

Interviewee: Donna Garrison Crocker
Interviewers: Rae Pulsone and Thalia Puccio
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Donna Garrison Crocker was born in San Antonio Texas in 1944. She moved around quite a bit as a young girl growing up, as her father was in, what was referred to at the time, as Army Air Corps during World War II. She and her family ultimately settled down in Weymouth, MA where she would later meet her husband. Donna now lives in Uxbridge, MA with her husband and the two of them regularly attend WISE [Worcester Institute for Senior Education] classes at Assumption College in Worcester. In this interview, Donna discusses her involvement with the Episcopal Church where her husband has been a pastor for the entirety of their marriage. Donna moves on to explain her political involvement in the community. She explains in detail her time working on both [President Barack] Obama and [Senator] Elizabeth Warren's campaigns. Moving on to her personal life, Donna gives a personal narrative of how she found her way into elementary education and how she and her husband decided to adopt two of their four children. Today Donna also struggles with having one of her daughters live out in LA while she is currently suffering from extreme health problems. Donna concludes the interview by expressing her extreme appreciation for the life she has. She feels as though she has always been fairly well off and is thankful that she has been able to provide for her children and help others.

RP: Alright. So if you could just repeat for us your full name, maiden and current.

DC: Ok, my name is Donna Garrison Crocker.

RP: Alright and what year were you born?

DC: I was born in 1944.

TP: So do you know where you were born.

DC: Yes, San Antonio, Texas.

RP: OOoo!

TP: Wow.

DC: Yes. My father was in the Army Air Corps.

RP: Oh that's awesome!

DC: Yes, they were living down there because of World War II.

RP: What was he doing in the army..if you don't mind me asking.

DC: He.. well it wasn't called the Air Force then it was called the Air Corps and he was teaching navigators because he was really good in math. He really had a stateside job when I was born and we were at Fort Sam Houston, and I was born there in San Antonio. Later, he did fly over to Germany, but only after the war was over.

RP: Yeah, oh wow. Did you spend most of your childhood in Texas or...

DC: No, most of my childhood was actually in Weymouth, Massachusetts.

RP: So was he stationed over there, or was that..

DC: My dad after World War II, got out of the army and got a job with—hmm how to explain it. Do you need this information?

RP: Oh yeah, go ahead.

DC: Ok. Both of my parents are college-educated and my father was working in sales for what in those days was called Directory Assistance like the Yellow Pages. This is when you went to a book to look up phone numbers.

[Laughter]

DC: It was very different, but he had a very good career basically that morphed into working for AT&T.

RP: Oh cool.

DC: So, he was the main provider in our family. My mother stayed home. My two brothers—we all grew up in Weymouth, Massachusetts.

RP: So when did you arrive to Worcester?

DC: After my husband and I retired we came back to Massachusetts from Arlington, Virginia and we bought a little townhouse in Uxbridge. Now Uxbridge is about a half-hour outside of Worcester—south—and we did that because we wanted to have a place that when we retired we could just close the door and go somewhere. We didn't have a lot of property to take care of. So we had family in the area and what we discovered was that while we lived in Uxbridge, most of the things we were interested in were in Worcester. So the first thing we did, was to find All

Saints Episcopal Church. So that's a big old Episcopal church right near downtown on Irving Street on Pleasant Street.

RP: Is that the stone one?

DC: Mhmm.

RP: Ok.

DC: Well there's a lot of stone ones, but yeah.

[Laughter]

DC: But it is one of those big old stone ones, and it's a wonderful community. We spend a lot of time and energy—my husband is a retired episcopal priest.

RP: Oh cool!

DC: So the church is an important part of our life and it has been for fifty-odd years.

RP: What was your husband's name again?

DC: Ronald.

RP: Ronald.

DC: So then we discovered that we liked Worcester very much for theater, like Hanover theater over near Mechanics Hall. We liked Worcester for the restaurants and then somebody said, "I think you would be interested in the WISE [Worcester Institute for Senior Education] program," and that's the lifelong learning program that you might be getting to know.

RP: Yeah.

DC: And WISE is Worcester Institute for Senior Education and Assumption College has been the location that we are located now for twenty-five years.

TP: Wow.

DC: Long time, there's over four hundred of us believe it or not.

