

Interviewee: Mary Melville  
Interviewers: Carolyn Kriso and Kristin Pancotti  
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Transcriber: Kristin Pancotti



**Abstract:** Mary Melville was born in Cairo to an Italian mother and a British father, and spoke French at home. She went to England for higher education. She had hoped to be a scientist but ended up studying statistics and economics in night school in Cairo after her brother died. She left before finishing a degree. She was hired in London by the Dunlop Company in their economics department, but was not awarded the promotion her male colleagues received. She came to the US in 1956 when her husband received a scholarship to Harvard Business School. She moved to New York City with her husband and became a researcher at Fortune magazine. After her two children were born the family moved to Rye, N.Y., and she continued to work part-time for Time, Inc. When her husband accepted a job in Worcester she was reluctant to move here, but found a tolerant and supportive community. She worked part-time for a publisher and then as part of an environmental research group at Clark University, where she completed an MA. She served on a number of boards and chaired the boards of Mechanics Hall and the Ecotarium. Mary Melville feels that "happenstance" has played a large role in her life, and she has felt handicapped by society's attitudes toward women, although her husband is a supportive feminist. When asked what opportunities today's women have that she did not, she replied " The general acceptance of the fact that women have brains..., women can choose whether they want to work or not; they're not downgraded either way."

**KP:** First we just have to record permission onto the tape that it's alright to do this.

**MM:** Yes.

**KP:** So, today is October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and we are here with Mary Melville, and this is Kristin Pancotti and Carolyn Kriso. And we'd like to know if you would mind doing this interview today?

**MM:** No, I'd be happy to.

**KP:** Ok. We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with work: both unpaid and paid. This interview will also be used for our Gender Studies term paper at Clark University. Thank you for your help with this important project!

**MM:** Alright.

**KP:** What is your full maiden name and, if applicable, your married name?

**MM:** My maiden name was Mary Sutton, S-U-T-T-O-N. And my married name is Mary Melville, because I was married long enough ago that I didn't think of keeping my maiden name.

**KP:** When and where were you born?

**MM:** I was born in Cairo, Egypt, which complicates things.

**KP:** How does it complicate things?

**MM:** Well, I mean, I was a British colonial, and my father was British and my mother was Italian, and we were French-speaking. Um, but I went to an English school so that I am bilingual and um, have had...eventually went to England for good...for what I thought was for good.

**KP:** Do you have any children?

**MM:** Yes. We have two daughters, who are,...what's the next question?

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

**MM:** Yes. We have four grandchildren: three girls and one boy. Two in one family and two in the other.

**KP:** Ok. What cultures and ethnicities do you identify with for your family background?

**MM:** European in the sense of England, France and Italy.

**KP:** Ok.

**MM:** But mainly England.

**KP:** So you have been married then.

**MM:** Yeah, I've been married 51 years.

**KP:** Oh! Congratulations!

**MM:** [Laughing] Never expected it! Never expected either to be married or have children. So don't say you're not going to do it!

**KP:** Tell me about your parents. What did they do for a living?

**MM:** My father was an electrical/mechanical engineer who ran a small business. Uh, he was a...he was a university graduate with that. Uh, so we come from a family of people who've had higher education for generations. My mother was...had a father who was an Italian cotton broker who went to Alexandria, because Egypt grows a lot of cotton. Uh, and met his wife who

had been brought up...who had...was born in Romania, grew up part of the time in Turkey, and got to Alexandria at the time of the Turkish Exodus. Um, and went always to, um, Italian, richer schools.

**KP:** Could you tell me about your transition from childhood to adulthood? Were there any issues pertaining to gender?

**MM:** Oh yes! In my generation, in England, less than 2% of women went to college, and I wanted to go to college. And, uh, which was a little difficult, because it was hard for me to get, um, scholarships, because most of them were...you could get them if you lived in England, but you didn't get them...it wasn't as easy to get them if you were going to a private school in the colonies. And I wanted to go to university and I saw myself as a scientist. I loved biology and mathematics, uh, so I had a lot of issues against me. Um, one of the things that happened...and it was important in my life, oh!...two things. One was that when I was six, I had a little brother who was born and when...so I was sixteen by the time he was ten, and I graduated from high school two years ahead of my class. Uh, all these kind of things, when you're out of gear, complicate things. I said to my father, "I want to go to England to pursue my studies." And he said, "Well, I don't have enough money for you to go to England, and it's four years, and we didn't work...we couldn't get...the tradition was not to work and pay for at least some of the tuition, because, what money I've got, I've got to save for your brother, because he's got to have an education and raise a family." It was one of my first realizations that I wasn't a boy. And the second thing was that um, he said, "I'll tell you what. You work for a year, and I'll double that amount and you can go to college for however long that lasts. Uh, so I worked at three jobs and almost broke his bank. [Laughing] And went to England and went to the Worcester Polytechnic...not the Worcester, but the Polytechnic Institute, where I found myself up against scientists, and my interest was more natural science, you know, physics, chemistry and biology. Physics and chemistry were not my interests, so I did okay with math and biology, but I did not do okay with physics and chemistry, which was the first time I had ever not done well in school. It was a good lesson. Uh, and then my brother died, so I had to ship back to...to Egypt for what I thought was going to be a short time, but my parents were so devastated that I spent three years there and I went to night school, where one of the few things I could study at the British Consul which was run and supported by British taxpayers abroad to teach...and they have the equivalent in America. You know, you can go to Mexico, Panama or Venezuela and find American institutes where you can get an education. And one of the few things I could study, which fitted me was economics. So I studied economics and statistics.

