

Interviewee: Diane Morin
Interviewer: Stephanie Morin
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Abstract: Diane Louise Morin was born in 1952 in Worcester, Massachusetts and grew up in the Greendale area. A mother of three children and two step-children, she currently works at Big Y with Worcester and lives just over the Worcester-Holden line. In this interview, Diane talks about her memories of her childhood on Ararat Street and Indian Hill and describes the changes that have occurred with the housing and Interstate construction in these areas. She speaks in detail about her work history, beginning with her first job typing envelopes for her friend's father's printing company, and explains how an offer of full-time work at Paul Revere encouraged her to move straight into the workforce after high school. Diane expresses regret over the need to contribute to the household finances through paid employment when she would have liked to have stayed home to raise her children, but explains how she was able to juggle these multiple roles through part-time work and night shifts. Diane describes her memories of being told she was not allowed to take 'boy classes' like woodworking in junior high, and speaks more generally about the changing place of women in today's society and the career world. She also touches upon her memories of dating and music as a teenager, as well as the roles of religion, health problems, and community service in her life over the years.

SM: Is it ok to record your oral history today?

DM: Sure thing.

SM: Ok. What is your full maiden name and your maiden name?

DM: My maiden name is Diane Louise ... , and I married and received the name Diane Louise Morin.

SM: And when were you born?

DM: I was born ... , nice lucky day, in 1952.

SM: And where were you born?

DM: I was born at Hahnemann – not Hahnemann, sorry – at Fairlawn Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts.

SM: And do you have any children?

DM: I have three children and two step-children.

SM: Any grandchildren?

DM: My step-children have – my one step-daughter has three, ah, two girls and a boy, and my other step-daughter has a step-daughter of her own. And that's all for now.

SM: Could you tell me about your parents?

DM: My parents were both born in Worcester, and they were born in the early 1920s.

SM: What kind of work did your mother do?

DM: My mother started out working in a bank in Worcester; I don't remember which bank it was. And she went on to work as a choir director and an organist in a couple of different churches in Worcester—Adam's Square Congregational and Bethany Congregational. And there was one that she used to play at when she was a kid in Fisherville, I think was the name of the town. And Dad went to Boy's Trade and was a welder, sheet metal worker. He started out at Norton's, worked there for a short time. Then went to Heald Machine where he stayed 'til he retired, and he went on to become the foreman of the sheet metal department.

SM: What neighborhood did you grow up in? Name any streets if you can.

DM: I grew up in the Greendale section of Worcester and grew up on Sunrise Ave., which is right off of Ararat Street.

SM: What was the area like, with the children and the setting?

DM: Oh, there were lots of children. Up on the top of Ararat Street was Norton Village, what they used to call Norton Village. My grandparents lived up there. My grandfather worked at Norton's and owned one of the houses up there. What was the question again? [laughter]

SM: What the setting was like.

DM: Ahhh yes, lots of young families in the area. There was what they call 'the project' off of Holden Street, which is a bunch of small homes where a lot of my friends grew up. And up off of Ridgewood, that was off of Ararat also, a lot of young families with lots of kids, so, had a lot of children to play with. My particular street and the area within a few streets were mostly older folk. There were a few families with kids. My best friend was one that lived on Sunrise Ave. But for the most part, to visit with my other friends I'd have to go to the top of Ararat.

SM: And what kind of things were there to do growing up?

DM: Well, I was always busy. We didn't have internet and very limited TV. And at the time TV was black and white, not colored. Um, we played jacks, jumping rope, went to ball games, softball games, baseball games down at Kendrick Field—there used to be Norton field there where they had ball games. Ah, riding bikes all over the place, reading books, playing school. We used to line up all our stuffed animals and we'd be the teacher. Ah, dressing up, and different board games we'd play. Go outside and go through the woods. There was woods in the area; it's all 190 now. But, a lot of the area I used to romp along are gone now. Housing went up on Indian Hill and 190 went in where we used to romp. My father used to do a lot of sawing with wood, making things with wood, and there'd be a lot of sawdust around, so my friends and I would play in the sawdust and make sawdust pies and all these different things with sawdust.

SM: How do you feel about the construction of the 190 when you were growing up?

DM: Oh it was kind of sad to see all of my playing area gone, but I guess that's progress so they say. I couldn't imagine the city without it; the traffic would be in a snarl. The top of Indian Hill kind of bothered me when they put all those new houses in and chopped down all the trees. I call it the Scalping of Indian Hill. All the pine trees that grew around the water tower on top of that hill were planted by my grandfather and his Boy Scout troop.