[Laughter]

DC: Taking some of your parking places around campus! [Laughter] And meeting in Kennedy 119, but it's a fantastic opportunity for us to learn, and to get together with other people that are interested in keeping on learning. I'm doing French Impressionism this time with an absolutely fantastic instructor, she has a great background in art, sixty-five of us in the class, so we're back and forth to Worcester a lot.

RP: So how does the schooling that you're receiving now compare to the schooling you got in the past?

DC: Well, I was a teacher in my first profession.

RP: Oh, what did you teach?

DC: I taught elementary level mostly and in my last eleven years, I taught a third-grade class in Arlington, Virginia that was both regular education and an integrated class with some special needs kids.

RP: Did you receive training for that?

DC: Oh yes, so I have a master's degree in special education from Rhode Island College and I graduated from Ohio Wesleyan in 1966 with a degree in elementary education, which you did in those days instead of having an academic major. I had worked when we were living in Rhode Island. I worked in Woonsocket and I worked there for about ten years. Our kids were growing up in Rhode Island.

RP: So how did this kind of like, how did you come into teaching and what made you decide to go into teaching?

DC: I always wanted to be a teacher, I loved teaching and I think it's a connection of wanting to do things with children and also just being very comfortable in a classroom, in an academic setting. So, I was—well my husband was in grad school at Seminary. I taught two years then we started our family in 19—we were married in 1967, we started our family in 1969. This is when people got married in their twenties. [Laughter] And I was an at-home mom for ten years and then I started back to teaching because our family needed a second income. Our kids were going to be going to college and we just really needed me to get back to work and I was ready. By that time we were living in Lincoln, Rhode Island, and I had gone to Rhode Island College and gotten my master's degree there.

RP: Oh hold on a second. So did you go back to get your master's degree after you had kids or before you had kids?

DC: Yes, after I had kids.

RP: After, ok alright.

DC: I was a better student at that time than I was as an undergrad. [Laughter]

RP: But as an undergrad, you received a degree in education?

RP: So presumably your first job when you got out was in education.

DC: It was. And in 19—in those days there were quite a few teaching jobs in the east, but my husband was in school in Berkeley, California, so it was a little harder to get a job out there but I did. They had different requirements than we did in the east, but I was able to get a teaching job right out of college.

RP: So wow, you've been like all over the U.S. that's awesome.

DC: Yes, we have.

TP: So I wanted to go back to your kids. Where did they go to college?

DC: Okay well our oldest son, Andrew, went to Rhode Island College, our second son, Peter, did not go to college he just graduated from high school, our third son, Aaron, is the one who went to Assumption College so that was a connection for us with Worcester. And then our daughter, Naomi, had only one year at Johnson and Wales and then she did not continue. So two of our kids only went to college.

RP: And you mentioned that two of your kids were adopted?

DC: Yes.

RP: So what made you uh, what made you guys decide to adopt?

DC: Well this was the 1960s and some of us were very concerned about population explosion, population growth, so we were able to have children that was fine, but we thought that there were some children that would be hard to place. Because of something that made them more difficult to find parents for. So, we applied to adopt children that were multiracial. Our son, Peter, and our daughter, Naomi, were not adopted at the same time, but each one was only one year old when they were adopted. And now they're forty-nine and forty-four. So they have been part of our family for literally their whole lives. But in those days—and we weren't the only ones—in those days we were trying to to meet a need that children would have who might be harder to place because some babies got placed right away and others don't. But both of these babies were released by their birth mother, each one of them had a white birth mother and a nonwhite birth father, so they were both placed at birth and were in foster homes.

RP: And did you and your husband envision adopting children when you first got together?

DC: I don't think so. I don't think so, but we planned a lot and so part of the planning was that we would have a child, adopt a child, have another child, adopt another child so that we didn't just have the two children at the end. So we were very idealistic and we thought that was a good way to build our family, to put our family together, and it's worked out and it hasn't been without problems, but nobody's life is without problems I think.

RP: So how do you think you balanced your priorities and responsibilities, like all of your major roles in your life? Sorry I know that's kind of a big question.

