

Interviewee: Charlene L. Martin
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Abstract: Charlene Martin was born in 1957, graduated from Assumption College in Worcester, MA, and subsequently worked there for twenty-eight years. She spent most of her career at Assumption in the Continuing Education department working with adult learners and after a series of positions became Dean of the program. Her achievements include developing the first online courses for the College and founding the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (WISE), a lifelong learning institute for older adults. She earned a doctorate in higher education from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. In this interview Charlene discusses the frequent moves made during her childhood, the importance of education in her life, her love for the Assumption College community, and her passion for adult and older adult education. This passion continued after she left the College to start her own business Pathfinders Retirement Innovations where she provides seminars and consulting on educational programming for adults seeking meaning in the second half of their lives. She reflects upon the importance of seeking new challenges and learning opportunities throughout one's life. She is also active in various organizations and is currently co-chair of the Worcester Women's Oral History Project.

JG: Julia Gaudet and Katelyn Burke are interviewing Charlene Martin today. Here in the Assumption College Library October 17, 2008.

KB: What is your full name?

CM: Charlene L. Martin

KB: Is this your maiden or married name?

CM: Married name.

KB: What's your maiden name?

CM: Longhi

KB: Longhi. When and where were you born?

CM: I was born in on October 24, 1957 in Clovis, New Mexico.

KB: Do you have any children?

CM: No we don't.

KB: You don't. What's your husband's name?

CM: My husband's name is Jim.

KB: What's his profession?

CM: He's had a few different professions over the years, but currently he has his own business. He does medical consulting to physician practices and he also has a medical billing company.

KB: Oh.

CM: Here in Worcester.

KB: Oh wow. How long have the two of you been married?

CM: We've been married thirty years this past summer.

KB: Oh really. Congratulations.

CM: Thank you.

KB: Can you tell me about your parents?

CM: My parents both were born in Massachusetts. My mother in Maynard, Massachusetts and my father in Hudson back in the 1920s. They were they're both 100% Italian, which makes me 100% Italian. [Laughter from **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**]

CM: And they, they were both born in this country, but their parents both -- from both sides -- came here from Italy, Northern Italy.

KB: Uh huh.

CM: And after they got, met and got married, I was born five years later, my brother John was born five years after me. And we moved around an awful lot because of my father's job. He worked for Pratt and Whitney, which is part of United Technologies so he worked on airplanes. He was like not quite an engineer because he, he never got a college degree, but he was the one that was kind of the troubleshooter. He knew what was the matter with them and then, and then, the mechanics would fix it. But we moved around every year, that's why I was born in Clovis, New Mexico.

KB: Oh okay, what did their education consist of?

CM: Both of them went --my mother went through high school. She graduated from high school in Maynard, and she was actually the class valedictorian. And she got, because of that, a scholarship to go to Framingham State. I think at the time she was probably thinking about being a teacher. Maynard isn't that far from Framingham, but in those days they didn't have a car and there was no way for her to get to Framingham State and so she couldn't go to school, which is kinda sad when you think about that.

KB: Oh yeah.

CM: She went on to work. She worked at an insurance company until she got married. My father went through part of high school and then dropped out to go into the service with World War II. Eventually later on when he came back he got his GED.

KB: Did they have any impact on your chosen career path?

CM: Probably not directly because they weren't the type of parents that told myself or my brother what to do. Or you know, "you're going to be a doctor," or "you're going to be a lawyer," sometimes you hear those types of things. Nowadays it's probably like going into business or going into computers or something like that. But education was very, very strong in our house. They always were... I think maybe because when you're the children of immigrant parents, that's a big influence in their lives, to get ahead and going to college was a big deal. So myself, and some of my other cousins, were the first of our families to go to college. And so it wasn't that they pushed us into specific careers but education was big and I think indirectly it affected me. When I eventually came here to Assumption College to go to school I liked the atmosphere of a college and I ended up working here, but, so I think indirectly the push for getting a good education led me to this career.

KB: You guys, you said you traveled a lot. Where were different areas you worked during your life?

CM: Well, we would move almost every year. From around here -- Connecticut, Springfield, to places like Seattle, California, Florida, Arizona. When I was two we lived in Taiwan for a year and because I was learning to speak in general I learned English, but I also picked up Chinese, which I, of course, don't remember today [Laughter from **KB** and **JG**]

KB: Oh yeah.

CM: But I really, really wish I did today, but when you are that little you just pick it up. My brother was born in North Dakota so we were a little bit all over the place.

K: That's really cool. What were the neighborhoods generally like, were they similar kinda?

C: Yeah they were pretty, and I, when I, they were, it's a fuzzy memory because everything changed so much but I always have this kind of the same memory of suburbia 1950s, 1960s. The same kind of one-story ranch house that seemed like we always ended up in, in neighborhoods with a ton of kids running around 'cause my generation always had kids all over the place, so at that time it was everybody in everybody's backyard, that kind of thing. [Laughter from **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**]

KB: Well that's fun. When did you arrive in Worcester?

CM: I came here in 1974 when I came to Assumption as a freshman. I had been living in Springfield at the time going to high school there and so that's kind of how I heard about Assumption.

KB: What challenges does the city still face and what would you change about the city?

