [turns to KL] if that's okay, so, you named a bunch of jobs, what was your very first job?

**GB:** Teacher.

**ADG:** Teacher?

**GB:** Yup.

**ADG:** What do you currently work as, if you do?

**GB:** I'm retired. I've been retired from psychotherapy for three years? Four years? So my "work" so to speak, is my home and my husband. For me, I make jewelry, so I'm downstairs pounding silver a lot.

**ADG:** What would you say, since you've named other jobs that you did, what was your favorite, I guess, and what led you to want to be that?

**GB:** What was my favorite, jeez. I think psychotherapy was my favorite.

**ADG:** And was that when you liked to help other people solve their problems?

**GB:** I'm going to say that it was kind of a perfect storm of reasons. I never was happy working for anyone else. All of the years I worked at Harrington Hospital were fine. I punched in, did my time and punched out. And my boss, at the time, was super. She was just really super.

**ADG:** Was that the-- Did that work-- the psychotherapy-- did that resonate the most with you? Is that something you've carried on with, you know what I mean?

**GB:** Well, yes in a way. It resonated with me because-- you know, like I gave you the surface of my family--my mother was the *raison d'être* that I went into Psychology and it is always been a keen interest of mine so at forty-eight I just said "screw it, I'm going back to school" even though my husband thought I was crazy, he thought I should go to Daytona Beach and buy an air brush and make a million dollars airbrushing motorcycle helmets. [laughs] He might have been right, I don't know. So I went back to school, got my degree, did my time at Harrington, set up a private practice and I really liked it. It was very frustrating because the lesson I learned there is that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. I can probably count, after nineteen years of work, I can probably count on one hand the number of people that I feel I actually helped. And really, I didn't help them, they were willing to do the work to help

themselves; most people are not. Most people came in the door and as soon as I [gestures], they said, “See ya,” like “Oh, I gotta work? No, you’re supposed to fix me,” you know? So it was interesting, working with people, I was my own person, I could make my own hours, I didn’t have anyone to answer to outside the insurance companies. Then, I could keep my hand in education because they had to keep those things in use, current. So, yeah. I would say the last job I had was that and that’s the one I liked the most, although I did enjoy being a mother.

**ADG:** [turns to KL] So, moving on to education, I guess?

**KL:** Sure.

**KL:** Kinda flipping backwards, but, so you talked a little about, like, how when you were growing up you went to Catholic school? So, where did you attend school when you were younger?

**GB:** It was like a different school every year I was in school, because when we left Hartford-- probably in the third grade, or the fifth grade? I can’t remember now. And, we, the first move was Detroit so I went to Detroit Public School until the eighth grade. Then, we graduated eighth grade, then, I went to Dominican High School and I was there for maybe a year before we moved to Toledo, then I went to Notre Dame High School. Went there for two years, then we moved to Middletown Connecticut and I went back to public school because I had only, I only had a few months of my junior year and my senior year so I went to Hamden High, graduated from Hamden High and that was that.

**KL:** Do you think that impacted you, switching around so much?

**GB:** Yes and no. I’m kind of a loner. I don’t like being in crowds, and even though I’m throwing myself a horrendous seventy-five birthday party [laughs] in a few weeks, I would rather sit at home with a book or a crossword puzzle. So moving around in one sense impacted me because although it wasn’t hard for me to make friends, it was difficult to hold onto them because we were always on the go. So maybe I have one friend who, that this time lives in Florida that I have left from the eighth grade and I’ve seen Gretchen a couple of times over the years and it’s been like there’s been no years between them so that’s been really nice. But, I think she’s about the only one-- yeah, I don’t really have any school friends so it’s kind of delightful to see my younger son who went through school in Auburn except that because we thought he was an envelope pusher, we sent him to Saint Mary’s so that he was-- had a little more supervision and constriction, [laughs] around him. Then he went to UMASS, but he has a bevy of friends even though he lives in Phoenix now, he’s got a bevy of friends here that he stays in touch with so that’s kind of nice. But I’m kind of a loner so, on the one hand, it was hard-- it wasn’t hard to make friends, but I didn’t go out of my way ‘cause I knew I wasn’t going to be around long.

**KL:** So you talked about college a little bit. Where did you attend college?

**GB:** At the time, it was called Southern Connecticut State College, now it's called Southern Connecticut State University. I got my bachelor's in education and it was a small school back then, I had a blast.