**KP:** So you got a degree in economics then?

**MM:** I didn't get a degree, because I left before I...I wanted to leave.

**KP:** Oh.

**MM:** And so I took half the exam and didn't get a degree and looked for a job in London and was very fortunate, because, um, I just applied for a job, in the '50's in England it was...as here, it was easier...yeah, it was just the beginning of the '50's, late '40's, um, there were plenty of job opportunities and I just applied to several openings. And I had an interview with um, an

economics...a head of an economics department in the Dunlop rubber company, which was then a very big international company. And I had an interview with this guy, and he...we had this long talk on what we were both interested in, was music. So we talked about music and he eventually hired me. [Laughing.] So my life has been a series of happenstances. It's not unusual in a lot of very successful adults whom I know, because eventually I got to know a lot of successful adults, um, it's kind of who you go up in the elevator with, who you happen to meet that changes the direction of your life. Um, is that the way you want me to go on rambling?

**CK:** Oh, yes. That's fine!

**MM:** Okay. Uh, so that's, uh...so, um, I had a job where there were...it was a small department. There were...first one woman, then two women and there were three men, and a male boss, and we reported to a male boss. Uh, a couple of years later, about three years later, I guess, and I had gone from doing statistical research and paper clipping, you know, newspaper clipping and stuff, to doing reports for the board and the board of directors, which was relatively prestigious and uh, doing some forecasts for materials that they bought, like rubber for cars and this kind of thing. Um, and I went to the head man, the chief of the whole department, and I said, "Why don't you promote me the way you promoted the other two men who were...you know." And he said, "You realize that you are one of the three most senior women in the company." I said, "That's all very well, but the other two women are secretaries." [Laughing.] That was the attitude.

**CK:** Mmhmm. This is in England?

**MM:** In England. Though there were models in England as there are in France, and I tell my American friends of women way back in history who had been intellectual leaders, teachers, writers, you know, who were excepted. They were the exception. They were accepted as the exception. So they were models for the exception. When I got to America, because I married a man who had a...got a scholarship to Harvard Business School, and I got to Harvard Business School fifty-one years ago. So that's two thousand...so that's 1956. And that was yet a whole other story.

**KP:** Did you end up getting the promotion? I'm sorry to...

**MM:** No, I didn't. Because, as he said, I was a turncoat. I left to get married and left town. [Laughing.] So I proved him right. You can't trust women. They get married! Um, I got to Harvard, actually, I was very lucky because I got a job as a statistician in the department of economics. Um, you know, just pushing numbers. So that was not a problem and you know, I was not looking for any great...you know, to be the head of a company. But I was in an atmosphere...Harvard Business School did not have women there, and the atmosphere in the '50s was, you know, we were supposed to be good wives. Uh, we were supposed to cook breakfast, and, I'm quoting, and send our husbands off to their important work, and we were supposed to not bother them with the minutiae, and I'm quoting, the minutiae of family life, and then they'd come home, and we'd have dinner ready and we'd do whatever we had to do to be good social adjuncts. But we were adjuncts. And I was probably the only professional woman in the class.

**CK:** Wow.

**MM:** They'd all gone to Wellesley, Smith, you know, they all had degrees from prestigious women's colleges, but none of those...none of the women who married...a lot of Wellesley women, Harvard Business School men, were aspiring to be anything but good wives. Interestingly enough, I have a friend here who went to Smith and one of the...she remembers, one of her...she's a year older than I am...one of the professors said to them, "I don't want you to leave this place and just use your talents washing dishes." [Laughing.] So, there were, you know, there were people who helped you if you wanted to be helped. But the general kind of atmosphere was, certainly in places like Harvard Business School, um, was to me, appalling. I went home and cried. I said, "I don't want to hear this stuff." You know, they'd call me and say, "We're having a wives' tea. Would you make some cookies?" I'd never made cookies in my life! And I still don't! [Laughing.] So, but, anyway, they didn't throw me out. And my husband grew up with five very strong women, uh, one of whom was a suffragette in the 1850s, uh, whom I actually met. Uh, and so he grew up with a respect for the other sex, you know.