SM: So where did you attend school?

DM: I attended school—first elementary was Indian Hill School which is now Salter's. From there I went to Forest Grove Junior High, and then on to Burncoat Senior High. No college.

SM: No college...What kind of education did your parents have?

DM: Ahh, they both had high school, up through high school, and then got their education basically where they worked. Mom did a little bit of Berkeley School of Music for a short time, and then was ill so she stopped that.

SM: What's your work history like?

DM: Oh, let's see. I started—before I graduated—I started work in high school, maybe my junior year I think it was. I worked with a friend; her father owned a printing company. And he used to send out brochures for different areas and he'd have a mailing list so my job there was to basically type out envelopes and stuff them.

SM: Wait, what age did you start working?

DM: I think it was probably 16, 17, somewhere around there. Before that I got a little work experience by being a candy striper at Hahnemann Hospital. I worked there for maybe about a year—working in the coffee shops, delivering mail, flowers, that sort of

thing. And then that company that was the printing shop went out of business. He moved and made his own building and everything and just didn't have the business to pay for everything I guess, and it kind of collapsed. From there I went to another company also in Worcester by the name of Hanson Stainless Steel. It was behind City Hall. And I worked there doing inventory and secretarial work, and at that point I was also laid off from that place because they were going under, and they closed. So those two places have closed. While I was still in high school I started working for Paul Revere; they were looking for a typist. And upon graduation they offered me a full-time job, so instead of going to college I remained at Paul Revere. And back in those days companies were, well, they would train you, on-the-job training, and pay for your education more or less with in-house courses and whatnot. So, from there I was supervisor of many units on my way up to being middle management. So I was billing supervisor, correspondent supervisor, single issue supervisor, premium collections supervisor. I went on to be a group department specialist, and in that capacity I would work with the law department to make sure that we were following the law and a bunch of different things, and sometimes it required that we convert over different things and I was in charge of converting. After I had my first child I cut back a few hours, still maintained 30 hours but wanted to be home more with him. And then I got pregnant with my second child, and before I went back to work, found out I was pregnant with a third one and decided to give my notice. From there, I took three years off and decided to go back to work after those three years – part-time so I could be home with the kids. My husband worked days, so I took a night job. He got home a little bit after the time I had to leave, so I would have a sitter come in from the time that I left and the time that he got home, and I would work 'til about 10:00, 10:30. And that lasted for quite a few years, and I'm still there; my part-time job when I went back was at a supermarket, at Big Y. Started out as a cashier; went on to learn the booth, the safe, payroll, and administrative work there, and that's where I still am on a part-time basis.

SM: So, what was the setting like for women in your earlier jobs?

DM: It was a pretty good setting. Most of the education that the women went into was to either be a teacher or a nurse. That was basically the big deals. Other than that it was basically clerical work, secretarial type of work.

SM: And what was the importance of having children for you?

DM: The important of having children...[laughter]

SM: Was it something you always wanted?

DM: Well, I always wanted to have children. It's a dream of many a young women to get married, settle down, have kids. Um, nothing like it.

SM: And um, what's your opinion on daycare?

DM: It's a necessity in today's world. Back in my days, it was a little bit easier; things didn't I don't think, cost quite as much. The idea was to stay at home with the kids. Where today things cost so much—you buy a house, a family has to have two jobs, and if they do have kids, that's even more of an expense so it might be two jobs plus another job.

SM: Do you feel two incomes are important?

DM: I would wish that we didn't have to. If somebody didn't have to—oh, material things is unimportant to me. I'd rather stay home and not work and make sure the kids are watched out for, and I'll make sacrifices and do away with some of the things I'd like to do rather than have to go to work while the kids are growing up.

SM: And....

DM: Sorry!

SM: And how do you feel about being a wife and having housework and a job and taking care of children?

DM: I don't mind it. It's something that you have to do; it's a necessity. In today's world it's more or less both parents chipping in doing housework, raising the kids. It's not like in the '50s where the mom's home all the time and can do all this stuff. Where *both* parents are putting in a 40-hour day it really has to be a shared thing.

SM: So you feel like it's equal in your household?

DM: I didn't say that [laughter]. I think it *should* be equal.

SM: Do you wish your husband did more?

