

Interviewee: Jacqueline Scafidi
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Abstract: Jacqueline Scafidi was born in Waltham, Massachusetts on March 27, 1959. As a 1977 Waltham high school graduate, Jacqueline attended Boston College for three years. Because she was unsure of what she wanted to do, she dropped out and decided to travel to California with a friend to try and find herself at the age of 24. When she returned she went to the Center for Computer Education in Newton, Massachusetts and got certified in programming. From there she got a job freelancing as a consultant doing junior programming, and was later offered a job in 1986 with FM Global, the company she is still with today. Jacqueline started as a policy writer trainee and is now a senior consultant. Going in with absolutely no qualifications for the job and no college degree, Jacqueline slowly made her way up the ladder in the company getting much training and experience over the years. Now a Worcester, Massachusetts resident, Jacqueline enjoys spending her time with family and friends, working, and traveling. Although she has experienced some tough times in her life, Jacqueline lives life as an optimist and emphasizes the positives of every situation.

JB: Okay, can you start off by telling us your full name?

JS: Jacqueline Scafidi

JB: Is Jacqueline Scafidi your maiden name?

JS: Yes

JB: Have you ever been married?

JS: No, I have not

JB: So do you have any children?

JS: Nope

JB: Do you have any regrets about not having any children or never getting married?

JS: No I really don't

JB: Alright, and do you have any nieces or nephews?

JS: Yes, I have four nieces and four nephews.

JB: Are you close with any of them?

JS: I'm close actually to all of them, most especially my nephews that live next door.

JB: Alright that's really good. You don't get that very often; and to go back a little bit into your childhood information, where were you born?

JS: I was born in Waltham, Massachusetts.

JB: And what was the date of your birth including the year?

JS: March 27, 1959

JB: And can you describe a little bit about what life was like for you growing up?

JS: We grew up in a middle class family with my three brothers. We lived next door to four of my cousins so there was eight of us that grew up together, all went to school, all went to Waltham public schools. My dad was into baseball so he spent a lot of time at the ballpark. My mom was a stay at home mom until we all went back to school and then she worked part time.

JB: Alright, so it sounds like you were pretty close with all of your family growing up.

JS: Yup, pretty much

JB: And it continues to be that way through what you said about your nephews and nieces?

JS: Yes

JB: Alright, and can you tell us a little bit about what your parents education consisted of?

JS: Both my parents graduated from high school. Neither one of them went to college. My dad was actually offered a full boat to go to BU [Boston University] to play baseball but he turned it down to go into the navy 'cause he was one of 18 brothers and sisters so he thought he should help his parents with some money, so he opted to go into the navy and send money home than go to school.

JB: Wow, so he went to school, he went to high school, went into the navy and then you said he didn't go to school after that?

JS: Nope he did not

JB: Okay and your mother went to high school?

JS: Yup

JB: And she never went to college either?

JS: Nope she didn't go to college. She chose to go to work. She was actually a secretary for the art director at Grover Cronin, which was a big department [store] in Waltham until she had me and then she quit.

JB: Alright, did your parents stress education to you and your siblings at all growing up? What did they say? What did they want you to do?

JS: [pause] My father really, when I talked about going to college, [laughing] he basically said “girls don’t need to go to college” [laughing] and my mother just basically said “you do whatever you want to do.” You know, obviously they made sure we all got an education through high school. I mean there was just no question that we would graduate from high school and that’s about it. I mean there was no, there really wasn’t encouragement to go to college. Again, my mother said “you do what you want to do” and my father didn’t care [laughing].

JB: So going off of that, when you weren’t really, there was no stress on you to further your education, did you go to college?

JS: I did go for three years. I went to BC [Boston College]. It was actually a dream of mine to go to BC. The only problem is I really didn’t know what I wanted to major in. When I was talking to my guidance counselor I wanted to be a teacher and he told me I could aspire to much more and looking back I kinda wish I had been a teacher ‘cause I, I really think I would’ve done well at it. I went to BC for three years. Financially it was hard because I got scholarships but my parents, you know, didn’t contribute. I worked as much as I could but even back then Boston College was very expensive so I ended up leaving and going to a computer school [Center for Computer Education in Newton, [Massachusetts] and getting my certification in programming.

JB: Alright that’s excellent. Does this, did this upset your parents at all?

JS: What, that I left school?

JB: That you went to school and didn’t graduate?