**KP:** That's great!

**MM:** Yeah, well, we wouldn't have lasted! [Laughing.] Not exactly. Um, so anyway, we...he graduated, and we...he got offered a job in New York, so we thought, we thought, so you know, I'm not typically an old guard Worcester woman, but we thought...but I've seen them. I've been with them and been part of them, and am very much part of them. Um, and made some very good friends and have respect for a lot of them and seen things change. But, so we went to New York, uh, because he got a job, and we thought, "Well, we don't know America, we've just been in school. Why don't we spend a couple of years here?" Uh, and I went looking for a job in New York.

**CK:** How old were you then...when you moved to New York?

**MM:** Uh, twenty...seven. And I'd had three years experience in London as a research associate, uh, statistical research associate. I had two years working as a statistician in the department of economics under Galbraith, who gave me a raise. [Laughing.] Twenty-five extra dollars a month. And, uh, and I had, you know, I had experience as well as a strange background in education, but you know. I went to interview for a job, which I knew was open at GE and at TWA. I thought TWA would be good because we really liked to travel. And I was turned down by the two men who...who were the personnel said, "We have the openings, you fit the bill, you have the experience, but I can't replace a man by a woman."

**KP:** That's so blunt!

**MM:** It was kind of accepted! You know, they didn't even have to hide! Um, so, very shortly in that period, we went to dinner with a friend whose girlfriend worked for Time Inc., and she said, "Why don't you try for a job at Time Incorporated?" I didn't even know whether they were hiring. And I went there and had the best interview I've ever had in my life. And so, the woman who was head of personnel said...looked at my résumé...said, "You've got a wild résumé, lived in all kinds of places, speak languages. You've got, you know, some experience in one thing,

you've got half a degree, I mean, you know. You're just the crazy kind of person that we like. Uh, so, and it's no good in my putting you in a weekly magazine, because...to work for a weekly magazine...because you'll never see your husband, because you'll have to work weekends." So I look at Fortune. Um, and, she said, "If you come to work for Fortune, you will be a researcher. The men are the writers, the women are the researchers, and you will never get a byline. I said, "Okay!" You know, it was better than not having a job. Interestingly enough, in my generation, a woman called Carol Loomis, who was...became quite well known, um, a woman who was a colleague, another researcher, um, and specialized in Wall Street, and the Market, became...went on the board of editors, and did have a byline. So that...we...that was the time when we broke through. And it was also, about that time that people like Gloria Steinem and others were making a lot of noises. And what...what we were all fighting for was availability of jobs and equal pay. What we didn't fight for, and this is in retrospect, was choice. Not choice in terms of pro or against abortion, but choice that...if I decide that I want to use my time raising a family, that's alright too. Because, if I hire you as a governess, or I hire you to wash my floors, you have a job. But if I do it in my own home, I don't have a job. And so, you were kind of looked down on, in my group, if you didn't have a job and you weren't a professional, because they were all gung-ho professionals. And this was New York. Now New York was not like, you know, Boston or Cambridge. We were more aggressive. So that was my early experience of the mid '50s.

**KP:** That was very interesting!

**MM:** And then I came here, and that's something else again!

**KP:** This is sort of a random question, but whose health are you responsible for beyond your own?

**MM:** Um, my children are grown up, and they look after their children, so I'm not responsible. Um, I would normally be responsible for my husband health, but he is very healthy, and unfortunately, I am not. So, he's had to bear the brunt of seeing me in and out of hospital much of our married life. Uh, but I'm active, uh, you know, it stops me for a little while and I get back on my horse.

**KP:** Okay.

**MM:** So I don't have that heavy role. Everyone around me seems to be fine.

**KP:** So you've lived in Egypt, and England...

**MM:** And the United States.

**KP:** ...and the United States. And then, in the United States, you've lived in Cambridge, New York...

**MM:** And then in Worcester. Though I lived at Swarthmore for two years.

**KP:** Okay...what factors played a role in your choice to live at each location?

**MM:** My husband's job.

**KP:** Each time?

**MM:** Each time.

**KP:** Okay, um...

**MM:** Each time, it was a contract. Only some places I wouldn't go. He was offered a job in Virginia once and I said, "I'm not going there."