DC: Yes, tell me if I'm not going in a good direction for you. I think that part of the balance that was a challenge for me was when I was in grad school and my kids were all still at home and all of them in various grades. I needed to spend a lot of time on on the grad school courses. I was also starting to do a lot of substitute teaching so the balance there was that my husband was really helpful. He was the director of an Episcopal church in Lincoln, Rhode Island so he would get home in the afternoon when the kids were home because I would go from work at school to Rhode Island College for grad school and then get home around seven o'clock. The balance was that my husband would be there for the children. They weren't really young children then but they were mid-junior high and so he would do some kind of supper for them, so he would be there when they got home and so that was a big help. Our kids are pretty independent so we could depend on that and sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. [Laughter]

DC: But , let's see another part of your question that I...

Interruption: RP: I think you mostly answered it, it was just kinda the balancing of just your roles and responsibilities in your life.

DC: I've been incredibly fortunate in my life and we've had a lot of stability and we've lived in places that we really enjoyed. We're very happy where we're living right now in Uxbridge because it's a community where in our little townhouse complex we have friends—it's an enjoyable place to live.

RP: So kind of moving towards kind of political questions, do you yourself have any political activity? Or do you feel connected into... you can say what you want go on... [Laughter]

DC: Yes, I do. I'm a very committed liberal Democrat. I'm very into women's issues. I'm very distressed with the current situation of our country's leadership, but I think that basically when I first retired in 2008 I was still living in Arlington, Virginia, and I worked for Barack Obama.

RP: Oh wow!

TP: Really!

DC: Yes!

RP: Oh that's so cool!

DC: I didn't work for him I just worked on the campaign. It was like you would go to the office in Arlington. Virginia is a very liberal blue, very well educated but there's a lot of immigrant people too. It's a mixture. But everybody was so excited about Barack Obama and you would go to the volunteer office and they would be overwhelmed with people all wanting to volunteer and go out and so I did that. I did phone calls for Elizabeth Warren when she first ran in 2012. Was that 12?

RP: Yeah.

DC: Her first senate race was 2012 and we donate, we pay attention, we tune in, we read the [Boston] *Globe* and the *New York Times*. We really connect, but I would describe myself as very liberal.

RP: Whats attracted you to the liberal party?

DC: Well, women's health issues, the pro-choice. I like the fair labor issues that they have. I think the emphasis on the quality of your education shouldn't just be based on your zip code. Medical care. I'm very big supporter of what Obama did with the Affordable Care Act. Now [President Donald] Trump has taken a lot of that apart, some of that rather quietly. So we've really got to get back to the place where people get the medical care they need. I'm on Medicare, my friends are on Medicare. I've gotta tell you we have a very good deal. All my working years I paid into Medicare. I still pay Medicare because out of my social security, Medicare is deducted every month as a payment, but then you have healthcare when you need it and at my age sometimes you really do. Some of my friends have had thousands of dollars of healthcare because they needed it.

TP: Were your liberal views something that you kinda turned into your parenting style, like would you say you're a very open parent?

DC: I would say that's probably true and whenever it's appropriate—people who know me know how I think and my children certainly do, and all of them share my views more or less and I'm very—we're very very big on just being responsible citizens. So my kids, they all vote, my grandson as soon as he turned 18 it was like make sure you vote! They were all registered so I think that I've evolved because we all change as we have more time to think about things.

RP: I was just about to say have you always identified with the Democratic Party or is that something throughout your life you've come to embrace?

DC: I think as long as I can remember thinking about it I've always been much more toward what I think the Democrats stand for. Now somebody my age, I go back to when John Kennedy was elected. I grew up in the Eisenhower years and growing up in the fifties if you were middle class and you were a white family in the middle class you had a lot of privileges and the Eisenhower years were very good for us. So there's a Republican that probably did way better...

[Laughter]

DC: but I really have always, I think, been very concerned about fairness for all people and wanting to work on where discrimination hurts people, to make things better. I think I'm not saying it very well, but I think that throughout my life I've wanted government to be as fair as possible, not just for me, but for everybody and that's a big—I mean that doesn't happen but it's a goal.

RP: Do you feel like you saw a lot of inequality while you were growing up?

DC: I didn't because I didn't experience it. Now I did have—one of my close friends her mother was an alcoholic. I didn't realize at the time how tough her life was. Another one of my friends her mother died when we were in the eighth grade and we were close friends, so you know I saw my friends having some trauma but we lived in a community in Weymouth, Massachusetts that was not a racially diverse area and economically my family lived in a neighborhood that people were more or less like us.