CM: I think that Worcester has so many good things going for it. Individually there's different aspects from culture to, of course the colleges bringing so much richness to the city, different businesses and somehow we can't, it seems like there's different attitudes and we can never quite pull ourselves together to present Worcester in a fashion to the outside world that is as nice and good as it is. I mean in other parts of the country to live in a place like Worcester, would be a very good thing, but it seems like we can't pull ourselves in a marketing sense.

KB: Mhmm. [Laughter]

CM: To, to get that out to people. But I, I think there are a lot of good things about it and I think the colleges especially add a lot to the city.

KB: What major historical events happened in Worcester, during your time there? Did they impact you personally?

CM: I think one of the things that comes to mind is the Worcester Cold Storage Fire that happened in 1999. I don't know if either of you live in the area or have heard about it but six firefighters died in this enormous fire in this deserted warehouse as they were trying to save two homeless people that were known to live there. As it was, it turned out afterwards they [homeless people] had gotten out and it was huge for the city. They had like ten thousand firefighters come from around the country to for this memorial parade. President Clinton was in office at this time and he came, it was really a remarkable thing to see. It reminded everybody of the importance of, of firefighters and of course 9/11 has kind of eclipsed that now, we see that in even a bigger extent after that happened. For Worcester that was a very huge thing. Worcester is the kind of thing where there is a lot of little neighborhoods connected into one big city and everybody somehow had a connection to one of those six firefighters. So that was kind of big.

KB: Were there particular areas in the city in which you spent a lot of time?

CM: I live actually in Shrewsbury right outside the city, so of course I do come in all of the time, but now that I am not working at Assumption, I'm not in it quite as much. When I was working at Assumption for twenty-eight years, I was back and forth here all of the time. And I would have to say that this campus is where I spent most of my adult life. When I came on campus I was actually sixteen until when I left, I was forty-nine. So that was like a big chunk of my life was revolving around Assumption College. So other than that, restaurants, I love all the little restaurants around Worcester. Some of cultural activities but, and museums but most of, most of my life was spent here on this [Laughter from **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] Assumption campus.

KB: Now we are going to discuss your education. Where did you attend school for grammar and secondary education?

CM: I won't remember the names of any of them.

KB: [Laughter]

CM: I, I really won't because every year was different. My, my husband can rattle off, you know "Miss. Smith was my fifth grade teacher."

KB: [Laughter]

CM: I don't remember any of those things 'cause it wasn't, I was more transient, but I went to Catholic school the entire time from kindergarten all the way through Assumption. So I do remember you know having nuns most of the time and back then there really, there still were a lot of nuns that, that taught in the schools and it's not that way anymore. Probably the majority of my teachers until high school when it was more lay faculty as well were, were nuns.

KB: Was it hard transitioning from different schools?

CM: You know I think it was -- because I always did it -- I thought it was normal I mean I knew obviously that not every kid was doing that, but I can remember at the end of the school year saying to my mother, "where are we gonna go next?" As if I was just anticipating that that was a normal thing. It was hard when you're the new person every single year and obviously other girls had friends that they had known for years and that kind of thing. So I probably was a little quieter because of that. We would usually move at the end of the school year and we would relocate during the summer and I would, you don't know people yet, at least you meet kids in school. So some summers I can remember like kind of being by myself, reading an awful lot, so in that respect it was a little bit different, but on the other hand I think that it, it gave me a much different perspective on life, seeing all the different places that I've seen.

JG: Did you live in one area like longer than anywhere else?

CM: Probably not until we moved to Springfield and I, and I went, I was there for four years during my high school years.

JG: Oh, so your full four years okay.

CM: Although, although the school I started at closed after my sophomore year [Laughter from **JG** and **KB**] and I had to start a new school.

KB: Oh.

CM: You know I, I seem to be cursed that way. So it, it kinda, to be a new kid in, in actually a much a bigger, Cathedral High School was very, very big.....

KB: [Laughter]

CM: and so it was going from a small private Catholic school, it closed, and then going to a bigger one.

JG: So you were able, able to develop like a sense of community here and finding friends by staying here for four years?

CM: I think you know in a way, when I've tried to psychoanalyze myself and thought why did I stay at Assumption College and my job for so long, it probably was, without me really consciously thinking of this of course, but it was a place to set down roots. I mean the reason I stayed in the area is that I ended up meeting my husband and we, we you know his, his family was always from this area, Northboro. And we stayed, but as far as this, yeah, yes it, it was like a community here that perhaps I never experienced throughout my early childhood.

KB: What colleges did you attend?

CM: It was just here at Assumption.

KB: Assumption.

CM: Yep the whole four years. And then after I, I graduated I started working here a few months later and I got my masters from here while I was working and about, about maybe twelve years ago I decided to go back for my doctorate and I went to UMass Amherst for that.

KB: What year was that in?

CM: I think that was in 96...1996.

KB: What were the challenges you faced in your education?