**KP:** Why is that?

**MM:** Because it was for me the boondocks and I had never lived in a small town. Uh, Worcester was a very small, provincial town and it was...I said I'd try it for two years and if not, I was leaving. And he said, "Okay, and you know, I'll...we'll try it for two years." We've had...we've been fortunate...we've had a team...we are an equally matched team and I have a voice.

**CK:** When did you move to Worcester?

**MM:** Um, our younger daughter was six, and she was born in...when I was thirty. I was thirty-six, or thirty-seven. In '77.

**KP:** How did you come to live in Worcester?

**MM:** My husband got this offer of a job and they chased him for a year, and he worked for a large company in New York, and I liked living in New York City and then when we had children, we moved to a near suburb Rye, New York with a very good school system, which was what I was looking for, and it was also a uh, an hour door-to-door from Time, Inc. where I had gone back to work on a part-time project after the children were born.

**KP:** So, did you commute by car?

**MM:** No, by rail.

**KP:** By what?

**MM:** Rail...

**KP:** Oh, rail.

**MM:** I took the train.

**KP:** Ok, and how far did your husband commute?

**MM:** About the same, we both worked in Manhattan. And then he...his boss changed, we didn't like him so much, and then the local company here uh, kind of pursued him, because he was one of the two best market managers in the country or something. And he uh...he's very bright, he's an intellect. Uh, he's also a leader. Um, so, he was doing quite well. So he got the job offer here. I came here one day when he was being interviewed, and walked about and thought, "Not on your life." But then I said, "Okay, you're the father of our two children, I will try it for two years. And I was thirty-six...or thirty-seven. When I got here, I was really the only professional woman that I ever came across. Except for...there were very few doctors, uh, and very few...and most of the women who worked were teachers or academics. But even at a place like Clark, there were very few women academics in comparison with the numbers of men. Um, so, there weren't a lot, but the people...the men and women here were very open and tolerant and supportive. And one of the women, who was the wife of the head counsel of the company, had a wide network, and she introduced me to a man who had a publishing firm and I went to work for him. So, I was lucky. I went and I did...I wrote his programs, his book jackets. Uh, so I had to interview the authors and write about the books, and did the press releases. So I at least used my brain and didn't have to spend so much time with my children that I would murder them. [Laughing.] We love each other a lot, which is surprising. [Laughing.]

**KP:** What do you think women's experiences in the Worcester labor market were when you were when you began working here, compared to recently?

**MM:** As far as I know, there were apart from the teachers, there were maybe two or three lawyers, but the majority of women in any recognizable executive position was minimal. I was invited to a bank board and I was the first woman they'd ever had. So, I saw who the heads of the...executives in the bank were, and I talked to the other board members at all the companies. There wasn't a woman among...you know, there wasn't a woman...I was the only woman on that board...uh, the bank board.

**KP:** They just invited you?

**MM:** Yes, because I was proposed by a man who knew me, and because it helps if you're not account numbers. There was one woman in town whose name is Nancy Morgan, and whose husband is from an old family here, and she's from her own old family. Um, and went to Radcliffe, and is very very bright, and she was the only other woman in town who was on the bank board. I don't know which one of us got there first, but it was mainly whose wife we were and also what...how...whether we'd impress the...I was one of two board members at Clark when I first went on the board at Clark.

**CK:** Were there certain networks or connections that allowed you to get that job too?

**MM:** Yeah.

**CK:** What were those?

**MM:** Uh, my husband's boss belongs to one of the founding members of the Norton Company, one of the families. And, he um, is a remarkable man, uh, his wife is very bright, but has never



aspired to...they were very welcoming. They were among the people who welcomed us here. And the lawyer in the company, his wife had actually worked for Houghton-Mifflin as an editor, and so they had the grace to recognize that I wasn't going to be happy pouring tea and asked me to...and found niches where I could contribute. So it was absolutely to their credit. And one needs this networking, one needs mentors or people to open doors for you when you're living somewhere where you don't know anybody.

**KP:** For your past three jobs, did you take the jobs first, then look for a place to live, or did you select the job after you established a residential location?

**MM:** Well because I did not...because from the time that I got married and had children, we actually made a decision that Don's income was likely to be higher than mine, and one of us had to be mobile and I said I would go along providing I liked where it was and providing I thought the job was worth moving for, so that I was part of the decision, but I didn't drive the decision. Not since...not for fifty years. So that doesn't, that doesn't apply.

**KP:** Okay.

**MM:** I didn't make the decision where I was going to live. In only a small way – why did I live in Worcester and not in one of the suburbs? Because A, I am a city girl and B, how could I know which of the suburbs...I don't know...where do you live? Where did you grow up?