TP: So when you were younger like in college did you ever participate in any of the, like the women's march kind of those movements?

[Laughter]

DC: This is the 1960s, I graduated from college in 1966 so what we had then was the birth control pill was just getting out to people. I was only vaguely aware of the Vietnam War where I found later most people were more aware. So we had the Vietnam War, we had civil rights, and Martin Luther King and all that, I did not go to those marches but I knew about that. I was not right out there in an activist sort of way. I did meet people from other college campuses that were and I realized kind of that I wasn't in that park. So there's a lot going on in the 1960s but I can't say that I was out there in front.

RP: So you mentioned earlier that you and your husband are very involved in the Episcopal church? Can you tell us a little more about that?

DC: Oh sure. What in particular did you want to know about the Episcopal church?

RP: Were you both born into the church, was that kind of how you met or your involvement?

DC: My husband and I met in high school and then he went to UMass Amherst and I went to Ohio Wesleyan so we didn't do college together.

RP: Did you do long distance?

DC: No, actually he broke up with me. [Laughter] I was a year behind him, we broke up, we got back together again. I grew up in the Congregational church, my family is Protestant. The Episcopal church that was a different kind of thing. My husband grew up in a family that had always been Episcopalian and he had been involved in his church all through his childhood. He decided that he would go to seminary and so he ended up going to seminary out in Berkeley, California, in the Episcopal church. So when I married my husband, Ron, that's when I became an Episcopalian although I had been attending a bit by then. And I don't know how much you know about the Protestant versus the Episcopal church but the Episcopal church has more liturgy, prayer books, kneeling, things like that. The mainstream Protestant churches have a bigger sermon and then both of them are what I would think of at my age as being more traditional than some of the Evangelical. They're not necessarily in that Evangelical realm. The Episcopal church has been part of our life because my husband has worked as an Episcopal priest the whole time we've been married until he retired in 2009 and even now he has worked as an interim, filling in or working on Sundays. So one of the ways that the church made a difference in our life, of course, was that we had a lot of friends who were also in the church. We spent a lot of time at the church or doing activities so we didn't really have weekends because Saturday and Sunday were really busy for my husband. His day off was Thursday but I was working and the kids were in school so it made a little bit of a chopped up time there, but it was a very stable, predictable kind of a life. We always had a job, we went from one job to another job without any—we always knew where the next job was going to be so we were really fortunate that way.

RP: So is your husband still practicing or...?

DC: Well he does but he's—we're both 75. He's retired but what happens with retired clergy—and things have changed a lot within the church. I don't know if either one of you goes to a particular church?

RP: Catholic.

DC: The Episcopal church is as close to the Catholic church as the Protestants get in terms of the liturgy, but in the Episcopal church now there aren't as many clergy as there used to be. Catholic church has the same problem so retired clergy are asked to take a Sunday service, are asked to fill in for four months, six months. Maybe there's a sabbatical for the—we call them a priest also. He's been working in a number of ways and he's pulling back a little bit because you could work for just about all the time even when retired. The Episcopal church has a very good pension fund. We are very fortunate and so all of his fifty years in the church means that we are living on his pensions, my pensions, and social security.

RP: So does he get healthcare with that or...

DC: Yes, the church pension group provides the supplemental health care that you carry in addition to Medicare, but once you're sixty-five you're enrolled in Medicare and that's your primary insurance. But it's the kind of thing where you—I'm not so sure that Elizabeth Warren is right on this Medicare for All because all of our life we've gotten our health insurance from our employer which a lot of people still think is a perfectly good idea, but for people who can't get health care that way, for people who work every day at Walmart or Amazon or some of these huge rich companies who aren't paying healthcare and they're not getting the help that we seniors are getting. So yeah, we have very good coverage on that, but we've always had that.

RP: So how have health issues impacted your life or like those in your family, have you had any major complications?