JS: No it didn’t, it didn’t upset them. Again I was basically on my own, you know whatever I wanted to do. I moved to California and worked for a while. I was just kind of a free spirit [chuckling] so they, you know, they were both pretty encouraging. They never discouraged me, whatever I wanted to do.

JB: That’s always a good thing.

JS: Yup

JB: Did your parents give you any type of financial help or any support in terms of if you wanted to go to college for any of you or your brothers and sisters?

JS: No, no they made it quite clear that they couldn't afford it, and it was kind of a tricky situation because applying for financial aide, you know, the first thing they look at is parents income and you know the push back was, well you know your father makes enough money. Well, your father can be the richest man in the world. If he's not gonna give you any, [laughing] it doesn't matter, so that's why I had to apply to student loans by myself. My dad did help me when I went to computer school. He gave me the down payment to go there which was, it was excellent and it was, it was the best thing I ever did. Back in those days colleges didn't offer a lot of computer courses. I mean we're talking over 30 years ago, so it was a good move for me and I'm glad I did it.

JB: Now what type of computer courses did you take?

JS: I took all programming courses. I was certified in Fortran and Cobal, which are now days, are dead languages, but you know the minute I graduated I ended up with a job in computer programming so it was a good move, lucratively. I'm glad I did it.

JB: So you said that right out of the, once you were certified in those programs, you got a job. What did that job consist of and what was it?

JS: Actually I, I freelanced so I was a consultant, so I had a lot of different jobs. It wasn't in any one company; it was basically doing junior programming, working with new applications, programming the language, and debugging the programs. It was a lot of payroll programs; a lot of financial programs is what I worked on.

JB: Excellent that sounds really interesting. How long did you do that for?

JS: I did that for four years (pause) and then I moved to California.

JB: And at what age were, did you move to California?

JS: I was 24 (pause) when I moved to California.

JB: And was there any personal reasons that you moved out there, or just— you just wanted, you said you were a free spirit, you just wanted to go out to California and see what it was like?

JS: I just went out with a friend just to, just— we thought it would be a fun thing to do and it was a fun thing to do [chuckling]. I only stayed out there about a year and a half but it was a really good year and a half it was fun, it was fun.

JB: That's great, we'll touch a little bit more upon that but going back to your childhood, did you go through any difficult transitions moving from childhood to adulthood that you haven't mentioned? I know you said that you didn't get a lot of support from your family in terms of money, but anything else you can think of?

JS: Not really, it was a pretty normal childhood. I think, you know the growing pains that everybody has, obviously but no nothing specific that I can think of.

JB: And do you have any memories that are significant of historical events that took place while you were growing up?

JS: Hmm...Bicentennial [laughing]. That's historic! [laughing] Do you mean in terms of history or just in my life?

JB: Either or, more along the lines of history so we can get sort of a time frame of what was going on while you were growing up.

JS: Yeah I'm old okay! [laughing] Yes, I was alive for the Bicentennial. [laughing] Let me think, let me think. I was alive when JFK [John F. Kennedy] got shot. I was four years old and I remember it like yesterday because Bozo [the clown] wasn't on [laughing] and I can remember saying to my mother "what's going on?" and her trying to explain to me what happened. So I definitely remember that. What else do I remember? You know the assassinations of, of JFK and Martin Luther King. I remember distinctly when the Challenger blew up. I was actually moving up to California when that happened. I was in Oklahoma.

JB: Wow

JS: So yeah I mean there's quite a few, you know quite a few instances when I was a kid that I do remember from the historic perspective, mostly not good.

JB: Right

JS: Ya know

JB: Well when we look back at historical events that's usually, they're usually not good.

JS: Exactly

JB: Alright, so I know we touched a little bit on schooling and some work information, were you, were your parents ever, did they ever stress you about getting a job while you were in high school to help pay for anything or did you do that for personal reasons?

JS: [chuckling] When I turned 16 my dad sang, [Jacqueline in a singing voice] "happy birthday, get a job" [laughing] and I'm not lying. So I worked from the time I was 16, I can't ever remember a time when I didn't have a job. I mean there were like, when you move from job to job, there's a little, a little time frame in there and when our company merged I chose not to go with the merger initially and there was a little time there but for the most part I worked, I've worked since I was 16.

JB: Now when you were talking about the company merging is that the company you're with now?

JS: Yes

JB: Okay

JS: Yes

JB: Alright, and what high school did you go to?

JS: Waltham high

JB: And the year you graduated was?

