

Interviewee: Harriette Chandler  
Interviewer: Maureen Ryan Doyle  
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Abstract: Sen. Harriette Chandler is the first woman from Worcester to be elected to the Massachusetts State Senate and has also served on the Worcester School Committee and the Massachusetts House of Representatives. She earned her undergraduate degree from Wellesley College in 1959, a Ph.D. from Clark University in 1973, and an M.B.A. from Simmons Graduate School of Management in 1983. She is married to Atty. Burton Chandler and has three children and four grandchildren. In this interview, she discusses her childhood, education, reasons for entering politics, being a woman in politics, and the political issues she has championed for the citizens she represents.

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MRD: Thank you so much for joining us today and I'd like to start by talking about your career and what motivated you. You clearly have a very successful career in politics and why did you choose politics? Was it always your goal or was it something that evolved over time?

HC: This was a very late career goal. I started as a teacher when that was one of the few jobs I could have gotten when I graduated from college. And because I had to have a master's degree to stay as a teacher I went on to get a master's degree from Clark [University] and they were kind enough to give me fellowships and other stipends along the way. And they also allowed me to experiment. They experimented with *me* and allowed me to go on for a doctorate – a Ph.D. in International Relations and Government. And I did that on a part-time basis so that I finished and I had by that point when I finished I had three children and I came out of my graduate work at a very bad time job wise and I decided that I really, it was hard to get a teaching job and I was very limited to where I could teach. I wanted to teach at the college level and with all the schools here, there were very few jobs. I taught at Clark, I taught at WPI, and I taught at Tufts and I decided I really wanted to get into the not-for-profit world and I took a job as the Executive Director of the National Women's Committee at Brandeis. And after working there for a few years, I decided I really wanted to get an M.B.A. So I've had a variety of jobs. That is very typical of someone my age. We never expected to work – full-time work – careers were really not expected. And I sort of fell by happenstance from one thing to another and when after I got my M.B.A. I went to work for in high tech and commuted to Boston every day. And I would have been happily there forever. I had an International Relations/Government background, but that – a graduate education – prepares you for how to ask the right questions and know how to do research – you can do anything with that. It's good training for almost anything.

I'm an only child. My mother became ill. As a result of that, I brought her up here from Bloomington, Delaware where she lived and I decided that life was very short and I quit my job

to take care of my mother and I started reading the Worcester papers every single day because I was here and I noticed that they were very concerned at that time – this was in 1990 – about the fact that schools were so bad that realtors were having trouble selling homes, getting homes sold, and attracting people to live in Worcester. And so I thought, gee I have a great education, and I, maybe I could be of some help and so I decided to run for the School Committee. My mother died just before I ran and the rest is history as they say. Once I was on the School Committee I served on the Governor's Commission on the Common Quarter which was the educational reform bill done in 1993 and I thought this was wonderful. I can do the whole state level – what I do in Worcester I can do at the whole state level I could do so much for education. So there really wasn't an empty seat when I started. I started to run for the School Committee without there being an empty seat and ultimately I won my seat – I came in second. 120 votes from first place which is pretty remarkable for somebody running for the first time and not real knowing what they're doing.

I served one and a half terms on the School Committee – three years and at that point, a House seat became available, Kevin Sullivan decided to run for Congress and there was an open seat. And I thought, wow, if I can do that, look what I could do at a larger level. And I won the seat, and they had never had a woman. That's not true – they had one woman back in 1922 right after women got the vote, but they hadn't had one since that time [from Worcester]. I heard an awful lot of things -- wonderful post-graduate education – politics has been wonderful that way [laughs]. I served three terms in the House and then there was an open seat again. Happenstance, I think, unfortunately is the way women in my generation looked at everything. We didn't plan too far ahead, we didn't have any career goals. Getting married and having children, being a volunteer were just about all we were taught to do. So I ran for that Senate seat and it was a brutal race, and I won. I beat Joe Early's son which was kind of an incredible thing. And it proved to me you could do anything you really want to do if you work hard enough. I served five terms in the Senate. I was obviously the first woman to run from Worcester and win a Senate seat. I'm running for my sixth term now.