DC: We had a time in 2005 when my husband was diagnosed with cancer. Now, we were living in Arlington, Virginia and that's right outside Washington D.C so there is an enormous amount of really good healthcare and when you know a lot of people in the community like you do through the church, you know once you have a serious diagnosis like that people start to tell you where you need to, you know, which doctors and all that. And our friend that works at NIH, the Nation Institute for Health said, "I think NIH might have a program that you want to get into but we have to find out because, if NIH is in Bethesda [Maryland], it's a gigantic medical center that the government runs and it's mostly for people that what they take patients that fit into their program in terms of what they're studying or new medications that they're trying." So my husband fit into one of the programs at NIH and so we had really wonderful care. He has been living cancer free now since 2006.

RP: Oh congrats!

DC: We're very fortunate, but it was because we had good healthcare but were also able to get into NIH and be part of one of the studies that they were doing. He was receiving medication that they were still studying and what he had was rectal cancer which is different than colon cancer so there's not as much there to work with as there is with a big colon. So and anyway, tenefarade was the medication but he had very very good care. So that was our biggest, issue. [pause] I can't think of anything else that comes to mind. That is significant.

RP: So who's health are you responsible for besides your own.

DC: Well really, it's just my husband and I. And I think he's in charge of his own health [laughs]. But I mean when you're married for fifty-two years you do a lot of things just sort of—sometimes you irritate each other, but sometimes you support each other and so I would say that we have a mutual interest in how we're doing. Blood pressure, and medication and we both have those little pill packs that you take your pills out of [laughs]. So yeah, our kids are all well. You know what? There is another health thing here talking about our children. Now our daughter has

some very serious health conditions that have developed in about the last four or five years. She lives in LA so we give her some support financially, but we're not right there whenever she needs us. So she has gotten herself into some good medical programs at USC [University of Southern California] at which is Keck [School of Medicine] is their big medical facility there. So she's going through a very tough time. She is on on a social security disability so she receives Medicare so her medical is paid she's forty-four years old she used to work full time but she can't work now. So we don't know what's going to happen to her—her medical situation I mean I should say. I mean we are quite concerned about her.

TP: So are you kind of like... are you kind of like annoyed about how she's so far away because I know that my uncle had a stroke while he was living in Texas and my grandparents were like very like very upset that they couldn't get to him.

DC: She's lived in LA a long time, like fifteen years, so there's always a question of should Naomi move back east to have more family for support, but then she would be leaving this medical network that she has. We don't get out to LA a whole lot to see her, but we pay for her flight to come back here and so it's working ok right now, but I don't know it's really a year to year thing because it seems to be something that's very long term. She has something called a mast cell activation syndrome, which a lot of people haven't even heard of.

RP: Would you like to tell us a little more about it?

DC: Well I don't understand a whole lot about it, but with mast cell activation syndrome one of the things that results from that is you are allergic to a lot of stuff. What happens...

RP: Like food or..?

DC: Food, yes. Medications, you are very sensitive to medications, but mast cell activation syndrome, your mast cells produce histamines and so that's all normal, but if your mast cells go crazy, this is really low levels—my daughter understands it all she has a big folder—so basically she takes a lot of medications maybe more than I think. She is managing all of her own healthcare and we are supporting her to a certain extent and hoping that she can get to a place where she can work again but this.. it's evolved. It's one of those things that doctors can't diagnose right away because they can't figure it out and they thought that she had fibromyalgia because there is a lot of pain associated with it, joint pain, nerve pain really weird stuff so when they finally did diagnose this and anaphylaxis, the DNA. Shock is one of the things that is a really bad outcome and when she has gone through that you know very critical so the that fact that she's in LA can be a problem.

RP: Yeah.

TP: Did they say that it was like genetics and stuff that attribute to it?

DC: Well now that's a good question and we don't know, because she is one of our adopted children.

TP: I'm adopted too and so...

DC: Are you?!

TP: Yes.

DC: Ohh!

TP: I don't know my medical history, like I don't have access to it, my mom doesn't have anything. We'd always have to put like, because for swim we had to fill out all these medical forms about medical history so I had to put like I don't know, I don't know anything.

DC: Yes, were you adopted as a baby?

TP: I was, when I was about one from Weymouth, I was born in Weymouth.

DC: You were born in Weymouth!

TP: I was yes.

DC: Well that is amazing, well that's where my husband and I grew up, my childhood was in Weymouth. So where were you living in Weymouth.

TP: I have no clue

DC: Oh of course you were just born there.

TP: I was born and then immediately...

DC: So your adoptive parents where are they.