DM: Oh most definitely, but, like I say, it was a different generation and that idea has still been around for a while with my age of people where the men kind of think the women do all the housework.

SM: And have you done any volunteer work?

DM: Much volunteer work. As I said, I had done candy striping as a kid. Different little projects as girl scouts, we would volunteer to do. I volunteered at the school when the kids were small, working in the kindergarten for a while, for a couple years, and then a few years working in the library at the school. I'm a member of the Eastern Star, which is a charitable organization, so there's much to do there to raise money. I've been in that organization for over 30 years, so I've put in a lot of volunteer hours and effort. I'm a cancer survivor and have given much time to the cancer cause—Relay for Life walks and that sort of thing.

SM: Do you think it's important for women to volunteer and get out of the house and do things on their own for themselves?

DM: Most definitely. It gives a sense of giving back to the community.

SM: Moving on to health. What health issues have impacted your life?

DM: Hmm...oh as a kid I did have scoliosis, so it's a little bit of a self-image problem—caused me to be a little bit shy. Later on basically just within the past few years I've had cancer and went through a mastectomy and radiation, chemo, and basically that hasn't impacted too much. I did get a month off from work because the doctor required that I take a whole month. And other than that it was an inconvenience to me to just give it the time that it needed, the time sitting around for chemo, and the time being spent going for radiation. But, other than that I'm doing well and it hasn't really impacted my life.

SM: How do you feel about the choices that you've made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

DM: Um, [sings] “regrets I've had a few...” I think I would have liked to have gone on and furthered my education. I had planned on going into the navy to be a nurse originally, but when Paul Revere offered me a full-time job I took that instead. And I kind of regret I didn't go into nursing. As far as having kids, I'd had the step-children first and we waited a while, and I think I would have rather had children earlier in life than later. My last one came at 36, and as you get older, you know, it starts to wear on you running after those little ones. You're not as young as you used to be. And, I would just like to be around to see my grandkids and great-grandkids, and I don't know if I'll be able to do that.

SM: So, I know you've done work with real estate.

DM: I have a Real Estate License; I did forget to mention that. Real estate was booming around the early '80s; I did get a real estate license. But with the house and paying child support, I never really used it because we couldn't afford for me not to have a steady income. It was just too difficult to figure out when your next paycheck was going to come, and we couldn't live on one income. So I've had it for over 30 years; I still continue to pay for the fees to keep it and maybe someday I'll use it, but right now I don't see that I will.

SM: Um, what kind of advice would you give to women today and for future generations?

DM: I would say to get into the field that has your passion. If you like what you do, or if you like something, just find a way to make money at doing it. If you like your job, you'll never work a day in your life.

SM: And how do you feel about women in the past, like seeing the way your own mother raised you and your sister?

DM: Well, it was kind of an age of innocence; I kind of enjoy that era and would like to see it come back. Have it maybe the women get out and work and have more of a time working there, but I'd like to see the parents home a little bit more with the kids.

SM: And how do you feel about Worcester these days and what's going on there and the community?

DM: I still like the city life. Worcester has had it tough; they've tried different things trying to get businesses in there and get it to boom again. A lot of the old factories and whatnot are going out and they're rejuvenating that, so I think that's a good thing. There's not so many vacant buildings; they're turning them into something useful. My oncologist has been in one of the old buildings; he has his office there now and they're doing quite a bit of renovating in these places, and I think that's a good thing.

SM: So would you say you're pretty happy with life right now, or...?

DM: Life is hectic. I'd like to take a vacation sometime. But I'm pretty content with the way things are. A part-time job, trying to balance family, work, and volunteer work, and it's working out okay.

SM: How has religion had an effect on your life? Has it played any role or growing up?

DM: Ahh, let's see. Growing up I was always at the church. Um, girls scouts was held at the church, I grew up in the church choir. I was at church every Sunday morning singing in the choir. When I got married that sort of changed. We moved away, and with work and the housework and everything else, just traveling into the city to go to my own church was a bit of a haul and I just never found another church closer by because that seemed to be my roots. And if I go to church now, that is the church that I go to. I do have a religion; I do have a belief, there is a supreme being. But, I just don't believe that you have to sit in a church in the front pew every Sunday to worship God.

SM: And, how about politics? How do you feel about what's going on in the world today?

DM: Oh, I don't get too much involved in politics; it's not something that I can really get into. I do listen to the news. I do keep up on everything that is going on. A lot of things that go on in politics I don't like, but right now there's not much that I can do about it.