**KL:** And then you went back when you were older, right?

**GB:** I went back to school, yup. Ironically, I wanted to come here [Assumption College] and get the Master's in Counseling--the program was beautiful. But everyone was telling me, "Get your MSW, you need the social work degree to do the counseling, you need the social." So, I did and I went to BC [Boston College] and got my MSW and truth be told, I think the MSW is a lot of crap. I think the Master's of Counseling is a better program because there's not much psychology in the Master's of Social Work program. I tried to re-image myself.

**KL:** So, do you remember any challenges you faced in terms of education?

**GB:** Well, my first [laughs], my first year of college, I suppose this is true of most freshmen. You know, away from home, mom and dad aren't around, I'm 615 miles away--I played a lot. Almost flunked out. And I got the stern message from my father because I was doing the, "Well, it was the teacher's fault, because they weren't teaching me right," you know? "My dog ate the homework." He said, "You're there to learn, in spite of the teacher. It's your job to learn, I don't care what the teacher is, says or does, it's your job to learn. If you wanna stay there, start learning." So, yeah, then I buckled down.

**KL:** So your parents encouraged you-- encouraged you to go to college?

**GB:** I don't know if encouraged is the right word. They, blessed me, they agreed with it. The mantra in my household was "intellect and education," you had to be well read, you had to be smart and I find it ironic cause looking back I grew up in an age where the other message— you're talking about sexism and messages to women, the other message I got strongly growing up was that you ARE a woman, you should be seen and not heard, you carry the conversation wall if you're dating, and keep your legs crossed. As I got older, I found that that was just a big crock! [laughs] I've been sold the bill of goods, so I had to un-crack that one too.

**KL:** Were there any, like, support networks or anyone that, like, while you were going through education was, like, important to you?

**GB:** Yeah, my aunt. My aunt, God bless her, was the one that got me through my adolescence. My father's sister, she swears she's gonna live to be a hundred-- she's got one more year to go, she's turns ninety-nine this year. But, she was always there when I needed her. My mother,

because my mother was so deprived as a child, she had a hard time giving anything to me. It got easier with my sister, I suppose that's true with subsequent children-- the first born always gets the mal. But, when it came to my first prom, my mother refused to buy me a prom dress, you might as well stab me through the heart, that's not what you want to hear at sixteen years old, and my aunt came to the rescue, she had some gowns, she redesigned my gown for me and I went to the prom. For my senior prom, I got a brand new gown from my mom, because my mother was embarrassed. But, yeah, my aunt was always there for me, when I was getting married she threw me the showers, when I was having a baby, she threw me the showers. She's still my sweetheart.

**ADG:** How many-- I don't think we asked, how many siblings do you have, if you have any?

**GB:** Just one. I'm the oldest, yup. My sister, like I said, is still in Cleveland. It's interesting on our adult trajectories. I got up got married, left the house. Married an alcoholic, had a child, divorced the alcoholic. My sister wanted a child, she married an alcoholic/drug abuser, had a child, divorced the drug abuser. There's kind of a sad story to that too, because her husband-- her daughter's father, late in life got sober, but it was so late in life that he was dying and he had been estranged from his daughter all those years, but before he died, they reconnected and that's awesome.

**ADG:** Kinda going back to your work life, did you have any primary responsibilities in terms of housework, and childcare that were kind of unspokenly said to you, or was their difference?

**GB:** Uh no, no, I grew up in the age where if you're the wife, you're the housewife, and you've got two or three full time jobs inside the house as well, so I never questioned it.

**ADG:** Right.

**GB:** That was the model I grew up with so I never questioned it, however once I began to realize what some of the messages of the 60s were actually about, and that my husband was not able to make enough money to support us, that was when I figured well housewife or not, mother or not someone's got to bring in some money, so that's when I went back to work. I mean I worked initially before we had the kid because I had that baccalaureate still clenched in my fist, but once I got pregnant then I stopped working, so I was only a teacher for about three years.

**ADG:** So was it almost like an unspoken deed I guess that you could say that you did in the house and was that hard to let go of when you had to work?

**GB:** Uh no, no my mother was also a clean freak. Her house was so clean you could perform brain surgery on the kitchen table [laughter] and I tried to carry on that tradition in my first

marriage until I realized what am I doing? Who am I doing this for? Why am I driving myself crazy. So little by little I've let go a lot of that my house is still clean but it's also dirty, it's lived in and it's livable.

**ADG:** Did you share any house duties, housework with anyone like your kids or husband or was it primarily yours and that was how you were raised?