TP: My mom is from Attleboro MA, where I grew up.

DC: Oh Ok.

TP: So all of—my uncle is the only one who has left this area to go to Texas for four years for his contract, he does something huge, I don't know. He gets sent all around the world. He was in Iceland, he was in China for my birthday, he's been everywhere except North Korea basically.

DC: Ok so Weymouth was just your birth.

TP: Weymouth was just my birthplace, where it is on my birth certificate.

DC: That's interesting, yeah. Our daughter was born...I'm pretty sure it was in Falmouth, on the Cape. We were living in New Bedford when we adopted her and so she was one, just like you, you've lived with your family your whole life; well not your whole life. We don't think that's a big piece of what we need to know about Naomi's situation right now. But we don't know, she hasn't raised it as a really big issue, but you're right, you don't really know family history.

TP: Yeah.

DC: Which our two kids that are our biological kids, do.

RP: So you had your children two years after you were married?

DC: Yeah, that's right; I was married when I was 23.

RP: And you were dating in high school?

DC: We were dating in high school; we dated other people in college; we got back together again when my husband was in grad school. My husband was a year ahead of me in school even though we are the same age, and so we got married when I was 23 and we had our first baby when I was 25.

RP: So I presume that you were allowed to date in high school.

DC: Yeah.

TP: Were your parents like strict or were they just like... they just wanted you to be happy?

DC: In the 60s, I had a group of friends and we all dated, we went out and did get together and stuff like that. This was in Weymouth in high school. So yeah my parents assumed that I would date. I can't remember having a lot of restrictions on it. I just didn't do anything that would upset them much. My brothers were a different story, I was the easy one.

TP: I feel like dating today is also different.

RP: Yeah.

DC: Oh yeah it was pretty... yeah.

RP: Do you feel like there were any differences in how you guys were brought up, between you and your brothers.

DC: In my generation between my brothers and me? Well my closest brother in age to me is just 20 months younger, but he had some difficulties just of his own creating in school. He's doing great now. He's had a very successful life, but he had a few blips. So, my parents had a few more issues with him. It was easy for me to be the oldest and only daughter. I got a nice break on that and then my youngest brother is six years younger than I am. We always said that he got the best deal because he got the convertible, he got the woman who cleaned his house cleaned his bedroom, you know where we never had any of that so...

RP: How many of you were there? You said there were four?

DC: There's just three; there's four of my children. But I just grew up with two younger brothers. Basically my family was close with a lot of relatives. I just saw my cousin who is just my age in September at the beach house where we grew up. I've been in part of a pretty close family for most of my life—all of my life.

TP: That's nice.

RP: So I think you mentioned your parents' education earlier. Did your parents...

DC: Both of my parents went to Montclair State College; I think it's Montclair University now or something. But in those days, those were teachers' colleges so it's a four-year college in north Jersey in Montclair. And that's where they both met in college.

RP: So do think how they were—kind of their professions did that impact how they parented you guys at all?

DC: Their professions?

RP: Yeah.

DC: Well, my mother grew up where her father was a high school principal, assistant principal, in New Jersey. So my mother's side, their model was to have rules that people followed and we did, most of the time. So, we had good structure, we had dinners together; the parenting was, as I think of it now, our parents were available to us a lot. We took vacations together, we did things together. I always felt very secure and I think my brothers did too with our parents. Is that enough to answer?

RP: No you're good. So this is going to be a very random question what was considered fashionable when you were young. I know that's a big jump.

DC: [laughs] You guys you know this ...

RP: I know we are all over the place.

DC: Well you have to remember when I was young girls only wore skirts. We didn't really wear pants to school. You might have had a pair of blue jeans or shorts when you were playing outside or in the summer, but one of the really fashionable things when I was growing up were these big full skirts that were made out of felt...

RP: Oh petticoats?

DC: They were made out of felt. Petticoats were important, but these were felt skirts and then if you got something embroidered on it like a poodle...

TP: Oh a poodle skirt!

DC: That was really a big deal, oh man. But they were great big full skirts. Now petticoats, full skirts like you're talking about were certainly used...

RP: Popular?

DC: Popular, yes. Shirt-waist dresses.

TP: So would you think like Grease? [Everyone laughs] I'm serious though because when I was in elementary school I know my mom got me a poodle skirt and I had one of those little cardigans....