CM: I don't really remember challenges specifically, I always loved school right through grammar school and high school and when I came here I really enjoyed it. I, I started out thinking I wanted to be a science major because I always liked science in high school and then I

realized I didn't, although I liked math, I didn't really like the math end of it or the physics end of it [Laughter from **KB** and **JG**]. I think I just ended up liking a couple of particular courses. And I took a sociology course freshman year because it filled a requirement and loved it and ended switching to that and I really, really love sociology and all that that entailed. As far as challenges I didn't, I think if I had to think of anything, it was challenging that first year as a science major. And you have to remember back in '74 when I came as a freshman, it, it had been all male until 1969, that was first year they had women on campus. So I was here like five years later. Enough time that you wouldn't necessarily know, but there were still some on campus in faculty that maybe weren't quite use to woman students. And I think the science faculty, there were one or two that had a particularly hard time having woman science majors. So I wouldn't call it a really hard challenge. I ended up being distracted by sociology anyway [Laughter]. And I, I ended up falling in love with that subject, but I would say that was somewhat challenging dealing with that attitude.

KB: So women were kinda treated differently being...

CM: You could see some of the leftover remnants of it. By the time I was here it probably wasn't the same as if I had been -- I have a couple of friends that were in that first year and they could probably tell you some stories about that. They were certainly outnumbered because they only accepted a few at a time. And there were only a few female faculty, there might have only been three or four at the time. And they have some interesting stories to tell as well. It's different being a new identity on campus and so, but by the time I got here it wasn't quite so, so much like that. I think everybody was accepted and, and the numbers were starting to even out by that time too so we weren't outnumbered as women.

KB: Oh good.

CM: And now women outnumber the men so...

KB: Yeah. [Laughter by **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] By your senior year did they have more female professors?

CM: They were starting more and more. It was still probably in the minority. But I know and, for example, in the sociology department there were probably at least two or three out of the six or seven so.

KB: What support networks and mentoring have you have been important to you?

CM: I think that when I first started here at Assumption as far as in the workplace it was the one or two other female administrators that were here. The campus was smaller back then than it is now. And it wasn't unusual to go into a meeting and perhaps be the only woman at the table full of men. So the one or two women that were ahead of me in this, in the administration here I think they, they helped me. It was more like a model, you know you could model your behavior after them.

KB: Humph.

JG: Okay, I'm going to transfer over to your work life.

CM: Mhmm.

JG: So you meant, you said before that you started working after your bachelors. What was your first job title?

CM: I first worked in the registrar's office and -- what was the title? It was probably the registrar's assistant or something like that and it was, mostly I did transcripts. So transfer transcripts would of course come in and I would put the official seal on it and, and send its way, so that's what I did for a couple of years.

JG: What did that work mean to you?

CM: I think at the time I was so excited to actually be in a, in a college environment. It was a, it was a, a comfortable atmosphere and I was still pretty young at the time when I got out. I think I graduated when I was twenty. And so for the first couple of years it was the, it was probably a comfort zone of some sorts since I had gone to school here as well. But the work you know in the registrar's office was very interesting I, I did learn a lot there, but eventually the office of continuing education opened. It hadn't existed since, until 1979 and I became very interested in what they were doing there. And they were looking for people to work in that office so I applied to go there and that's when I transferred there and became -- I guess let's see, the title at the time was academic counselor. That's where I started and that meant working from like noon to eight p.m. because all the classes were at night and that's when students were coming so I was the one they would meet. That was the first position in Continuing Ed.

JG: Were there a lot of women then?

CM: A lot of women. In fact in the late seventies and early eighties, when many of the Continuing Ed departments opened across the country not just here, often it was mostly for women because at that time women were just going back into -- were just going into the workforce in such large numbers or there were a lot of divorces that then they found themselves in the position that they had never finished their education perhaps, or they needed retraining. And so for a long time CE was catering mostly to women. Our most popular program back at the beginning of CE was paralegal studies, for example. And a lot of women who were legal secretaries, that was a step up for them and at the time... many did not even think of the lawyer aspect. Now you, either of you would probably automatically think of lawyer before you would think of paralegal and, but that's, at the time it was a little different on what kind of jobs women could get. In fact at that time when I was still, after I graduated or few years after that, you would open a newspaper and would find women's jobs and men's jobs split up into two. [Laughing and wow from all]

JG: What year would you say the CE department opened?

CM: I think it was '79 and I actually started in there in '81.

JG: You started in '81. You said you've been here for a long time. [Laughter] So what was your time frame of work here at Assumption?

CM: With different jobs I did and everything?

JG: Yeah.

CM: Well once I started you see I never left and I started as the academic counselor and I did that for a couple of years, the person ahead of me who was the Assistant to the Dean left and I ended up getting that position. The title changed for, you know here and there, but the duties kind of were the same and then I was the Assistant Dean but that was a big thing back then it sounds strange but in the world of academia, Assistant to the Dean isn't as highly thought of as Assistant Dean, so there was, you know, a little bit of maneuvering to get the "to the" taken out of my title eventually [Laughter from **KB** and **JG**] as a promotion and then I was Assistant Dean. And then eventually I was Dean of the whole program.

JG: Did you ever envision yourself as a Dean?