JS: 1977

JB: Okay and did you face any challenges in school? Like were girls treated any differently when you were in school?

JS: I guess, looking back. I didn't, I didn't think so. You know, I think, you know, when I really think about it, I think boys were awarded more opportunities. I mean I remember a lot more scholarships going to boys, you know, athletic. I mean I don't think, I don't know any girl that got an athletic scholarship. With today that is just not the case. They give as many to girls as to boys, but you know back then we didn't give it a second thought it was, it was all good, ya know?

JB: That's good and you mentioned the job that you had as a freelancer in computer programming, what other jobs did you hold?

JS: In high school, like all my jobs, up until the point I moved back from California, I mean other than the computer job was all in retail and you know department managers working in retail and when I got back from California I started, actually started in the company that I'm working in today. That was back in 1986, so then I've had that job since.

JB: So you started the job you still work at today in 1986?

JS: I started in the company [smiles].

JB: In the company?

JS: A totally different job, [chuckling] but yes in the company in 1986.

JB: And the company's name is?

JS: When I started it was Arkwright [Mutual] Insurance Company in Waltham [Massachusetts], based in Waltham. After I was there for probably 10 or 12 years, I don't even remember when we merged with two other insurance companies, Allendale based out of Rhode Island and Protection based out of Illinois, and I think its Factory Mutual Engineering Corporation, us four companies combined, merged to form FM Global and that's where I am today.

JB: Alright and what is the title of your or what was the position that you started at?

JS: I started as a policy writer trainee, which is exactly what it sounds like. We took the insurance binder agreements that were written up by the underwriters in operations; we created a policy out of them to give back to the to the company to give back to our insured's.

JB: Okay and what is your position now, and how did you achieve that position?

JS: [laughs] My title right now is a senior consultant. What I really am is a business analyst. I work with the business part of FM global and the IS [Information Systems] part and I, I do the analysis for buildings and applications. The road to that was long and varied; I did 10 or 12 things in between.

JB: Alright and when did you get a promotion to the position that you're in now? How long have you been doing the consultant position?

JS: Do you want me to go through like all the jobs I've had, or I mean... When I first started it was a policy writer trainee position and I think I got started a six dollars and 75 cents per hour. I had a bunch of different positions and then they had this program for underwriters that they had only chosen eight people from the entire company and eight external college students. We had to go through extensive interviews with upper management and I was one of the ones from the company they picked. We went for six months and stayed at Babson College, and then I had a two month internship at our Greenwich, Connecticut office working on live accounts. Then I was sent out to our Dallas office. Then I got transferred back to the Waltham office and worked on an insurance program called ACSIS, which stood for Arkwright Customer Service Information System. I had a background in both policy services and underwriting, so I was able to represent these aspects of the business while we built the application. Eventually, I was made manager of the program and I was in charge of that and then when we merged in the late 90's with Allendale, Protection and Factory Mutual Research and Engineering, I was put in charge of managing the analysis and merging of all four companies computer systems. I stayed for six months, during the initial merge, then I actually left for almost a year. I had an opportunity to leave with a good severance package. I wasn't happy with the position I had been offered and so I opted to leave the company, take some time off which I hadn't had since I was 16 and then pursue other opportunities. I didn't want to rush into anything so after taking about six months, I ended up working for AIG.

JB: What does AIG stand for?

JS: AIG is a huge, huge insurance company, one of the biggest in the world. What does it stand...something insurance group. I don't know what the "A" stands for [American International Group]. I went to Boston and worked in their Boston branch as a business analyst, working on their small computer programs. I was there when a friend of mine, who I worked with in Dallas, when I was at Arkwright. I was an underwriter and he was the engineering manager. So he called me and said, "lets have lunch" and I hadn't seen him for a long time so I thought it was a social lunch. I was like "yes, absolutely!" So I met him and he said, "I want you to come work for me," and I was like "what?" He said, "I want you to come work for me". At first I thought he was kidding, but he laid out the position and it was basically what I was doing before I left the company, but for the research and engineering division of the company, which was a little different for me. I was able to get all my vested time in the company back and so it was like I didn't skip a beat and that was back in 2001 right after 9/11 when I came back. And then from there you know I got moved to a bunch of positions but that's how I got the position I am today I got, that's the position, I had moved around so much and had a bunch of positions over the years. I left at a management level and when I came back, he promoted me right back into that position so it was, it was nice, it was really nice.