**GB:** Well husband number one because I was still in the conventional mold, husband number one never did much around the house and I didn't expect it, he was the husband I expected him to earn the money but he didn't. When it came to husband number two again it must have been the stars and planets lining up. He's fifteen years my junior so he was twenty-one years old when I met him and I was thirty-five. So, at that age he knew he had an alcohol problem and he signed himself into—well it was Doctors Hospital at the time. Now it's AdCare. He did the month program and got sober and that forced me to take a long hard look at myself, my thinking, my belief system so we kind of went into recovery together and our relationship in terms of roles in the relationship has kind of evolved and it's evolving still. We were both working when we met, and actually when we first met I was earning more money than he was so [laughter among everyone] and we didn't have a kid at the time and Sean was old enough to take care of himself, he was eleven so he could flip an egg he could take care of himself. In fact both of my sons have given me that feedback that they were both very impressed that their friends didn't know how to cook, couldn't wash their own clothes, you know. I wasn't going to be anyone's maid so they were introduced to the stove, the sink, and the washing machine. So as I grew up myself I didn't feel obligated to have a hot meal on the table every single night, hey you have two arms [laughter] fix it yourself or go hungry, or eat cereal I don't care, I ain't cooking. Same with toys if you want to keep these toys then you need to put them away and if they aren't going to be put away then I'm going to throw them away and that's the last time you will see them. Same with clothes if laundry doesn't get down, then it's not going to get washed, I'm not going to go looking for it you need to get it to the laundry or you go to school with dirty clothes.

**ADG:** In your life had you felt you were able to balance your different priorities, responsibilities when it changed or even before that? Or did you feel overburdened by your interests, by your responsibilities that you needed to have done?

**GB:** You know it's funny because I feel more burdened now that I've retired [laughing]. I have thought to myself how did I ever have time to do anything I wanted to do when I was a wife, a mother, and I was working outside the home how the hell did I. I can't even get through the day, I almost forgot this appointment because I was busy doing something and then I was like I'm going to go downstairs and solder up some rings for jewelry and then at two-fifteen It occurred to me that, "Oh, I've got this three o'clock appointment" [laughter] so I feel almost more

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pressure now then I did all those years I was being a mother and a housewife, somehow I managed to organize, and you can even ask my husband I do keep things organized, I'm not so OCD that I need medication, but I can't operate in chaos so if my house isn't clean, it's at least organized so that I can walk through the house so that I can seat in peace. But yeah, raising the kids and being outside the home [long pause] somehow I got it all done and I didn't feel pressured, I felt satisfied and proud of myself for doing it actually.

**ADG:** Do you feel it's a different kind of pressure? Like back then it would have been a pressure because of an expectation and now it's just not?

**GB:** You know that's a good point, I guess back then it was what you had to get done so get to it. Probably my mom's mantra of do it yourself or die trying was cracking the whip behind my head. Now that I don't feel the pressure to accomplish anything, I'm not raising kids anymore, I'm not holding down my job anymore, I'm probably a little more loosey-goosey with my time. Like you know I accepted this invitation because I had nothing else to do for the day outside of my yoga class this morning. I had nothing else to do, I could do whatever I wanted, and so maybe not having that kind of schedule time-frame, feels like pressure because I'm not organized enough. [laughs] I don't have to stay on my toes.

**ADG:** Do you think there are any pros or cons for lack of a better word of the path that you have chosen in your life for you to I guess end up here? Would you have chosen something over the other?

**GB:** I would have thought more about entering relationships and worked harder at my own relationship with myself. I wished I had a few more years as a single women before I re-married. I would have liked to have my own apartment, my own house, I never had any of that stuff. But I'm not sure I would have made any different choices.

**KL:** So do you have any regrets?

**GB:** No, just that one you know I wished I had more of a single life, a longer single life with some intention not so much the aftermath of a critical decision, like it's a critical decision to marry, it's a critical decision to divorce, and I think in my youth I held the naive belief that somehow the world would take care of me, it took me a long time to realize that, "Honey, the only one that's going to take care of you is you." There's no one else who is going to take care of you. Which is odd because now my husband and I are in the stage of our life where that's exactly what we are doing with each other, he has had a battle with cancer, now he's dealing with rheumatoid arthritis, he's a self-employed business man so I can't even imagine how many balls he has in the air, but that's his personality. So now that falls on me, although I'm not raising

children, there are times where I have to take care of my husband and that's going to fall on him as well because I'm no spring chicken anymore. [laughs]

**KL:** So going into--because we were just touching upon health, how have health issues impacted your life, or your family?