CM: Never even thought of it. I mean when I, I don't know if I'm strange in this respect, but at the beginning of my career I really didn't have that as a goal. I just enjoyed working with the adult students so much and being on a college campus and working with students of all ages not just the adult students but, that I never really thought of it. In fact, when the Dean position became ... opened I wasn't even sure that I was going to apply for it because I was happy with what I was doing. And I knew the higher up the position the more you get away from working directly with, with students and the more you end up spending a lot of your time in meetings [Laughter], which it, it isn't always the most fun thing of, of any job, but, but I actually did enjoy it. I got a chance to, while I was Dean, to start the first online courses on campus. Which was really an exciting thing for me -- a lot of different facets into getting that to work. Because it is a small college you really have to rely on a lot of people to get things done and everybody is overworked so, and this was a huge undertaking, the online courses. So everybody really pulled together and I had fun doing that. And I, I almost liken that to women coming onto campus for the first time because this is a traditional liberal arts college, the thought of online courses was not necessarily appealing to everybody on campus. So there was a little bit of, you know, making sure everybody understood truly what it meant to offer them and that education really can be conducted in an online environment. So it was a big thing to get people to kind of change their minds. As I imagined it was to get them [Laughter] to agree to get women on campus, so that's what I kind of think of that. So I, I'm very proud of accomplishing that. But I think the thing that I am even more proud of is that I started the WISE Program on campus, the Worcester Institute for Senior Education. I don't know if you've heard of it but if you're walking around and you see some of the older people on campus going to class, that's the WISE program and that started fifteen years ago in 1993 and I was their founding director. So it's a, it's a great group because they run their own organization, but we're their home, their campus here. And they have many

courses that they come and take and they administer their own courses and find people to teach them or they teach them themselves. And... that I think really gave me a lot of pleasure because these are people who are truly excited about learning and interested in continuing their intellectual stimulation while at the same time getting out and being with like-minded people.

JG: Going back to the online courses when were those launched? What years?

CM: I would say it's about I would say it's about four years ago. So something like 2003, 2004.

JG: And also when you became a Dean had you already obtained your masters by that point?

CM: Mhmm. [Nodded]

JG: And did you do a night program for that or...

CM: I did. I took the grad courses in the education program right here on this campus.

JG: And what years were those?

CM: I, I think I got it in '82, 1982.

JG: Okay what do you think has changed the most in education at Assumption College from both a professional and a former student here?

CM: I think that it's certainly, if I look back from my student time, it's certainly larger. Don't quite know how many you have in your class now. [Laugh] I probably had about 280. That's got to be more like 500 or something now right?

JG&KB: Yeah.

JG: It's up to 700 I believe.

CM: Yeah. Okay so, quite different everybody knew each other and at the same time it's still that way.

JG: Mhmm.

CM: To that extent, that you know each other well enough or know of other people that anything that happens over the weekend, everyone knows about it by Monday morning kind of thing. [Laughter by **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] That was the way it was back here. In the classroom I think, I think we felt challenged in our, in our classroom and the expectations I think were high and I, I think they're still that way today. I think the bigger change is that we did not have adults on campus. We didn't have the Continuing Ed program, you would never see students sixty, seventy, eighty years old, never mind the adult students, so I think there are, it's, it's broadened

in a lot of ways by including people, older people on campus. More diversity on campus, although probably nothing like some of the other schools. But much more. I , there was probably only two [black] people in my class for example. And I think really some of the ways that learning happens is, is different now like the online and I, and I think more faculty are getting used to it. And even if they don't do a pure online class you have so many other tools at your disposal like Blackboard and things like that. That it, it has changed in a lot of ways when you think of the technology.

KB: Can I make a follow up question on the WISE Program? What kind of classes do they teach?

CM: They pretty much set up their own five-week classes, and its mostly liberal arts kinds of things so they're interested in literature and history and religion and philosophy. Mostly the, you know, liberal arts not the "how to" or basket weaving or things like that. They're real topics, and they're actually very interesting topics.

JG: What is your current position, and where is it located?

CM: I decided a couple of years ago that as I was approaching fifty that, because I have spent my whole life here, maybe it was time to, to do something different. And if I was going to do it at all, that it seems a good time to do it as I was approaching fifty. But I still loved, I actually always loved my job. There was no reason I had to leave but it felt like the right time to be challenged in a new way. When I left Assumption I decided to open my own business and I do work with, well I call it Pathfinders Retirement Innovations. So I still do work with older adults, educational programs and that kind of things. I do seminars for baby boomers who are approaching being older adults although they don't like being called older, you never call them older, or aging baby boomers. It's going to be different for baby boomers because of longevity. We live much longer now than a couple of generations ago, so if in fact you did retire at say sixty or sixty-five you could conceivably have another thirty years to look forward to. Whereas previously you didn't live quite as long and you enjoyed as, as much as you could. But now they are thinking that they are going to do things in a slightly different way. And some of our programming that I do for them explains different options for them. A lot of people want to keep working, but in a whole different capacity or in a volunteer capacity. Perhaps working for non-profit organizations, working with children or the elderly or group, sick people and those kinds of things. So I do some programming with that, I do consulting for, on educational programs for older adults with other institutions of higher ed.

JG: So despite approaching fifty, were there any other reasons why you chose to leave Assumption?

CM: I think that as I said earlier after you asked me the question I had never even aspired to be Dean.

JG: Mhmm.