SM: So you have a sister but no brothers, and how was that like with a house full of women and just your father?

DM: It worked out well. I was sort of a daddy's girl, so I got the attention from dad. I'd go ice fishing with him in the winter time, bring my skates along and skate while he was fishing. We had a camper and we all used to go camping. Some of the things that he liked

to do I liked to do as well, so that's probably why I was a bit of a daddy's girl. My sister wasn't too interested in those things, so I was sort of the boy he never had but not quite.

SM: Did you have any difficult times transitioning from your childhood to adulthood?

DM: No, I don't think so. It was gradual and just took it as it came from school to work. It was a different work ethic at that time. You went into a job and you settled down and you acted mature, and you just did what you had to do.

SM: So who was your favorite musical group?

DM: My favorite musical group. It would probably have to be the Beatles. They came along in the time when I was just turning oh 12, 13, around there when you just start getting really interested in music and dances and that sort of thing. So I would have to say that all through the years they lasted a good long time, they always had good songs that I enjoyed; the longevity that lasted, so I would have to give them the heads up.

SM: Did you ever go to dances or clubs?

DM: Yes, I did. We had a few clubs in Worcester and my girl friend, my best girl friend, lived out in East Brookfield, so there were a few places out in Ware and Warren and that area that I used to attend and stay at her house during the weekends.

SM: How did you meet your husband?

DM: My best friend, the one that I used to stay at with her house, was dating a lad who was friends with him. At the time they were sharing a trailer and it was a blind date set up by her.

SM: How do you feel about women and girls today growing up in this era?

DM: I think it's a tough time. You have to have an education nowadays. So, it's not like my days where I could go on to work and learn a trade just by doing that. You really need that college education to get out there, and I think it's a tough very competitive world with few jobs now and they have it rougher than I did.

SM: Would you rather be back living in Worcester or do you like it here where it's more, a little more calm, in Holden?

DM: I don't see too much of a difference. We just live over the Worcester line in Holden and there really isn't a heck of a lot of difference only being a mile apart. But, I think the neighborhoods—it's not inner city that I grew up in. It was on the outskirts of the city area, and I don't see too much of a difference.

SM: What major like historical events occurred in Worcester while you lived there? Like I know there was the tornado.

DM: There was a tornado back in 1953. I was only one year old so I don't remember it. My sister was six at the time; she remembers it and is still fearful of storms. My mother was always fearful of storms after that and would run for the cellar. The house was damaged, the houses around us some of them completely. Some were off their foundation. Our house, the chimney came off, the back porch came off, trees through the window, one wall was blowed out, but everybody survived and rebuilt. No other major events.

SM: What challenges do you think the city still faces, and what would you improve about the city?

DM: Well, they're still growing; I think they're on the right track. They're trying to bring people into the city, trying to clean up South Main Street; it's a pretty rough neighborhood. It was great in its day. Being a rainbow girl and having our meetings at the Oddfellows Building which was next to the old mart in the South Main area, there was no problem. Us girls would meet, we'd walk around; there was no problem, no worries about violence, drugs, any of that sort of thing. That has declined and I know that they're trying to improve that area, which I think is a good thing. And rebuilding all the old factories, refurbishing them, making condos out of them—I think that's a good thing. The medical centers and the DCU Center—that has all been good bringing people into the city and just the renovations. Traffic is still a problem here and there. They put in I-90 and 290, and even at that, it's still a traffic jam come 5:00, so they might have to look into traffic issues again.

SM: Growing up how were girls treated when you were in school? Was there any different kind of treatment for them or...was it all just the same?

DM: Can't really say that there was any gender differences that I could think of. Going through school there wasn't too much of an issue. There was an issue that I can recall in junior high. I had mentioned dad liked woodworking and would do a lot with wood, and that kind of piqued my interest. And I mentioned it to my guidance counselor in junior high, that I would like to take woodworking, and they told me I couldn't. I got stuck with cooking which I did not like because I didn't like half of the food we made. Sewing, I really didn't need sewing because my grandmother taught me all I needed to know and taught me better than any school system could. So I really didn't need sewing either, which I got into and everybody didn't like me in sewing class because I'd have my dress all made while they were still pinning the pattern on the material. So that was a bit of a difference back then with the gender that we couldn't cross over into the different classes that were considered boy classes and girl classes.

SM: What was dating like back then?