JB: That is great. You did mention though that they offered you a position and you didn't like the position and that's when you left. What position did they offer you?

JS: I was working in our IS department as an analyst and in a way I don't even know if it was a lateral move because in the positions the grade levels were so different in the company that I couldn't even gauge where I was, but to me it was a giant step down and I knew I could do better so I just thanked them very kindly and withdrew. You know and, and I had to sign something that said I would stay with the merger for six months while things got settled. I fulfilled my obligation and I walked. I felt like I needed a break and it was good for me to see what is out there. It gives ya, you know you think the grass is greener on the other side but it's not always that way. I'm glad it happened.

JB: It sounds like that was a really good move for your future to see what you wanted to do. Okay so I know that you talked about the computer programming courses that you took and those must have helped a little bit to get your job at least. What other requirements did they want you to have for the jobs that you've held in order to get to where you are today?

JS: Ironically, I had no qualifications for any job that I got in this company when I got it. I just, one thing about Arkwright and FM Global is that if you voice an interest in something they will help you with it and they will help you get to where you want to go which is, you can't say that about very many companies. I mean when I was a policy writer you really didn't need many expertise, they trained you. I got many promotions after that and of course I mean business knowledge, the more knowledge you get...When I became an underwriter I had that 6 month course behind me so that gave me a good basis when I moved back from Texas because I had the policy writing expertise and underwriting expertise. They wanted a business person to kind of be a sounding board for this new computer application. I came back and I stayed with the pro- the program and eventually, because I was on it so long, my boss turned over his role to me so I became the manager of it. Now I have that background and when I, you know when Tom [friend

who she worked with in Dallas that she had lunch with] called me, I had that background, plus the underwriting background, plus the policy writing background; it just kind of snowballs. So any, any qualifications I had prior to the job weren't very many. It was 90 percent on the job learning and training and just basically asking a million questions and not taking no for an answer. I mean that's, I, even today I mean there's just so much I don't know and I make sure that I find out or at least find out who knows. That is the best way.

JB: That sounds like a really great company that you're working for.

JS: It absolutely is.

JB: It seems like they really care about their workers too and getting the best workers they can to the level they need to be at so...

JS: Absolutely

JB: So you said that your requirements were, you didn't have a lot of the requirements to begin with, so do you think it was harder to get the job without a college degree or not so much?

JS: [sighs] I'm, I'm not sure it was any harder to get one. Again, again I happened to be at the right place at the right time, again I make my business to know things so any time I was up against somebody with a college education I always had the business to fall back on you know, so all things being equal I was pretty lucky that they went with the expertise and not the college degree which isn't to say I haven't missed out on a few opportunities because I don't have a college degree. Many people that I came into this company with have since been promoted to say, an AVP [Assistant Vice President], I have not and I tend to think it's, that's why, you know because I know as much as they do. I even have a higher position than many of them, but I still don't have that title and you know and a college degree is important and you know that's, that's [emphasis on second that] kind of where it's hit me, certainly not you know promotions, certainly not salary. I mean anywhere else it's been absolutely fine and I haven't regretted that, but in that respect it's been, it's been a problem.

JB: And you said that AVP was the title that other people with the college degrees have gotten. What does AVP stand for?

JS: Assistant Vice President

JB: Okay and what are their positions? How does it differ from yours, 'cause you said that your position is higher but what are, what are their responsibilities?

JS: Higher grade level; I mean everybody gets a certain grade level and then you get the AVP title on top of whatever your grade level is, so varied positions, everybody's got varied positions. I actually worked with a woman that, at Arkwright, that all she was, was a secretary and when we merged she got a position that made her an AVP so you know again it depends where your niche is and where your expertise is and you know its just, but you know I mean I certainly, you know don't regret it at all, again give me the money. [laughing] You can call me the janitor.

[laughing] I don't care as long as I'm getting paid for a good day's work and then they pay very well so I'm not gonna complain.

JB: That's good

JS: Yup

JB: And so you mentioned your views on higher education as you've gotten older you've realized its more important, is that correct?