CM: And I was, and then, but I thoroughly enjoyed it once I got to that position. It wasn't like I was aspiring next to be the, the Dean of the whole college or President of the whole college. I was very, very happy with Continuing Ed, it was kind of like my own little business because CE is more of a for-profit model than the non-profit rest of the campus you, you did need to serve the students, provide them their education and you, you also needed to earn money for the college. So it was like having my own little business and that was great. I just think I needed a new challenge and even though we were constantly doing different programs or inventing online courses and those kinds of things, after a while the ways you start a new program is even kind of the same formula. So I just, I needed a challenge, I needed to do something different.

JG: How have your past experiences influenced your current position?

CM: It's amazing once I started putting my own business together, how much I fell back upon the skills that I learned in continuing ed, because that really was like putting a business together. So, for example, marketing any, everything I learned about marketing was from doing that for continuing education. How, how you find the audience was similar to finding the students that would be interested in the programs we had to offer in CE. So I think without even consciously realizing it, I learned about small business from what I did in continuing education.

JG: Are you still searching for your dream job? Or have you found it?

CM: I think for now I think I have found it because what I do now on a day-to-day basis can be very different and although I did find that true in Continuing Ed like I said it, it could become routine. And now I'm doing something different five days -- every day -- of the week and that is exciting. Now whether or not I will enjoy that forever I, I don't know. Right now I am enjoying it. I am also doing some teaching which I had never thought I was going to do. I am actually teaching for University of Phoenix in an online environment and their fairly new doctoral program in Higher Education. That's what my degree is in so that is what I am qualified to teach. Worcester doesn't have any doctoral programs in Higher Ed so I would have to go to Boston or to Amherst and now I can just stay home which has been really fun. And again I had never thought about teaching, I was very happy as an administrator. [Laughter] But I, I'm realizing that I really like this.

JG: Do you have any career goals for the future?

CM: Not the immediate future. I think I prefer, I, since I spent twenty-eight years in one thing I think I am just going to see how this goes and it'll probably be for at least another few years. My husband is a few years older than me so we daydream about our own retirement although its not gonna happen very, very soon. But I think when he starts to maybe pull back a little bit then I might reevaluate what I'm doing, but what I'm doing now I can do out of home, so its very flexible.

JG: And comfortable.

CM: Mhmm.

JG: Great. Thank you.

KB: Now we are moving onto housework. [Laughs] What were or are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework?

CM: We probably kind of fell into a pattern without any, much thought and most of it's probably very traditional so that I pretty much do, on a weekly basis, the usual housework routine and the cooking and the washing of the clothes and that kind of thing. Whereas he tends to do more of the making sure the cars are maintained and taking care of the yard work even though he doesn't actually do it, he hires someone to do it. [Laughter from **CM**, **KB** and **JG**] So, but that still counts. But I do the bill paying kind of thing. And I don't know how that, we didn't have one conversation about it to start out that I ever recall but we kinda fell into that. On the other hand, he is very supportive and it's not like he won't do housework. When I was in the doctoral program if he did not do the housework it would not have gotten done. He was very good about that and he actually enjoys cooking more than I do. I don't really like cooking and he does. But we would starve because he only likes to do it when he feels like it. [Laughter from **KB** and **JG**]

KB: How has housework changed for you over time? Did you do similar things when you were younger like?

CM: Yeah, you know I don't really think too much has been I, I can't remember too much of that changing and whatever new kinda appliances doesn't seem to cut back on the time all, all that much. [Laughter from **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] But, yeah I don't think there was too much change from say what my mother did and what I did.

KB: Mhmm.

JG: You said that you had, you have a brother. Growing up were you expected to do more housework because you were the daughter?

CM: Its probably more that because I was, I was five years older and that I think can be a big gap between siblings, so part of it was that, but I do think part of it probably was being the girl so you did do some of the cooking, you know learn how to do the dusting and the ironing kind of thing I can kinda remember that. But I am trying to remember, but I don't really remember him doing so much. Except you know maybe when you're baking cookies and you're doing the stirring and that kind of thing. So I don't really remember him doing all that much no.

KB: [Laughter] He got out of it. How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life because you have a lot going on with your different career?

CM: It is hard I think. I do like multitasking, although I mean so you, you kinda have to do that now. We don't have children and I can't even imagine you know that, really your life when you have children, it is most of your time. So it's amazing to me, friends that have kids and how

much they can accomplish. So I don't know if I can compare myself to them, but I mean I did have some responsibilities when my parents, when my mother was older, my father died quickly and at a rather young age he was only sixty-four. She lived about twelve years after that, and at the end she had a stroke. So there was a little bit of balancing in, in, in that kind of role. Mostly, you know, I think my husband, like I said, is supportive of a lot of things that have to be done at home when it, when I don't have the time. He, he's not a "needy" husband I guess in that respect. He is fine on his own or if I am out for a meeting I don't have to get dinner on the table because he doesn't know how to feed himself, kind of thing so that helps. Balancing with work responsibilities, I think I learned on the job that you had to be able to multi-task to get things done. And to, to still have some outside time to do fun things and work on activities in the community that I would like to get involved in. Like the Worcester Women's Oral History Project for example or some other things.

KB: Did you learn the different multi-tasking just through the work you've done throughout the years or your parents or mentors?