**CK:** Virginia actually. The very place you didn't want to be! [Laughing.]

**MM:** But you know, if you went to Virginia, and you didn't know what town to live in, how could you choose?

**CK:** Right, you probably would look for a city.

**MM:** Yeah, and then you could decide where you'd want to live. Where did you grow up?

**KP:** I grew up in Westford, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of Lowell probably.

**MM:** Right, yeah. So, you know, in a sense that doesn't apply to me, because I haven't made that decision. I made it before I was married. I wanted to live in London, and I lived in London, and I wanted to live in the middle of London and not outside London. And I did.

**KP:** So, then your husband's job would move and you'd find a home, then you'd look for a job after you'd found a home?

**MM:** Yeah.

**CK:** How many times did you relocate within Worcester?

**MM:** Twice. That was all. We...no, three times.

**CK:** Where were those places?

**MM:** Um, in...we actually bought our first house in Worcester itself. We looked at houses in the suburbs and we looked at what was available. And, because my husband is a decision-maker, um, we talked about whether or not we should buy the house that...one of the two houses that we saw in town...and he said, "I don't know what you're waiting for." This is the kind of argument that we have. "You've had 24 hours to make your mind up." So I kick and scream and I make my mind up. [Laughing.] It's not a bad thing; it worked out. And then I didn't like that house and so I went looking for another and I bought one. But we discuss our finances...I took care of the books forever until he retired and I said, "I've done it for thirty years, you do it for the next thirty." Uh, I'm the one who set up budgets when we started together, because he didn't know how, and I'm the statistician, you know, I'm the...but he's good at math anyway. And we also decided that once we were both working, he was likely to make more money, and we would live off of his income and we would play with mine. And we both liked to travel, so my income went into the bank so that we could travel.

**CK:** Has it remained that way? Has his job in fact generated more of your income than yours?

**MM:** By far. He happened to become quite successful. And, yeah, we've lived off his income. I've always had a nest egg. Uh, it's my nest egg, I could probably live three or four years on it and I have a stockbroker and I choose my stocks. So, I play my own games. And he doesn't interfere; he just keeps telling me I'm rich. [Laughing.] And I keep telling him, I'm not half as rich as he is. But then, he has to share, because we always have had joint accounts. So, I have his account and I have my own. [Laughing.]

**KP:** How were you raised to view your own gender role?

**MM:** I think a couple of things. One was my father was very respectful of children in general and until I was in my teens, really treated me like a son in many ways. I would go with him...in those days people worked Saturdays...but I would go with him to visit the plants that he was taking care of or built. Uh, I would go with him, and then for the...in the summers, because we didn't have camps, I went to work with him. And he was brought up by the Jesuits, he was very logical. And he was also very conscious of nepotism and when I worked with him in the summers, I called him Mr. Sutton, because he didn't want people to feel that this was his daughter and she could get away with murder. And I couldn't. So he was...he gave me...what is it we all talk about? Um, a sense of self-worth, because he treated me to build on that self-worth. It wasn't because I was his daughter that I went to work...and he said, "I want you to do the job properly or I don't need you. I can't afford you."

**KP:** And how did your mother influence your gender role?

**MM:** My mother was a very bright woman who...when she graduated high school had teaching certificate, but she didn't go to college to college to get a teaching degree. And she taught for a year while my father was in college in France. So she taught, she was very bright, but she was very spoiled. Loved all the things to do with, uh...you know, we were living in a country where there were a lot of poor people, so we had a lot of servants, and she went to the hairdresser and she went to the dressmaker and I thought all of that was for the birds myself. SO I don't know

where I got it...well my grandmother...my paternal grandmother was very independent and people would say misbehaved, "You're just like your ah...*Nona* Annetta, because she always gets her own way." So part of it is genetic, but part of it is that nobody sat on me. There was a kind of respectful attitude, mainly on my father's part. And my mother, my mother never said...I mean, she would have liked me to have a nice big wedding, etc. and she was very upset when all she got was a telegram. Uh, we're like, "We're married." [Laughing.] Um, she gave a party with champagne. Um, she loved a good time. Anyway, she and I didn't get on very well, but she had her own strengths and she was bright. So, you know, nobody was...nobody in our family sat...in our little family sat on anybody else. We weren't pushed down. And I certainly wasn't.

**CK:** How was housework and chores divided up as you were growing up?

**MM:** We had servants. I never made...I didn't know how to make my bed. I didn't know how to do washing and there weren't any machines then. I just piled up my dirty clothes and they stayed piled up, so I learnt to wash them.