**GB:** The few years that my husband dealt with cancer that was very impactful, because at first he diagnosed himself, he thought he had lyme disease and I had gone online and plugged his symptoms in and I knew what was going on, I knew he either had leukemia or some form of lymphoma but I didn't say that to him because—and his doctor, it was kind of scary because his doctor didn't catch the diagnoses, but my doctor did, so it was a year where he couldn't work, a year of chemotherapy, it was just a year of taking care of him and a lot of my taking care of him was leaving him alone, you know, because sleep was hard if at all, but amazingly enough he went through the chemotherapy, never lost a hair, gained weight, and how many years has he been cancer free now? I don't know, eight or nine that's the good thing but the bad thing is chemotherapy leaves its mark, so he has a bone marrow disorder which is going to kill him which is because of the chemotherapy, right now his gallbladder or is it his spleen that is taking over to make the red blood cells so he's alright, and this past year he was stricken with rheumatoid arthritis at first we didn't know what it was because he went and had surgery on his hands for carpal tunnel, but he was still in so much pain that he wasn't sleeping, he wasn't eating, he couldn't work, he couldn't open a jar, he couldn't even open a door the pain was just intense, and it has only been a month or so ago that someone finally gave us the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis, and he has been on [laughs] a menu of medications until they figure it out and I'm a believer of if you are on more than four none of them are working. I think we finally found a doctor who has empathy and has some answers and she is taking some actions, and he looks like he is getting better. It's nice to have my husband back because my husband sings in the shower, he dances, he is a very outgoing, upward cheerful person, and for the past year I've been living with someone who has not been that. [laughs]

**KL:** So besides your own health, you're responsible for his? Is that the only person?

**GB:** Yes, cause both of my parents have died, my sister is in Cleveland depending how long I will be able to travel because she won't come this way, she has taken on my mother's fears and anxieties, so she doesn't travel more than 20 miles from her home, it pisses me off, but anyways.

**KL:** What have your experiences been in getting affordable health, have you ever had a problem?

**GB:** You know that's a good question, I know when my first son was born there was no such thing. I paid the doctor whenever I had to take him or if I had to go for a physical you would just

pay the doctor. When I was a teacher I had health insurance, I think when I worked for Worcester Magazine I had health insurance, there must have been some years in there where I didn't, although I can't imagine being without it, I know that until I went on Medicare my husband's businesses supplied/paid for health and care we were both insured through Fallon and they are not cheap, but I'm on Medicare now. I think it's a big racket, I don't think you guys want me to go into politics but I think it's a racket, and my husband is a broker.

**ADG:** Going into politics [laughing] because we actually have to. Do you consider yourself active politically?

**GB:** Not as much as I used to, when I was living in Connecticut and up 'til the point to when I was living with my husband I was active in politics. I was living in Old Saybrook, I was on the town committee, I ran for public office—what was I thinking [laughs]? Luckily I lost because that would have been a nightmare, but now I am not a [President Donald] Trump fan so since he has been in office I have been in more close contact with my representatives, and I have donated more to a lot of campaigns because I think it needs to be done. But I am not as active; my soapbox has been put away.

**ADG:** Other than I guess the Trump presidency, is there anything that led you to become more active?

**GB:** Yeah if Trump has done anything right it's that he has activated a lot of us.

**ADG:** Do you notice any changing roles in politics for women because of the women's movement or do you think they have plateaued?

**GB:** I think women are becoming more visible I am glad they are not burning bras anymore, but we need to give up apologizing for ourselves, we need to let go of the, "I can't do this because I am a woman." Men have held power for too long, and I am glad to see there is a bevy of women running, and as abrasive as what's her name, AOC, [US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez] as abrasive as she is, she is bringing light to corners that need to be lit. There was, early in the space age when we were sending men up to orbit the earth and bring them back down, one of the problems they encountered was, "how are we going to wake up these guys?" because the sleep wasn't like it was on earth. They were mandated to sleep a certain amount of time and when it came to that time you had to sleep, then you had to wake up. Well, "how are we going to wake them up?" and there is a little psychological thing called adjust noticeable difference and what they decided to do finally was to put a women's voice on the intercom to wake the men up [laughter]. And it worked. And as politics has gotten more complex, and more of a ruckus, and because there are so many more problems in the world, everything has gotten the volume turned

up on everything, and so the squeaky wheel does get the grease, so if what's her name is loud and abrasive I think maybe she needs to be.

**ADG:** If applicable, do you have any religious affiliation and if so what?

**GB:** Well there's a good question. I was a good Catholic girl, until one day when I was sixteen getting ready for the prom and in those days, you could go out in rollers all day and go out with a scarf on your head, and that's how you traveled. I was going to go to confession because I was a good Catholic girl and I had on slacks and my hair in rollers and the priest wouldn't let me in because I was not appropriately dressed. I said, "Okay, clearly you are more concerned with my appearance than my soul so see ya," and I never went back. If I have to have an affiliation I am more affiliated with Buddhism sentiment than anything at this point. It kept me on the straight and narrow though being a Catholic, I kept my legs crossed.