CM: That's hard to figure out where it comes from and part of it is and maybe that's just my personality. I like to be organized I like to make lists and check the things off the lists.

KB: Yeah. [Laughter]

CM: Which my husband will make fun of me for.

KB: You feel good after you check it off. [Laughter]

CM: It feels real good checking it off [Laughter]. To the point where if I've done it before it's written on the list I'll write it on the list and check it off for that feeling of accomplishment. [Laughter by **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] So I think I am a big list person. When I was here at Assumption I had one of those big organizer books that because it wasn't just my job, I was also keeping track of what the other people in the office-- their projects, so and as much as I was would try to turn it over to them and say you tell me what you are working on, they liked it that I told them what they were supposed to be doing. So some people are just like that and some aren't and I think I just happen to be one of those. It, it could be that I am a control freak too maybe that's part of it too, but I like to be organized.

KB: Do you like the on, back to the online course aspect where you don't, like you can stay at home and get some other stuff done that help with the multi-tasking?

CM: I do, I do I think now that I am working out of the home, it you can, well there's two ways of looking at this, a positive and a negative. The positive is that you can do, like this morning I was working on something before I came here, threw in a load of wash while I was doing it. I mean you can do that kind of thing while you are at home. The other thing is that you get easily distracted a lot more than if you are in an office environment. Not so much with the housework mind you [Laughter by **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] I don't let that distract me as much. But [sigh] I guess it, it's like you, you just want to be doing too many different things at the same time and there

isn't a set organization when you have your own business as opposed to coming into an office. So you have to be careful of not overdoing it too at home.

JG: Do you find that you have a lot of stress or have had a lot of stress in the past?

CM: No I mean not really, I think for the most part I think there's always stressful situations you can go through in the work environment especially, well I guess I've been fortunate if I had any stress, maybe it was only in the work environment and not at home, but I think that I don't, I try not to let it get to me or worry about it too much. I think I like to figure out a way of solving that kind of problem that's leading to the stress, try to separate myself from it.

KB: That's good. How would you characterize the personal and professional costs of your chosen path.

CM: Say that one again.

KB: Sorry. How would you characterize the personal and professional costs of your chosen path?

CM: The, the what of my path?

KB: Costs. Oh I'm from New York. Sorry.

JG: Costs.

CM: Oh I'm sorry, I'm sorry. [Laughter by **CM**, **KB**, and **JG**] Monetary wise or...

KB: Um.

JG: Both.

KB: Both, benefits.

CM: Yeah, I mean I think that I've been very fortunate to kind of fall into this field of education that I love, that has supported me getting my own education as far as my master's degree. I had to pay for my doctoral program out of pocket, but I think that that cost was lower than...I didn't have to go back for my doctorate. I felt it was something I wanted to do for the challenge of it. I think that in that respect monetarily yeah I think it was well worth it cost wise, otherwise it was well worth it. I don't see that anything I've done with my career has cost me anything. Again I go back, if I had been fortunate enough to have children perhaps when someone gets so busy with a career it, you have to cut corners somewhere and you are trying to have that work life balance. I didn't find that I had to do that.

JG: Any benefits?

CM: To the career itself?

JG: Sure.

CM: [Laugh/Sigh] you know to work on a college campus for example where when you love education and you can drop in on any of those courses whenever you want the knowledge you could, even though you don't have time to do it. I, I did sometimes but not always. I think I loved that I loved being able to be around younger people that as you're getting older, they're always staying the same age [Laughter] -- the 18 to 22 year olds. And being in that environment and just being on a beautiful campus like Assumption, which not all campuses have this look to it, and its just absolutely beautiful and I actually miss it sometimes, like at this time of the year when the leaves are so beautiful. So there's a lot of benefits I think I got out of, of my career that there, that were not, had nothing to do with my paycheck.

JG: Do you feel like you developed a lot of relationships with coworkers over your time at Assumption, do, do you still have those relationships even though you moved on?

CM: Definitely. So many people here you know I would call a friend not just a work colleague from being here so long. A lot of people stay here a long time so it's not you know a transient kind of place to work. And I knew when I left it would be the biggest thing that I would miss, especially two of the people that were in Continuing Ed that I had worked with for twenty-five years -- talk about a tight knit family. [Laughter **JG** and **KB**] And, but so many others and since I left I, I still see many of them because that truly is what I would miss. I knew I would miss the, the people and the friendship but I was able to maintain them.

KB: Did it make that, make it hard for, to leave Assumption and...?

CM: To make the decision? Definitely I mean I, I definitely think that that was a big thing, but I knew that I could keep up the relationships and in fact I had more time to get together with some of them than I ever did on campus. We'll joke about being able to go to lunch now when before we wouldn't have the time to even to get to, ya know, have lunch at Charlie's or the cafeteria. [Laughter]

KB: That's good then.

JG: Okay, I'm going to talk a little bit about politics and your community involvement. Do you consider yourself active politically?

CM: No, I guess not and in the respect that I don't work with any kind of community organizations in a political way. I always vote and I am becoming addicted to MSNBC for the last six months. I really truly think I have a problem [Laughter] because I, I have been watching with this election. I, I am a political junkie but I don't tend to do anything -- I just haven't had time in my life to, to devote to, to doing community work in that respect. I have to say this is probably the most exciting election I have been able to watch. It was exciting to see a woman, Hillary Clinton, in it for the first time. A serious women candidate for president who almost

made it that far. And our first black candidate for presidency, it's just really been interesting to watch.