JS: I would say yeah, I mean that's my biggest regret that I didn't go back. I mean my intention was always to go back and get my degree always, always, always and you know life sometimes throws you a curve ball and you don't always go back. People have good intentions when they leave school for whatever the reason is and I totally you know when I left everyone's like "you're never gonna go back" and I was like "of course I will" but I never did. But I was lucky, I didn't have to, you know. What I mean, I mean I fell into a good company. I fell into a great job you know I, I, some of my best friends...I have a good friend that I've known since 2nd grade and she has her PhD and she doesn't make near the salary I make, not near, so I can't, how can you complain about that, you know but... [emphasis] On paper I mean, Doctor Hannah, you know my best friend you know, and I, I think its great and I, I commend her because I don't, I don't think personally I have the dedication to do something like that. I was, as much as I was always a great student, a really good student, always hated school; always hated it. I hated getting up for it. I hated to study. I was lucky in the fact that I didn't have to study; things came naturally to me. If I ever had to work for it I may have dropped out, honestly. I hated it that much, so, [laughing] so I don't know, you know...I just think, I mean I commend you guys. I'm so proud, of especially my nephew, Tim, [chuckles] who'll be [coughs] excuse me, the first college graduate in my family.

jB: That's very impressive

JS: I know, I know. [laughs] So, I mean my brother, Stephen [Scafidi] did get, go back and got his Associates [degree] but, so I definitely think you guys are doing the right thing and everybody that goes to college and further your career as much as you can. It just didn't work out for me and I have no complaints at all.

JB: Alright, it sounds like you got the lucky draw of the straw.

JS: I did, absolutely.

JB: Nowadays you said, back when you got your job, it was, you were in the right place at the right time. Do you think now a days its still the same, its who you know or do you think a college degree weighs really heavy on getting a job verses someone who doesn't have it?

JS: I think if your lucky enough to know somebody that's your way in, whether or not you have a college degree, but [emphasis] all things being equal not everybody knows somebody. A college degree is, will definitely get you in. When I first started at Arkwright I started with a guy

who's still in the company. He had a college degree, I didn't. We started in the same company, the same department, he started as a group leader. I started as a policy writer 'cause all things were equal. We, neither one of us knew anybody. He had the college degree, he started here [holds hand up] I started here [holds other hand below the other] so that's definitely, it's like I said, if you happen to know somebody all the power to ya 'cause I mean I don't care who you are, you know politics, who you know. As soon as you know somebody to get you in a door your golden but not everybody has that advantage, it just doesn't happen so...

JB: Okay and how do you define success in your life?

JS: [laughing] I guess it's a personal thing on how people look at it. I mean, I feel successful. I have a good job. I have a house. I have okay health. [laughing] I have a good family. I have a ton of friends. What else is there, you know? So I think I'm pretty successful?

JB: And has this definition changed over time since you were younger to now? Did you have the same view on what successful was?

JS: I think when you're younger you don't really think about success. I think you take a day at a time. You do what you can do, it's only when you get older and look back on what you've done, [laughing] that you can really determine whether or not you feel successful. You know, maybe somebody that has my lifestyle wouldn't feel successful because they don't have a Mercedes in the garage, heck I don't even have a garage, [laughing] but you know, it's just, life could be worse, let's just put it that way. [laughing]

JB: Alright and you said that you feel like, you feel like the choices that you've made in your life have made you successful. You've liked most of the choices you've made in your life and a big regret or one of the things you do regret is not going back to school. Are there, is there any other regret you have in your life about the choices you've made [pause] dealing with any type of aspect of your life?

JS: Well sure, I mean everybody's got regrets. You know again, not going back to school, there's a few career choices that I wished I had made and a few personal choices I wish I had made but [clears throat] when push comes to shove, it makes me what I am so, you know, how can you regret it?

JB: Alright, that sounds good and when, you live in Worcester [Massachusetts] now, correct?

JS: Yes I do

JB: Alright, and when did you make the move to Worcester?

JS: Actually, just a year ago. I moved last April 2008.

JB: So you were commuting from Waltham to, where is FM Global located?

JS: FM Global is in Norwood [Massachusetts]. The office I work in now is in Norwood. I was actually living in Attleboro [Massachusetts]. Before that I have moved more times than I care to even count since I was 18. I've been to California, I've been to Dallas, I've been to Connecticut, I've been to New Hampshire, I've been to Rhode Island, I've been to Pennsylvania, I've been to at least [chuckling] five or six places in Massachusetts that's, that's my thang. [laughing] I guess I come by, honestly my grandmother moved every 2 years too. Everybody I think, I think when I leave this house they'll take me out in a body bag, [laughing] that's my plan but yeah so that's, I mean that is maybe that's, maybe that's a regret that I've moved so much that I, I've never really been able to put down you know, roots anywhere I've always, Waltham is my home, it will always [emphasis] be my home but you know I guess, I guess I'm glad that I moved so much. My friend Carolyn [Greeley] says she has at least four pages of addresses for me. [laughing] she goes "I never know where the latest one is." [smiling] But when I did, when I did move here I had been looking for a house for two years so I'm glad, I'm glad I'm here. I like Worcester a lot believe it or not. I love being next door to my brother. I don't like the commute to work, it's over an hour each way every day. I do regret that. [laughing] But you know for the most part I'm very happy here.