MRD: You mentioned that the Senate race was a brutal race. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

HC: Well, a brutal race in the sense that I was running against the son of a – I should say that almost each of the races I have run have been for the first time – always the first time is the hardest – have been difficult races because you're meeting a whole new population of constituents. You're listening to their concerns and their issues and you're learning at the same time as you're running. The reason the Senate race was so difficult was because I was running against the I don't how many times congressman's son who is a wonderful person. He's become a good friend – he certainly wasn't at that time, [laughs] but no opponent is your good friend. His father had done wonderful things for so many people throughout my district and people don't forget nice things that are done for them. So, it was a tough race. I mean I'm an only child, my husband's an only child, I don't have that large family. Basically I wasn't born and brought up in Worcester. I've lived here a long time now, but I'm not a Worcester native. It was a difficult race because we had all the chits of his father. I don't mean to say that in a demeaning way – that's

just the way it is in politics. And frankly, Joe Jr. is a nice guy. So that's why it was such a brutal race.

MRD: Did you find as you were, as you mentioned here you were the first woman from Worcester elected to the State Senate, did you find an anti-woman feeling as you were campaigning.

HC: No, I never had that. I've been very fortunate in that. I think that the School Committee was always thought of as a place where women could serve and serve well and yet I had been the first woman to run for that School Committee in probably eight to ten years. And you don't think of it that way now because there are three women on that School Committee or four women whatever it is now. But that's the way it was then. There was a little bit of, among my colleagues, a little bit of a, "What she doing here?" kind of thing, but for the House and the Senate, no. Maybe because I'm older that too helps. I'm not a young girl. I have a track record, by this point in the Senate, I have a track record. I've served as Chair of the Health Care Committee in the House which is a very significant position and I've been fortunate enough to be able to do a number of very good things including the Prescription Advantage Program that we have in Massachusetts; CHIPS which is the Children's Health Insurance Programs; I've done a number of things and I did not find it to be so [??]

MRD: You had mentioned that women of your generation, the expectation to marry, have children, to volunteer – clearly you've taken a different path.

HC: I have.

MRD: How have you balanced the different priorities and responsibilities in your life as you've gone down this chosen path?

HC: Well, I think I've always worked, interestingly enough. I was going to school when my children were young. I was getting my Ph.D. when the children were young. I was just brought up to try to be as good a mother and as good a wife as possible and try to go to my children's games and sort of all fit in and probably the person who suffers is *me* because that's the way it works. I know I'm not unusual in this because when I get together with classmates – and I do, in fact we're having a mini-reunion on Monday, actually the whole week. I have to come back and I have all kinds of other things to do. I hear it from my other classmates and one of my classmates, Madeleine Albright who was a good friend of mine in college, and the same sort of happenstance with her. I know that sounds – "Could that really be true?" – it really was. She started to go to school just like I started to go to school and in the process her husband ran off with somebody else which was a brutal blow. You try to do the best you can. I think every once in a while I say if only I had a wife so I can do all those things that men do. I think the other difference is that women I've found -- and I've been Chair of the Women's Caucus in the past so I hear these things over and over again -- but women are very hesitant to run for office. It's almost as though there's this huge barrier and they start thinking about how much money they have to raise, they start thinking about do they have enough of a base, they also, probably

because I know this is the way my mind works – do I have the right set of talents for this? Do I have the right degrees? I mean women think we can solve everything by going to school and getting another degree. The truth of the matter is that men don't think of this at all. They graduate from college and if they want to run they run [laughs] and it sort of works out. But women don't think that way. It's all got to be more carefully planned out and that is one of the reasons I think that women have – we have about a quarter of the legislature are women and that is about the same percentage that we've had for the entire sixteen years I've been there. We have a woman now who is President of the Senate, but I don't think that means it is less easy to become that, I think a variety of reasons. But women just have to have all their ducks in a row and they have to be certain it's in order before they go on. And for some women there are mentors. I really didn't have much in the way of mentoring. I picked up mentors along the way probably. I wouldn't say they were mentors, I would say more that they are people who were helpful. I didn't have anyone guiding my career. I come from a very apolitical family and politics is not in my blood believe me [laughs] not at all. In fact, to my family I'm kind of an anomaly.

MRD: Now, you talk about women feeling they need to have their ducks in a row, and hesitant to run, yet it seems that you were not hesitant to run when you looked at what was happening in Worcester and you felt you could be useful on the School Committee. Why do you think that was? Why were you not hesitant?