JG: Agreed. Have you ever have you been involved in volunteer or community work? I know you said not really but we know that your from your resume you did a lot of workshops, did you want to talk about those?

CM: I have done some community work up at the March of Dimes. And a lot through a professional organizations, ACHE which is more work related it's a, it's a group of continuing education deans and directors that I've done workshops and so forth for. The latest one is the, the Worcester Women's History Project and this in particular this oral history project which I am co-chair of, but was started by someone else who works on Assumption's campus to, to get these stories of, of women's lives and preserve them for, for all time and for researchers. And that was based upon the group of women that started the Worcester Women's History Project because of the anniversary of the first National Convention.....

JG: Mhmm.

KB:of the Women's Rights Conference so I'm very interested in, in that work right now.

JG: Great. Could you highlight a specific group, I know you kinda just did or organization that you worked with and maybe tell us what led you to join this organization?

CM: I think sometimes it's people that you know that are also working in something and they invite you along and that's what happens with this, with this Oral History Project. I knew of it, but then I met a couple of people from Assumption that were really involved with it and they invited me along and then I became interested in, in it as well.

JG: What would you say the Women's Oral History Project's main goals are?

CM: That they want to get out of this, mainly to gather the stories of everyday women. Famous women, fine we'll take that too, that's, but it's not as important, the famous part as just hearing from different women at all different stages of life. And you can imagine if this continues for many years, that we'll be looking back at whole different eras of life and different generations. So I think that that's important because I think, don't forget I'm a sociology major which means that I like learning about other peoples' lives, [Laughter by **JG**] and I don't know if that makes me kind of a voyeur or something, but to me its interesting to read about people during -- what they are thinking about during a particular historical point in time. For example, I like history but the history I had growing up we learned facts and dates and that kind of thing and what I really like is hearing the stories behind that. That really brings a richness to history. So what we are hoping is, is that the Oral History Project, and of course its not that old, so say it's five or six years old, some of the older women that are being interviewed that are maybe in their eighties or older that remember the early part of the twentieth century is all fascinating to me. But when you fast forward fifty years, someone someday might be interested to hear about women of my generation or your generation as a history.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project
30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – 508-767-1852 – info@wwhp.org
www.wwhp.org

JG: Mhmm.

CM: And that is hard ta imagine sometimes, but I think that it really can add to it.

JG: Absolutely. What have been your direct contributions to this organization?

CM: Well when ,I when I started I just went as a regular part of the community and I went to a community workshop where they would train people on how to conduct an oral history. Then I was invited to serve on the board of the Worcester Women's History Project and we each have different roles to play and I volunteered to participate in the Oral History project part of that organization and then I ended up being co-chair of it.

JG: What would you say the like their major accomplishments have been?

CM: Well when -- I am going to start back with the main organization WWHP, or the Worcester Women's History Project, started to put on a huge three-day conference to the 150th anniversary of that first National Rights Conference and that was in the year 2000. It took them three years to put, to organize it. And it was a huge event that many people from around the country actually came to. Ten years later they, I mean they're looking ahead ten years to the year 2010 to maybe have not as big of a conference, but perhaps a one day so they they're working on on that right now.

JG: That's great. Were you in and I know you said the March of Dimes did you want to list any other organizations that you've been apart of?

CM: I'd have to look at my resume again. I can't even remember but mostly I think besides the professional organization ACHE which I became very, very active in I think that played a big role in my life as far as -- and I probably should have thought of it earlier when you asked me the kind of mentor question -- that there have been people in that group that helped me a lot in figuring out how to be a dean of continuing education or how to work in a continuing ed environment from that group, a really tight-knit, small group of people from the New England area but also from across the country that I became very active in and ended up serving on the National Board of ACHE which was, I felt really good about because I felt like I was contributing to the field of continuing education.

JG: Great. Based on all those experiences between your volunteer work and your community work could you describe you you've obtained?

CM: I think...

JG: Maybe that you didn't, wouldn't have normally received from your day to day work.

CM: ...I think that it's hard to ever learn even if I had taken business courses I don't think you necessarily learn certain skills when you work in any kind of career and I think to figure out

working with people is probably always a challenge no matter what field you go into. So many different kinds of people, different generations in the same work place that you are working with people that have different feelings about how things should be done. I think, I think I learned how to have the knack of getting along with almost anybody. Pulling people together to work together on a project I think was a particular talent I had and, as I said earlier, say for the online for example when everybody is overworked anyway [Laugh/Sigh] they don't need one more thing to do. So to ask people to work even harder on this kind of project I mean you kind of have to know how to, know how to work with people and bring them together to get them excited about doing it and not just merely doing it because they have to. So I think I learned that talent somewhere along the way but I'm not sure I can explain how. [Laughter] But I think that was a, is a valuable skill for anybody to have in the workplace.

JG: Great.

KB: On to health. How have health issues impacted your life?