**ADG:** Would you say because we are a women's studies class, would you say that was the first time not being appropriately dressed to enter or was that more of a religious aspect at that time, you know what I mean you weren't dressed appropriately for God, or were you a women wearing slacks? If you were to look back on it now.

**GB:** Maybe a little bit of both, because that would have been—well women were wearing slacks in the sixties, but this would have been the early sixties because I didn't graduate from high school till sixty-two, so this would have been 1960-1961, it could have been a little of both.

**KL:** How do you get through tough times, what are thoughts that keep you going?

**GB:** I have to rob from my husband's recovery program, and say an "attitude of gratitude." Whenever I think, "Oh, poor me," or "This is the worst I've ever been," or "I think it's too dark," I have to remind myself that I am a lucky woman and I have a lot to be grateful for, I mean a whole shitfull to be grateful for. That and the Buddhist philosophy of acceptance. Life is what it is, you can't change it so you might as well accept it. In fact it is the serenity prayer, going back to my father, you know? Accept what you can't change, have the courage to change what you can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

**ADG:** How do you define success in your life and has that definition of success changed over time?

**GB:** I once thought I had to be the cherry on top of the sundae, I think success for me at this stage of life and it has been for a long time, is more related to happiness, wherever you are, whatever you are doing if you can say that you are happy and happiness is a decision it's not something that is bestowed, it's a decision you make so no matter what is happening outside of

you or inside of you, you are grateful and you accept it, thus you are happy, and so for me that's success so if I look back or if I look at where I am now, I would say I have had a successful life and I feel successful now.

**KL:** Based on your life experiences, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

**GB:** Always have a beginner's mind; always keep your mind open. It's difficult in these times when there is so much divisiveness and venom being spewed in all directions, it's hard to find your own center, I would say, and this may sound flip, but practice yoga because yoga gives you the opportunity to find where your center is. If you know where your center is, if you know who you are, and what you are, then what's going on around you is irrelevant. You are going to make the decision that is right for you and that is what you need to do and not be distracted by all the cacophony going on around you.

**ADG:** I think for the sake of WWOHP program, one question that would probably pertain more to them would be what major historical events in Worcester have happened during your time here? Maybe when you first got here? And do you think they affected you personally at anytime?

**GB:** Well every city has its drug problems, but then again my naiveness helped me because even though in my days I smoked pot and snorted coke somehow I wasn't them, that good ol' duality. In fact, it's that kind of naïveté that disallowed me to not see my first husband for the alcoholic he was because my definition of alcoholism at the time was someone standing on the street corner with a bottle in his pocket and no job. Well, that's the definition of probably a homeless person, but not necessary the definition of an alcoholic [laughs] and it took me a long time to realize the error I was committing. So the problems I saw with Worcester were kind of political because the people in charge couldn't seem to get out of their own way to make Worcester as viable as Boston. That's changing. The drug problem is still here and with my husband, and I know I am probably breaking his anonymity but after thirty some years how anonymous can he be [laughs] anymore, because of the work he does in his program the drug issue has hit much harder because we have lost a lot of friends to that problem, it makes the house very dark and sad when that happens and I don't know what the answer is.

**ADG:** I don't think we went over this but it's for our bio sheet for WWOHP but it asks more specifically your parents names, and their birthplace as well.

**GB:** Sure.

**ADG:** So let's start with your mom's?

**GB:** Okay so it's Katherine Baulac Brophy.

**ADG:** And her birthdate?

**GB:** July 7th, 1922, I think.

**ADG:** And where was she born?

**GB:** Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

**ADG:** And your father's name?

**GB:** John Stanly Brophy, I didn't talk about this, he's Lithuanian. He is all Lithuanian and the name they came across with was Brosauskis and someone changed it to Brophy [laughs].

**ADG:** And where was he born?

**GB:** He was born in New Britain, Connecticut.

**ADJ:** His birthdate?

**GB:** August 28th, let's see, he is how much older than my mother, was he born in 1914? Something like that, I can't even remember the year he died, he was one month shy of his ninety-sixth birthday when he died, and that was eight years ago, you know he was born somewhere around there.

**ADG:** We've asked everything right? [turns to KL] We have your birthplace, your birthdate.

**ADG:** Was your psychotherapy your last job?

**GB:** Yep.

**ADG:** And that was at?

**GB:** I had thirteen years at Harrington Hospital, and ten years in private practice.

**ADG:** Do we have anything else [turns to KL], I think that is it, thank you very much.

**KL:** Thank you.

**GB:** You're very welcome.

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