HC: I think I was a little older and if you look at the careers of, if you look at the women in the legislature, we're all a little bit older. They had their children first, they're a little bit older. I would bet the average age is closer to 52, 54. I was 54 when I entered the legislature. So, that makes a huge difference. I didn't have children's games to go to. I didn't have those things and I would find it very difficult. I think women find this is a 24/7 job and you're on 24 hours a day. It's 52 weeks a year. I can go away on vacation and go to a grocery store and find constituents who come up and ask me all kinds of questions. And maybe it's the nurturing, the fact that I'm a mother, I listen. I try to listen as much as I possibly can and truly understand. I think my graduate education has made me a problem solver. I think that's a tremendous help to me. I have discovered, and I don't think I knew it originally, but I have discovered in recent years that I'm a problem solver and I have the ability to bring people together. And bringing people together is a very feminine trait. You can get women, you can get people – mine has never been – I've never been a woman's candidate because you don't win on that. I've absolutely advocated for women's issues. My first major bill was the 48-hour Delivery Bill for women who had a baby and, until then, they were allowed to stay in the maternity ward one midnight and they had to go home. Two midnights for a Caesarean – that's ridiculous. And it takes a woman maybe to understand how ridiculous it is [laughs]. So, I've done that. I did a major bill this year. I didn't think it was as major as it's obviously become, but it's a bill that allowed women or people, people to get a restraining order against someone who is not a family member or with whom they have not had a dating relationship. And we've had more and more of these because – especially in a community like Worcester or Boston with so many colleges – young women are stalked by strangers basically or people they work with. They couldn't get a restraining order before that. The Jane Society and a whole group of women's organizations against domestic violence see this as a major, major effort. I also was the lead sponsor – as you get older and been there longer [laughs]

you get to be lead sponsor on interesting bills – but I was the lead sponsor on the bill that extended buffer zones so that we were able to have at Planned Parenthood or abortion clinics generally, a wider path so nobody could get hurt because they were absolutely protesters –and everybody has the right to protest – but they were almost on top of the cars. And it was dangerous. There’s always a danger of somebody getting hurt. So I did that bill this year, excuse me, I did that bill two years ago. And I also did, I was the lead sponsor on CORI , the one he’s [Governor Deval Patrick] just signed. You wouldn’t expect me to be the lead sponsor on CORI, but it’s a Worcester bill actually because we have these ex-prisoners and I listened to them and I saw the things they were going through. They did the crime, they served the time, men and women were, if they had a felony, they had fifteen years without their record being sealed and they couldn’t get jobs, they couldn’t get housing. They carried this like a scarlet letter wherever they went and this is a major, major change for a great many people.

MRD: Well, you certainly have accomplished a lot.

HC: [laughs] I’ve enjoyed it!

MRD: Has it been fun? Tell us about that?

HC: I’ve loved every moment of it. I love helping people. What better way of helping people than changing some of the laws under which they live. I like even helping people make sure that they get their Medicaid money. I – one of the major bills I did two years ago that finally came through last year was a bill to allow dental hygienists to practice what they’re trained to practice teeth cleaning and dental hygiene without a dentist present so that they can go into schools, so that they can go into nursing homes – nobody ever went there – and do what they’re trained to do. So a very major, major thing because it meant that dental hygienists for the first time able to have -- and I see the pattern for the future – practices, practices of their own. It also allowed dental assistants to be able to go and be more than someone who just walks in off the street and gets trained by a dentist and is almost a servant – but an indentured servant who really has a problem getting another job just because the person who trained them is the only source of any kind of recommendation and they’re afraid to leave. Now, they can leave. Now if they have educational credits they have an opportunity and obviously hygienists and dental assistants are largely women.

Also have been very interested in senior citizens probably because the of face of poverty for seniors, women are the ones who live longer so we’ve, I’ve been very involved in that. We just passed a bill – we’ve been pushing for a long time – that will encourage people to buy long-term care insurance so that particularly women they’re not going to outlive their money and go onto Medicaid an be wards of the state. There’s also, it’s not as altruistic as it sounds because the state can’t afford that.

MRD: You talked about how this has been fun for you.

HC: Oh, yeah!

MRD: Is there any part that isn't fun?

HC: It's hard to raise money. You hate to keep – you feel like you're going to people over and over again as a charitable organization [laughs] with a tin cup in your hand asking for money. That's not, that's not. There are some bills that you deal with that you really agonize over and there are others that you know you did the right thing. My rule of thumb is, in times of conscience, in bills involving conscience, I have to feel that I can get up the next morning, look myself in the mirror and say, "This is the reason I voted the way I did and I'm comfortable with that." If I can't say that, I can't vote that way. And there are always bills like that.

MRD: Can you give us an example of a bill that you did agonize over?