CM: You know I've been, I've been very fortunate that I haven't had any really serious or ongoing problems... but I did have, and interestingly enough it was like the week or two before I turned thirty, so we were talking earlier about turning fifty but twenty years ago as I was approaching thirty and it wasn't bothering me in the least I, out of nowhere and I still don't know how I got this, I got viral meningitis.

KB: Ohh...

CM: Which isn't as severe as bacterial meningitis where people actually can die but it was bad enough that I felt like I almost wanted to [Laughter] because it was very serious you feel absolutely horrible. Multiple trips to the ER and you know all sorts of things that they do to you and there really isn't anything for some reason that they can do for viral meningitis, they just have to let it play out. There's nothing, no medication or anything. So that was a really miserable experience and about as sick as I had ever been. And that was like serious and severe for a good two to three weeks and then as I felt better I mean I did come back to work, it took months to get my strength back, literally months and months. And that, that was kind of scary because it just hit out of the blue and they don't know exactly why it happened. And then, so twenty years later and it was as I was leaving Assumption two years ago, so again I was like forty-nine looking forward to turning fifty and I don't think there is any connection between these things except I think its kinda humorous now cause I really am not someone that's worried about aging and then these things happen to me at thirty and fifty which are these like magic years for people. [Laughter by **CM**, **KB**, and **G**] So as I'm approaching fifty I, I woke up one morning and I was completely deaf in my left ear. So don't know how that happened or why it happened. Again when I went to the doctor they said it was like a viral thing which these virus things when you're not sick at all is kind of scary to me. But I only got it back about 10% so veritably I am deaf in my left ear. So it doesn't hamper me in any way except I have to ask you to repeat a question every now and then like I did earlier. Background noises can really bother me. In a restaurant it's very hard I have to really lean in and, and listen. I have to remind my husbthat I can't hear around corners anymore. He'll be trying to talk to me from the other room and he just forgets

because it's kind of an invisible problem. You don't know when people are hard of hearing and you don't know why they are answering you and it wasn't even a question they asked [Laughter] I'll be answering something totally different. So those are the two major health things but I can't say that it's, it's really affected my life in a huge way.

KB: What are your experiences in accessing quality and affordable health care?

CM: I haven't had any problems cause I have always been fortunate enough to be working and as part of as my job or my husband's or whichever way, actually he was on my health plan for a long time, have not had a problem.

KB: Ha. Whose health are you responsible for?

CM: No one like I said. If I had children that would be you know, and my parents are both gone now. My mother-in-law is the only one from that generation left and she is 82 but she is very healthy so we haven't, and I know a lot of women especially my age have to take care of not only their own mothers or fathers but their in-laws and things like that, but I, except when my mother was ill for a very short, short period of time I haven't had any of those kinds of health responsibilities.

KB: In conclusion, how do you define success in your life, has this definition changed over time?

CM: I think for me success is being challenged with what I'm doing. I, I would like to use the word happy, but that's kind of a word that can mean a lot of different things. But I think success has never been about the paycheck. And it's the same way with my husband because as I said earlier he's had a few different careers. When he felt he wasn't being challenged anymore, he would start to do something new and that's when he was happiest. And it never bothered me because what made him happy, made me happy and vice versa, so it's more the challenge of doing something interesting and helping someone else. And I always felt that about education while working here at Assumption, that I was helping adults students get their lives back on track or retool to get a new career. And then later with the older students I really felt like I was making a big difference in the latter half of their lives. They would tell me things like, "I don't know what I would be doing if I didn't have WISE to come to." So for me, it was to be able to offer something to other people and to be challenged with something new. And that is what I am finding now with my new career, as I slowly build up this business, that it's nice to be challenged and I still like to be doing something that is helping other people hopefully.

KB: Based on your life experience what advice would give to women today and, and in future generations?

CM: I think as far as -- at least to the women today, I'm not sure about future generations-- but I have nieces and nephews, I tell my nieces, who are probably about your age, to just try and find a path that you feel challenged by and that that will lead to happiness. And I think that, you know, the money isn't everything. I think that most people get that although we all need money to live

on, but to find work that is interesting to you and to surround yourself with people that you like and hopefully love, that that is the most satisfying thing in the world. It's not that complicated, although day-to-day life can develop that way, but if you keep those things in mind and you do something you're passionate about, that's what I would advise young women to do.

KB: Finally now that we working to tell a fuller story of the past of women, what should we be sure to include?

CM: I think, I think as women oh we've come a long way and sometimes, sometimes people don't even realize how long that path has been and that's a good thing. And I, I hope especially younger women today don't have to go through those same things. I didn't have it hard going through these things, but I do know what women before me did, and I know I was on the borderline of it being almost that way. I had a foot in both worlds. I think that today young women have a lot to look forward to and so I think that they should just always remember that they can stand up for themselves in any environment. They don't ever have to take a backseat to anybody -- that they are always just as good, but I also think that that advice almost isn't necessary anymore and that's a really good thing. But there are still pockets out there in the work environment that don't appreciate the value of women in the workplace even today which it does seem kind of strange in the year 2008, but it does happen sometimes that a women will really have to fight for, for getting ahead in that particular environment but hopefully you won't have to go through that. [Laughter]

KB&JG: Thank you very much.

CM: You're welcome... you're welcome.