**CK:** What about with your family in...your husband?

**MM:** Now...in...my husband grew up in a very egalitarian...he had two sisters and they all did the dishes together. He knew how to do his laundry, but he usually took it to the laundryman. Um, and so, I'm...he doesn't know how to cook, so I cook and he wash up...washes dishes, because that's how...that's the way it...that's how the division of labor works. And when the girls...when Wendy was no more than three months, I decided I didn't want to spend all my life in the house, so I went back to Time, Inc. and they were just starting Time/Life books, and they wanted seasoned researchers. And so I went back to work for them part-time. And with that money, I paid for somebody to come do my housework and look after my kids. So, I've been able to because I have been fortunate or manipulative enough to have enough money to pay someone to...I still do. I don't do my own housework. And I don't do my own laundry. I can, I know how. I do it very well. I know how to fold very well, but I prefer not to.

**KP:** So, you're totally fine with that then?

**MM:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Because nobody's making me do that. I mean, there's no expectations. I'm making those choices. And I think that's very important. If you make the choice yourself about what your role is going to be, it feeds you and it suits you. If you like to...I don't clean silver. You know, I don't care! So, I either hire someone, or if Don wants clean silver, he can do it. As long as you have this open relationship with yourself, you don't have to be subjected...I don't...I know women who have...I know the woman who runs Abby's House, and women and men who have worked with women who have been abused, and I have sympathy for them, but I don't understand it. I mean, I don't understand where they are coming from. I just...I said to my daughters, "You know, here's all about contraception," because I had a great biology teacher who taught us all about sexuality and contraception while we were doing biology at the age of twelve. Um, and I said, "Promiscuity...I don't believe in promiscuity, because I don't...I never...that cheapens you." And at the time there wasn't AIDS and HIV and stuff. It cheapens you. You choose to act a certain way, you take action, and it's your responsibility to take the good with the bad. And I'm hoping that they have a sense of self-respect.

**KP:** That's great! Um...how were girls treated when you were in school?

**MM:** Uh, there was a tendency...well...there was a tendency to expect the girls not to be good at math and science. There was a tendency...uh, well I went to a school that was very focused on sports as the English schools are...um, and if you were...this didn't come...this came from your peers not from the...the teachers, not from the faculty. There was a tendency to think that if you were pretty and you could play good sports you were going to be popular and I was neither so I was not popular and never thought I would be and that was just...but I had friends. What was your question? How were girls treated...?

**KP:** How were girls treated when you were in school?

**MM:** Well, the thing is that we were Europeans and we actually came across a lot of Islamic women who were by our standards not necessarily treated well, but I understand them much better than people who've never lived among them.

**KP:** Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

**MM:** I wanted to go to work and earn a living and be independent.

**KP:** Did you feel that those were options for you, or...

**MM:** Yeah. I did. Uh, some of my agemates did not, but I tended...you tend to make friends with people who are like you. I mean, I still do. Um, so I didn't meet a lot of women who didn't feel this way, because they didn't...[inaudible]...circles, until I got to the United States and until I got to be an executive wife in Worcester. But they were very respectful that I was just odd or different or whatever.

**KP:** Carolyn, do you want to ask some...

**CK:** Sure. So...so what was your first job?

**MM:** Ever?

**CK:** Mmhmm.

**MM:** I worked summers with my father.

**CK:** Okay, so that was in...

**MM:** In Egypt.

**CK:** Okay.

**MM:** Yeah, that was when I...when...just summers in between school. My first real job was when I went to London and got a job as a statistician at a large company.

**CK:** So, what has work meant to you, why did you choose to work, and what are the goals of...?

**MM:** I have...had to deal with that when I went from doing paid work to doing...I also worked here at Clark...uh, as part of a research group, which is now the Marsh Institute, um, when it was founded. I um...and that was happenstance too. But...I...when...after my husband retired and we both liked to travel, I realized that if I were to pursue my work opportunities, I was going to have to go back to school, and you know, I had gotten an MA, thanks to people I was working with at Clark. Uh, but I might have to go back and do some more, and I would have to spend a lot more time and go to conferences and everything else. And I chose not to. You know, by that time...and I had to decide that the accolade and my self-respect was not dependent on my worth in money, and that was very difficult, because we tend to judge our worth in dollars. I was never going to make the money that Don has made...and I was never going to give the time so that I could spend time with my children and then later with my grandchildren. Uh, I was never going to be CEO of a company, and in my generation, there weren't many. There are now, but not many. That's why I kept track of Susan Hanson and women and work for fifty years. Um, she's got all my files. Did you know that?