DC: Awww yes.

TP:...because we were doing Grease.

DC: I didn't even think of it that way because I don't even know if I've seen Grease. I know what you're talking about, but yeah I mean it was the fifties in the area I grew up. There were expectations that you dressed up. The other thing you wore to school were leather shoes. You didn't wear sneakers. You didn't have sneakers at school usually in the fifties until you went to gym class at junior high school so you were expected to sort of dress up more. Women wore hats.

RP: .How do you feel girls were treated specifically in your school.

DC: Which one?

TP: Did you notice if there was a difference like in preference over men and women did like someone get called on more?

DC: Yeah, I hear your question but I don't know. I'm the oldest child I never felt left out. So I probably in a better position than most women or at least I sort of saw myself as being strong enough to deal with that. I don't remember that the boys were favored over the girls in my elementary class because the girls usually were the smartest ones [laughs] or the ones that weren't fooling around. Because in those days we had ink-wells and penmanship and all that. So I think I'm probably not a good example.

RP: What do you mean?

DC: You would think that the norm was—I grew up in a time where girls were expected to get married as soon as they got out of school. Well if you were going to work you were going to be a teacher, a nurse, or a secretary, that was it. You weren't ever expected to be a scientist. You were expected to provide and support for your husband at home and have babies. And I was really the end of that kind of thinking I think because by the sixties when you start with the women's liberation stuff and women really starting to get out and say I want a different kind of life. I wasn't brought up at that time I grew into that after I graduated from college. But then my own home life, the life I created for my own family, was more of a model from the fifties at first where I was home with the kids.

RP: Do you feel like you faced any kind of significant transition kind of moving childhood to adulthood like moving in with your husband?

DC: Nothing remarkable that I can think of. We were living in an apartment in Berkeley, California because he was finishing seminary out there so we were away from all the parents and all the siblings and we were in the seminary community. So it was fairly an easy transition that way. I'll tell you one thing and they were just starting to give out credit cards in the late sixties and that when we got our first credit card where you can just charge something and then pay a little each month that was something we were not well prepared for. So those balances just added up and added up now people still do that I know, but that was the very beginning of that Bank of Americard thing and then they started sending them to everybody. So that was probably the financial piece and we had very little money but the financial piece probably was the thing we were least prepared for and because both my husband and I but especially I grew up in a very financially secure situation not because we were rich but because my father was incredibly responsible about stuff so I never I never knew how to do bills or things like that.

TP: So what historical events do you remember like? I know like you said you like remember your friends and like Martin Luther King. Do you remember what you were doing or where you were when Kennedy was shot?

DC: Oh I do. Oh goodness Lord I do. Yes, that was hugely traumatic. When Kennedy was shot I was a sophomore at Ohio Wesleyan and I was back in the dorm and it was kind of afternoon and one of the cleaning woman was crying in the hallway and she was the one who told me the president was shot. I was like, "What? I mean how...?" You know this was something I couldn't

even possibly imagine. But then of course everybody gets to one of the very few TVs. There was nothing in the rooms to turn on, maybe a radio. You didn't have any televisions except in the smoking lounge, because in those days a lot of people smoked, so there was a TV in the smoking lounge and there might have been one other TV in the entire dorm. So that's where we gathered to find out what had happened and that's where we found out that he had died—had been killed. And then of course the news for all the rest of that time was all the story over and over and over and then Jack Ruby gets shot a couple of days later and then the whole thing. So what happened is my friend had a car—how did she get a car on campus? I can't remember why she had a car?

[All laugh]

DC: Because we didn't have cars on campus in those days, but I remember driving back to New Jersey—my parents were living in New Jersey at that time—driving back to New Jersey because Ohio Wesleyan just basically sent us all home. It was almost Thanksgiving. It's like no more classes...you're done. Go home. Gooo. Go. Leave. So that's what happened because we drove back, it's so funny I don't remember how she got that car, but we drove back to New Jersey and so I got home to my family. The other traumatic—well you all know 9/11. And on 9/11 I was teaching third grade in Arlington, Virginia like two miles from where the Pentagon was hit. So what happened on 9/11 as the first planes were hitting in New York, my kids were at P.E. [physical education] so I had an empty class room and my assistant, Craig, came in and said to me, "Turn on the TV." We had TVs in the classroom then [laughs] so I turned it on and that's when you saw all that smoke from the first tower so it was like, "Oh this little plane he's off course; he's just crashed into the building." Then the TV goes right off because you can't have that on when the kids are there.