JB: What made you decide to move to Worcester?

JS: It was actually a fluke. I had absolutely no thoughts of coming out this way at all. We had our corporate offices in Rhode Island and I was actually looking for housing closer to Rhode Island because eventually I'm gonna be transferred down to our Rhode Island office. I had been looking for a house for, oh god, probably a year and a half and my brother called me and said that his neighbors were moving and I should come look at the house, and I knew which house he was talking about cause I had been up here [speaking about Worcester] a lot and I thought it was too big for me but he said to come look at it and I walked in and I fell in love with it. It was, it's old, which I love. It's over 100 years old. It was in really good shape and it was, I mean, it was close to my family so I bought it.

JB: Alright, and how long have you lived in this house?

JS: Just a year

JB: So you said you've moved all over the country pretty much and during the time, were you able to keep contact with all of your family and stay close to them? How did you manage that when you lived in California and most of them lived around this area [speaking about New England].

JS: Mostly phone calls, back then, you know, there was no such thing as email, there was no texting, there was nothing like that, so it was, you know the good old fashioned telephone calls. I did miss the birth of a lot of my nieces and nephews 'cause I was away, which was okay. I mean I did come home often, you know, my mom called me, I called her, I would call my brothers. That's, that's basically it. That's really the only thing you could do, you know, I was lucky enough to be able to hop on a plane and come home when I felt like it, so that's what happened.

JB: And I know you said that you really enjoy living in Worcester, what are some of the benefits?

JS: You really aren't ever far from any place you need to be and the fact I live next to my brother, that's always good for a free meal every now and then [chuckles].

JB: And the downfalls to living in Worcester?

JS: I'd say the yellow trash bags that you have to buy. They get really expensive. I think that's really it. [laughing]

JB: You mentioned the yellow trash bags being such a problem for you. Can you explain what that is to people who don't live in Worcester?

JS: [smiling] Everything that you put out in the trash has to go in a yellow trash bag, a Worcester yellow trash bag, that are a dollar-fifty a piece. They don't hold anything. Any time, I'll tell you particularly, if you get something packed in those big styrofoam things you have to sit there and break all of the styrofoam up and stick it in the bag just to put it out in the trash. It [the trash bags] ends up to be very costly [laughing] just to put anything in the trash and if you have something that doesn't fit in the trash bag then trying to find a place to dump it is a pain, so yeah I could go on forever about the yellow trash bags if you want. [laughing]

JB: And what happens if you don't have the yellow trash bags and you put your trash out?

JS: Well I've been too scared to do that, [laughing] but my assumption is it stays right where you put it. I don't think they'll pick it up, honestly.

JB: That doesn't seem right [Jacqueline laughing]. So you said that before moving here you didn't have a lot of experience in Worcester, minus the baseball fields, but do you have any insight as to women's experiences in Worcester and if they're treated any differently from what you've seen just living here for a year?

JS: I haven't really noticed anything different. Maybe, maybe, I don't spend a lot of time, I don't know, seeing the sights of Worcester. When I'm home, I mean I work full time, usually when I'm home I'm doing laundry or cleaning the house or doing something so I haven't really gotten out and enjoyed, you know what Worcester has to offer. I've hit quite a few restaurants and stuff but as far as the culture and how people are treated I guess I haven't really noticed that.

JB: And how do you take, how do you take it when you tell someone you live in Worcester and they reply back with a negative remark? Have you ever had that happen?

JS: Yeah actually I have and ironically it was someone who lives in Maine, [laughing] so their response was "who lives in Worcester" and my response was "the same people who live in Maine." [laughing] So yeah I do, I do get a little ticked off because until you've been here, you know, honestly before I moved here, I kinda had a negative thought of Worcester too, you know

I've heard a lot of things. It's a big city, I've heard about the crime in Worcester, I've heard about, you know it comes with all the big city problems, but until you live here, you know you don't know, you don't get it. Yeah there's problems, but there's problems everywhere, so when people react negatively I do get kind of ticked off. I feel very protective even though I've only been here a year.