DM: A little bit more innocent. Holding hands was the thing, the big thing. And a kiss was something else, which is quite unlike today. Dates were going to the movies and going to dances, basically.

SM: And men being a little more courteous...

DM: And the men much more courteous—holding doors for you, opening up the car door, pulling the chair out for you.

SM: How old were you when you were allowed to date?

DM: I was probably—well, I don't know if I was allowed to date; it was just the first time I actually had a boyfriend that I did go out on a date with—when I was a senior in high school, so I was 17, I guess. And I met him actually through his mom when I worked at Hanson Stainless Steel. She worked there also and he was going to WPI and she sort of fixed us up.

SM: What women, if any, do you feel have impacted your life or played a role in leading what you do?

DM: My mother, of course, her work ethics. I had one in particular teacher who was very good, cared about her students and how well they did, and she had an impact on my life. And, I had a lady that actually hired me at Paul Revere, and she was a mentor to me as a young kid not even out of high school yet. Looking at her work ethics, she also went through breast cancer at that time, and I learned a lot from her. And, like I say, she was my mentor.

SM: With people having to work, two parents having to work, do you think it's important for children to have the motherly figure? Some don't get it with there being single parent families with just the father sometimes.

DM: Most definitely. I think they benefit from the female touch, the sensitive side, as opposed to the male, who can be sensitive of course. But, there is definitely a difference and I think they need a mother figure if they don't have one. There's many out there, through teachers or even a friend's mother, but I think they need one and can find one—they're out there.

SM: So what was it like living in the city and having public transportation and all that?

DM: Well, I walked a lot of places when I was a kid. My mother didn't drive so Dad being at work, we didn't have a car. My grandmother did live at the top of the hill and she drove, so she took us a lot of different places if I wasn't walking. The bus was a major transportation source for me. From when I was working and still going to school, I would take the city bus from school to work, and from work I took it home. I didn't get my license 'til I was 18; my folks wouldn't let me. And when I turned 18, got my license, I did get my own car and took that to work. Working in the city, parking is a bit of an issue, but Paul Revere did have their own parking area and at that time it was free to park. Nowadays you go to work and you pay to park in those places that used to be free. So

that's a bit of a change in today's world; also in the working environment you quite often have to pay to park.

SM: So how come you had to wait 'til you were 18? Why didn't they want you driving?

DM: Oh, basically they didn't want my name on their policy in case I was in an accident or something and got sued or whatever; they didn't want to lose the house or I'm not quite sure what. But I think that driving age is a little bit too young nowadays, and I think that maybe they ought to think about raising it a bit. And maybe 18's a little bit too old, but I think they could probably raise the driving age a year.

SM: With women in the past and women today and the changes they've gone through and the advances they've made in the career place, do you think it's been a good thing or that times are going back to the way they used to be or should be?

DM: Oh, I think it's definitely a good thing. Women are in higher positions nowadays. There used to be what they called a "glass ceiling" where women could only go so far and that was it. In today's world, you see them as Vice Presidents, Presidents, in every aspect of the career place. Ultimately it's a good thing. They should be in there and they can contribute a bit, quite a bit, to any occupation.

SM: Do you think things are equal between men and women now, or do we still have some ways to go?

DM: I think women still have a ways to go. There's still some areas in some places where men and women are doing the same thing, but yet women are getting paid less for doing that and that needs to be equalized.

SM: Do you think—oh I mean—how was your salary like in your jobs? Did you find yourself being similar to the men or were you being paid less?

DM: Well, at Big Y I think everybody's paid kind of on an even scale. You enter at a certain salary and you progress at a certain rate and it's pretty much an even scale between the men and the women.

SM: Do you feel like you leave a legacy to the world?

DM: Legacy...[laughter], I would like to think that I would leave something, but I'm not quite sure what that might be. I think just by being a good person and helping out, I hope to leave that sort of a legacy, not really in career-wise. A career isn't that important to me; I feel it's more important to be a good person.

SM: Do you think you've done a good job raising your kids?

DM: Well, none of them are in jail yet, so I think I've done a pretty good job. I've heard from other people that they seem to all be good kids. So when you hear that from other

people—of course they act up at home and you sometimes wonder—but when you hear it from other people, I think you know you've done a good job.

SM: Any last comments you'd like to make?

DM: I'd just say to shoot for the stars. Again, whatever it is, whatever your passion is, go for it. And again, if you enjoy what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.

SM: Thank you for your interview.

DM: Oh, thank you for asking me.