TP: Yeah of course.

RP: Oh man.

DC: And then we find out that no, the other building went.

RP: Oh, can I ask? Did any of them have parents in the... because you said you were pretty close.

DC: We were in Arlington, Virginia so at the Pentagon there was nobody in my class that was directly affected, or killed, or injured but one of the principals in one of the other elementary schools, her husband was killed.

RP: Oh wow.

DC: My sister-in-law was teaching in Middletown New Jersey. They had a lot of students impacted from the from the twin towers because that was a commuter area right into Manhattan. So we went into lockdown and one of the—I had a very diverse class, a lot of children that came

from other countries. And so one of the little girls who had come from Yugoslavia, from Croatia, she was the first one to say, [whispers] “What’s going on.” Nobody, nobody else noticed anything. We’re all locked down they can’t go to the bathroom without an escort...

RP: Oh God yeah.

DC: Because we don’t know what’s going to happen next in the DC area. And, of course, because of the plane that they crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania probably saved us from getting another—you know, that plane was headed back to DC. So, our experience of 9/11 is that we were right in the Washington, DC area and could see all the smoke from the Pentagon. And the helicopters and then what happens of course is all the flights are grounded. And because we live right near a national airport, Reagan National, we always had planes, lots of planes [whispers] it was really quiet. The only thing you heard was the military jets flying over Washington and so it was very traumatic.

RP: Wow.

DC: You all were little, but for most of us we remember.

RP: I think we were like three.

TP: Three even.

DC: Yeah, [laughs] things that I remember in my life as an adult, are things like when Al Gore lost the presidency to George Bush. But that was nothing compared to when Hillary [Clinton] lost to [laughs] to Donald Trump.

TP: I woke up and I went downstairs and I was like, “Mom, who won?” “Donald Trump.” I was like, “I don’t want to go to school today.” I’m from Newton and it’s a very liberal town and I just remember everybody in the hallways crying.

DC: Yes.

RP: Everybody. It was just crazy.

DC: Yes, yes that was, that was my reaction. Also, people were stunned and they were crying because they were like your area, we were not looking for him to get elected.

RP: So kind of shifting over a little bit...a little less traumatic I guess but do you have any hobbies that you do kind of outside the home?

DC: [Laughs] Oh gosh, right now I knit little things, not big stuff, but right now I would say one of the things I really enjoy is reading and I’m in two different reading book groups as well as the

WISE classes. So things that I enjoy have to do with reading. I love the Worcester Art Museum. The Tower Hill Botanic Garden. I like things like that. I used to cycle a little bit. My husband cycles a lot more. I don't do that anymore. I can't think of anything else. We love theatre, symphonies, classical music is a big favorite of mine. But hobbies, that's about it.

TP: So how do you define success in your life?

DC: Yes success, I think that success—I have come to see success in a softer way and success where people are connecting, where there's compassion, where there isn't just one person over another. I'm much more aware of the power component in success in that I don't like that. [laughs]. I do have another hobby; I play mahjong every week.

[All laugh]

DC: And I'm a very good cribbage player. Part of the thing I like about success is I like to succeed. I like to see other people succeed and celebrate with them too. I'm not a highly competitive person, but I like games like mahjong and I love to win but success but in terms of my professional life, when I was teaching there were so many times when I was able to feel good about how things were going and then there were times where I knew I hadn't been successful in getting a lesson across or dealing with a child who was really difficult and those are hard times too. So I don't know that I've answered that very well.

RP: Oh no, you have.

DC: Little tricky.

RP: So last question for you today, based on your life experiences, what advice would you give to women today and for future generations?

DC: Be yourself. Be strong. [laughs] Be ready and don't be too hard on yourself. I think that women are coming to a point where they can feel stronger and express that. I would say also have a sense of humor; don't expect to be perfect. Realize that most of the time life is good and do your best. I don't know.

TP: That's perfect.

RP: That's great. Thank you so much for coming in today.

DC: Well I thank you for having me. Thank you very much.

RP: Oh, thank you.