JB: Now, you do live alone?

JS: I do, with my cats.

JB: With?

JS: With my cats.

JB: And how many do you have?

JS: I have two cats; Ozzie and Lily.

JB: And how long have you had them?

JS: Just 6 months.

JB: So before they came in, or now that they're living with you, do you feel any safer, less safe? How did you feel about staying alone in the house?

JS: I have pretty much lived by myself since I've been on my own. Had roommates very briefly, didn't work out real well. I never think anything bad is gonna happen to me. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but I never feel unsafe no matter where I've been. I've never felt unsafe so, you know I feel perfectly okay here, perfectly okay.

JB: That's really nice to hear. Have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, any interests you've had in your life? How have you balanced working five days a week, coming home, having to take care of the house and still finding time for you and what you want to do outside of the home?

JS: I think it's, it's probably varied throughout the years. I mean, people's priorities change. When I was younger, you know, I always came first; my social life, my partying, what I wanted to do, my friends. Obviously, you get older, you get more responsible, you know, you have bills to pay. I've always been a workaholic; work has always been a major part of my life and sometimes it has impacted my personal life. I mean there was a whole, probably two years when I was working with this company where I traveled and I'm talking three, four, five times a month and I was never home. I enjoyed it while I was doing it but when I look back, I missed out on a lot, so yeah, your priorities change. At that point and time in my life though, I always thought I was doing the right thing and in retrospect I don't think I would change anything.

JB: That's nice that you can look back on your life and have that outlook and know that you regret very little about it. Do you have any hobbies? What do you like to do in your spare time? Do you and your friends like to do certain activities?

JS: Hobbies...I like to read. I really don't have a lot of time now, but I mean, like I said, I work a lot, even on the weekends. I might sneak in a few hours work here or there. I do love to travel. I do go out a lot with my friends, we travel a lot, we just got back from the Dominican Republic and as a matter of fact we had a really fun time. I do see my friends, I mean I have friends that I've had since kindergarten that I still see. We make it our business, no matter what everybody's life is like, to try to get together once every couple months for dinner, for a movie, just to sit and chat, so that's nice. My family I try to see as much as possible. I don't know, since I've had the house its been a little easier to try to get people together for certain things. You know, I had Christmas dinner last year, I'm having it again this year. I just had a brunch, you know a cookie swap, you know sort of fun things just to get people together. Other than that, I mean hobbies...I like to read. That's about it you know, I love, I love all sports; watching it on TV, watching my nephews play ball [baseball], I mean that's, that's my real passion, I love all sports.

JB: That's great. Moving on to a more serious topic...How have health issues impacted your life or those in your family? And do you have any personal health issues that you're willing to speak about?

JS: Yeah health, health issues have actually impacted my family a lot. Both of my parents died of cancer, lung cancer. My dad was diabetic and I'm diabetic and so are two of my brothers, so that has definitely impacted us. It's a life choice. Every day it's something you have to monitor. Every day you don't always feel well and it's just again, something you have to live with, something you have to deal with and I just, I get worried for my nieces and nephews 'cause it's a hereditary thing and its not fun.

JB: And when were you diagnosed with diabetes?

JS: I had just turned 40 and I remember when my dad was diagnosed. I think I was in ninth grade and I remember his symptoms and just for about a month I just wasn't feeling well and I just kind of got suspicious. I, I, I had a lot of the symptoms he had and just on a whim I called my doctor and I said I think I need a blood test and I was right so...

JB: And how does that impact your daily, every day life? I know you said that you have to constantly keep track, but what else has it impacted or stopped you from doing?

JS: It really, if you control it, it doesn't keep you from doing anything as long as you have a good control over it. I'm not real good with my diet. I just, not that I eat the wrong things but you're supposed to eat a lot of little meals and I'm a big meal skipper, you know. I, I don't eat breakfast sometimes, I get caught up at work and sometimes don't eat lunch and that's a real problem. I've had a real problem controlling it. You do have to take your blood sugar, you know, two to three times a day, which is, which isn't a big deal, I mean, that's okay. You do have to make sure you see a doctor every quarter. You have to make sure you get your eyes checked. You have to make sure you get the circulation in your feet checked. It's just, it's just always no

matter what your doing it's always in the back of your mind, even when we were in the Dominican we were there on an all inclusive trip, which meant as much drinks as you could drink and I had to be real, real, real careful that you know, that during the course of the day, that I checked my blood sugar and made sure that I was, I was okay to go, so it's no matter what you're doing it's always in the back of your mind.