**KP:** Yes, she told us!

**CK:** We'd like to look through those if that's okay.

**MM:** Oh yeah, that's why she's got them! You can throw some of them out. I mean, it's all clippings. It's not original stuff, but I followed the subject very closely. But you have to make choices and some of the choices are your personality and you're fortunate if you can make those choices. You know whether...even if you decide to be a doctor rather than a professor, or a philosophy teacher rather than a...science person. You make choices according to the way you see yourself and according to your interests.

**CK:** So, how did you commute to work when living in Worcester?

**MM:** In Worcester, I drove, because I lived in town and I worked in Barre and then I worked at Clark. There was some...there was a hiatus between...I got sick.

**CK:** What was your title here at Clark?

**MM:** I was a research associate at the Marsh Institute.

**CK:** And you...you do...you no longer...?

**MM:** No. No and it...as I said, it was hard to give up...when I went to work as a research associate, I made a deal with them that they would pay the market rate for a day, and I would give them five days, four days or three days [Laughing.] of free help, because they couldn't afford my market rate. Uh, you know, it was a joke, but it was important to me. Uh, when I gave

up working I found myself by then in...you asked at some point...in not-for-profit, in the not-for-profit institutes. And whatever talents I had, I brought to that. I was president of [McKenna].

[Side A ends; tape must be flipped.]

**MM:** Um, you know, I became...I was invited on boards and when it...when the subject was right, or the need was right, I became Chair of the Board. So, I was Chair of the Board of Mechanics Hall and I was Chair of the Board...and you're usually vice-Chair and then Chair...and I was Chair of the Board at the Eco-tarium, which is the local natural science museum. So...uh...in effect, I guess one of the things that moves me is that I want to be useful to society, I want to earn my...my place in the sun. And I can be useful without being paid. And that came hard, but I understood it. And it's something that I learnt in Worcester, because it's not the tradition in Europe.

**C and KP:** [Questioning looks.]

**MM:** Volunteering.

**CK:** While you were employed in Worcester, were you doing any of this such community work as you were saying?

**MM:** Only marginally. Uh, I did some, because people got to know me and invited me in to go on the board at the International Center, and what I did was bring my tools in there. I could interview people and write bits for them. So I did that.

**KP:** Do you feel that many of your jobs you found through social networks? Um, people that you knew told you about them, or...?

**MM:** Yes.

**KP:** Were they coworkers or were they family members?

**MM:** Both. No, they were friends, because I was always away, too far from my family. And anyway, I would never have allowed my family to tell me where to go to work. [Laughing.] Um, I was a difficult child. The uh...now networking...and it's still true...I believe that networking is what gets you in the market. And experience. I mean, you've got to be credible. You've got to do a good job, or else nobody's going to tell their friends, you know, "She's worth hiring."

**CK:** How did you balance your roles as a mother and as a wife and as a woman working in the workforce?

**MM:** With difficulty. It's um...and I think any woman would tell you that. Some women decide that they can't do the multiple...but the advantage of being a woman...and I think it's anthropological and genetic...is that we do multitask, you know. We collect the grains, we watch for the child, we carry a child, we feed a child, we watch for the jungle animals that are going to eat the other child. We're programmed to multitask. Which may or may not prevent us from

focusing on one thing and being very successful in that one thing. And so I'm very interested in following the...the...path of women who are able to multitask and become CEOs or those who don't multitask and don't want to multitask. And I think we're on a continuum, men and women, that some of us are somewhere in the middle and some of us are here and some of us are there. So, I don't think there's a straight answer to that.

**KP:** Did you hire help for childcare?

**MM:** Yeah, even if I only made a nickel for doing it, with her pay and mine.

**KP:** For how long? For how many years of your children's lives?

**MM:** Until they were uh, thirteen, fourteen. But it varied. For instance, I had regular women, older women for childcare, whom I paid when I went to work and they would come in at three o'clock in the afternoon and when the kids came home from school and maybe make dinner or whatever. And then later, I got to know some students who...or young teachers who became sitters and they became part of the family. I still know some of them. So, they would come and spend...because we traveled...spend the week while we were away and the girls were quite happy with that, because this wasn't someone who was going to put a straightjacket on them and give them...you know... "Eat your cereal!"

**CK:** So, was it ah... a person would come to your house to watch them?

**MM:** Yes. I still feel strongly about that. When our girls...my gift...our gift to our daughters is that if they need to go away and they want us to babysit for the children, we will do that. Now the children get to an age when they'd rather go and stay with friends. So, you don't interfere with that, but in a couple of weekends we're going to Maine to look after our two grandchildren while their parents get a weekend off. So, ah, that's what we're used to doing.