JB: At least it seems like you've got a good handle on it, so that's always good. How do you get through tough times and what kind of positive thoughts or thoughts in general keep you going?

JS: [thinking] How do I get through tough times...I'm just a tough person I think [laughing]. You know, you just, you just do what you have to do. I think one big thing that I do no matter what's happening is I always try to take control. That makes me feel better. You know, when my parents died I'm the one that, you know, went to the funeral home and bought the plot and did what I had to do. You know, when people get sick I'm the first one there to figure it out. I think it keeps my mind off of the real problem and it gives me a task to do. I think that's how I basically control that type of thing and control my emotions, I dive right in. A lot of people, I mean, I know a lot of people that the way they control it is they divorce themselves from it you know if they don't have to think about it or see it they feel better. I'm just the opposite, I dive right in and it makes me feel better 'cause I feel like I'm doing something about it.

JB: And how old were you when your parents passed away?

JS: When my mom died I was 35. She was only 58. She was really young and my dad just died five years ago, so I was 45 maybe.

JB: And how did your family handle that? Do you tend to come closer together or does everyone have their own type of way of dealing with death in the family?

JS: When my mother died it was, it was weird, because she had been sick for so long and you know, one of my brothers just couldn't deal with it [tape stopped, flip to other side of tape] and it was really the first time that any of us had to really deal with anybody close to us dying. I mean my grandparents died, you know, I had a few uncles but this was, you know, up, close and personal. My dad happened to be in the hospital when my mom died. He was actually two rooms down from her when she passed away, which was pretty bad. He was going through his own problems. He had just had some amputation done from his diabetes, so it was a really bad time for everybody and again the way we dealt with it is we just dove right in. You know we, we did all the planning, put together a little reception afterwards, it was just, it was just something that you know, we had to do. When my dad died I felt like we were old pros by then. I mean, my grandmother had died and it just was, it was easier. It was also easier because you know my dad had been sick for so, so long. My mom died pretty fast, she was diagnosed in I think January and she died in September, so she went pretty quick. My dad was three years battling and you know, like I said he had his leg amputated. He had so many health issues that I think when his time finally came we were all decided that this was better. It was better for him and it was better for everybody, you know, when he finally went it was peaceful and you know we dealt with it. Even all the nieces and nephews, they all took place, took part in his funeral you know, the boys were

the pallbearers, the girls did readings, it was, it was you know, a family, it pulled the family really close.

JB: It's really nice when a family can look at a hard time like that as a blessing and it does bring you closer together. So to tie things up and just look at your life in general and your life experiences, what advice would you give to a woman of today and future generations just in general?

JS: Just to go for it. I mean there is [coughing] excuse me, nothing that anybody can't do. I mean, I've, I've had some obstacles, you know, in my job, some things have happened along the way that, that I guess I had always heard happened and I never thought it was possible, but I got through them and you know I've never, especially in, in my company, have never seen anything that a guy can do that a woman can't do. I mean it's just such a fallacy not to say that, you know, there's still preferential treatment out there. You know, promotions still go to men, men still make better money, I mean, it still happens, but you know what, one day it's not gonna happen. I'm not sure I'll live to see it [laughing] but I hope I do.

JB: It's refreshing to hear you say that considering we're gonna be out of college soon.

JS: Yeah [laughing]

JB: And do you feel like the life you lead impacts the lives of others and how do you feel about that?

JS: I'm sure it impacts others. I'm not sure how. [laughing] I would hope it impacts others in some way, but I don't lead it thinking it impacts others, otherwise you'd always be living for somebody else. I just do the best I can, live the life I want to live, hopefully it positively impacts others, but you know it's just, it's just what you do.

JB: That's a great way of looking at life too. And now that this whole project is to tell a fuller story of the history of women, should we make sure to include anything else about your life that we didn't discuss?

JS: Hmm you know what I don't think so. I just think, you know, looking back its been a pretty normal life, its been a pretty boring life. [laughing] I don't think I've done anything extraordinary, [pause] I don't think, but it's been fun, it's been a good ride.

JB: It sounds like it. Thank you very much for letting us interview you.

JS: Your welcome, any time.