**KP:** Were there periods where you would have preferred not to have a job?

**MM:** No, I was able to make that choice, because I was not financially dependent on my job and I don't know how I would have felt if I'd had to work to put food on the table constantly. And so I if I had to juggle a lot, I was very fortunate in that I could control the amount of juggling I did.

**KP:** So, did you take periods off at times?

**MM:** Yeah. Because my work was...depending on what was available...so it wasn't constant.

**KP:** Did you receive benefits from your jobs?

**MM:** Um, yes, when I worked...mostly I worked on what is called "self-employed." So, I paid my own benefits, my own social security and stuff, because I was on contract. Before I had children and when I worked for big organizations, I did have benefits. But otherwise I just went on a contract basis and there was a...you know there's a whole...you couldn't do it as a self-employed person.

**KP:** So you had maternity leave and everything like that?

**MM:** Uh, when I was at Fortune magazine, I had maternity leave, but they made you leave when you were three months pregnant, which is different from now. So, yes, I had maternity leave, but they didn't pay for it at the time.

**CK:** Was it difficult to reenter the job market after being...after maternity leave?

**MM:** No, I had enough of a head in it and I went back to work for something else at Time, Inc. I had enough of a résumé by then, I wasn't straight, you know...I wasn't a sixteen-year-old who'd never had a job. And I had a network by then; I knew people.

**CK:** How important was flexibility in a job?

**MM:** Very, very.

**KP:** Did you shape your hours around your children at all or your family in general?

**MM:** Uh, to some extent, yes. I um...I didn't to some extent. You know, if there was something going on and it was conference, and it was going late, then whoever I'd hired would stay later. But on a kind of day by day basis, I would leave after they'd gone to school and come back about when they got back. And if I needed it then I would hire somebody else or if they were sick I was flexible enough to stay home.

**KP:** Did...so you mostly worked part-time, or...?

**MM:** Mostly worked part-time or on contract on a project. After I had children, not before.

**KP:** So after you had children, you started working more part-time?

**MM:** Yeah.

**KP:** Do you think that over your lifetime women have gained equal rights?

**MM:** Women have gained considerable rights, but not enough, and certainly not equal. How's that for an answer? [Laughing.]

**KP:** Wonderful! Um...what opportunities do women have today that you did not have?

**MM:** The general acceptance of the fact that women have brains, women can work if they want to, women can choose whether they want to work or not, they're not downgraded either way. The wife of the head of I think it was GE or GM or whatever said that a woman said to her, "What do you do with your time?" And she said, "I look after five children." And the woman said, "Well, what do you work at?" And she said, "Well, they're my dead wife's...dead sister's five children." And immediately that was a job, because it was not her own children. Um, and I



think...I'm hoping that that attitude has changed. And my hope is that you can A, make a choice of what to do with your life and have all doors open and the glass ceiling is still there. In subtle ways, like you know, if you're whatever names...if you're Purina and head of a prestigious company, they'll start off by saying, "She was wearing a pink bow on her head." It bugs the hell out of me! [Laughing.]

**KP:** [To Carolyn] Is there anything else you want to...

**CK:** [To Mary] Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**MM:** No, I had fun.

**CK:** Well, thanks so much, it's been really interesting hearing about all this!

**MM:** Well it's not...it will be interesting to hear what other women have to say who've lived more linear lives, you know, in one place and gone...didn't have to make all these adjustments. Yeah, it will be interesting. But what you've done for me is that I've begun to ask my friends questions like this. You know, "How was it for you?" Like I asked this friend who has five children and she was in the Harvard School of Design and left because she fell in love with this lovely man in law school and had five kids. And has been wife and mother ever since. And quite...is very happy with it and is...you know she knows architectural history backwards and never shows off. I have great admiration for her.

**CK:** Yeah, there's definitely a lot of different tracks that women can go.

**MM:** Yeah. So, even among my friends, there are these women...you know, there's the woman who went to Radcliff and married this very macho chauvinist pig man, in an even more macho chauvinist pig family who owns a big industrial company. Uh, I mean they really are...they never promote any of their women in the family. Uh, but she...she was an overseer at Harvard, which is no mean thing. You know, it's the board that connects all the Harvard institutions.

**KP:** How did her husband feel about that?

**MM:** He's actually proud of her.

**KP:** Oh, good!

**MM:** And they, you know, they have arguments, more than we do. Like, the only...he loves her and they're still married. So, we come in...our relationships, have a lot to do with whether we're male or female, but a lot of it is who we are. That's in relationships. Good luck to both of you.

**KP and CK:** Thanks!

**KP:** Thank you very much for doing this for us!

**MM:** It's been fun. Now did I have to sign something...

[End of interview.]