HC: [laughs] There are a lot like that! This recent casino bill is very difficult for me. It's very difficult because I really am not a gambler. [laughs] not just "really not" – I'm not a gambler! And my reasoning was basically there's such a high unemployment rate. I presided at a hearing on the legislation and the audience was three quarters filled with unemployed workers. People who had not worked for a year, two years, and didn't see much hope. These casinos, as bad as they might be, are supposed to offer about 15,000 jobs. We haven't been able to lure any company to Massachusetts or grow any company in Massachusetts to provide that kind of job. We're also losing approximately a billion dollars a year across the border to Connecticut in terms of revenues in gambling. So, it's hard to know the right thing to do. I ultimately voted for the bill because as I read the bill I believed that the governor had the power to shape the commission and the authorizing legislation gave that commission the option of giving out zero, one, or two licenses so there's an option there. And I figured the governor would have the ability to appoint people who felt the way he did. He is not in favor of slots. I'm really not either and not that there aren't slots in a gambling casino, but at least the gambling casino offers jobs. Slot parlors don't. So, for me it was not an easy issue.

Another issue that I have to be honest with you that I've changed my mind about during the 16 years I've been in office is the death penalty. I started out being in favor of the death penalty and the more I learned and the more I read, the more I was aware that the death penalty certainly didn't stop anybody from committing a crime of that kind and quite frankly there were a lot of people who were probably put to death who were innocent and so I basically changed my mind. I think people should be able to change their minds and that you should be able to listen, hear the arguments, and make informed decisions even if they are different from what you thought in the past. One area that I'm very proud of and I have never regretted and look upon with a sense of real pride is the gay marriage issue. They've created families. They're people who've lived together for years. These are not flighty young people. Many have lived together for along time. They're in their 50s, they're in their 60s, and what we've done is make them feel like we understand they are different and we acknowledge that difference and give them rights to a relationship. So, that is where I stand and these are moral dilemmas. In those cases, there is not any party discipline really – no one's going to try to twist your arm because these are things that you have to live with. And you can't live with something that's been forced upon you.

MRD: Going back to what you were saying about the death penalty, how you were originally in favor and after learning more and becoming more informed you realized that that was a position that you could no longer hold. You changed your position. How did your constituents react to that? Were they understanding of the change?

HC: I think so, I think so. You know, I try to be extremely transparent with everything I do. You get, you can't fool the public and if you think you can you're just raising problems in your own life. The most difficult thing for me was to determine how I was going to make that change and not look like I couldn't make up my mind what I wanted to do. But I think people understand that. At the time I did it, it about six years ago, it might have been eight years ago, we were getting a lot of information from other states about people who were put to death and then, frankly, they discovered that they weren't the guilty party. Also the development, the use of DNA had made an enormous difference. We have technology now that we didn't have originally. So I think people understand that and I think people understand – I'm running for election, we'll find out if they understand – I think they understand that you can only do the best job that you can do. You can't be something that you aren't. And you can't stay in the public eye as a legislator is, if you're not telling the truth to the people you represent. You've got to be pretty solid, there aren't too many secrets you can have. If I changed every day, I think that would be a different story. And clearly this issue of the slots, they picked up on me as they should. But I was planning on voting against those slots and then I read the bill that had just come out that morning. So, I have to try to explain it. Sometimes it's not a slogan that you could put on a bumper sticker – most times, it's much more complicated than that. Maybe because of my academic background, maybe I elaborated too much. I wish I could speak in short statements, but that's just not who I am.

MRD: Your vote on the casino though, certainly your addressing the high unemployment we have..

HC: It's a great concern.

MRD: It's a great concern for all people in Massachusetts and certainly in Worcester. As you look at the city of Worcester, in addition to unemployment, what do you see as some of the biggest challenges the Worcester area faces right now?

HC: Well, I look at Worcester, let me turn it around in a positive way, if you don't mind.

MRD: Fine

HC: I look at things that I've had a part in the sixteen years that I've been here, been in politics, and one of the first things I see is the DCU Center that I was involved in. There's nothing that has gone on here that I haven't played a part in if it had something to do with the state. So, the DCU Center is certainly one. When I became chairman of the Healthcare Committee, I presided over the merger of UMass and Memorial [hospitals] which was a very complicated issue.

Complicated to bring a public and private institution together and to determine how we were going to bring in nurses who worked in two different institutions with two different pay scales – really two different everything! To bring them together. If we hadn't done it, it was my feeling, and I think people would agree with me, that one or the other or both would go out of business. It was a terrible time for hospitals and either they would go out of business or they would have to merge with a Boston hospital and that would have been a disastrous thing for Worcester. Here we have the field of healthcare is our major industry in Worcester and so I feel by bringing them together, by making both stronger -- it's really one plus one equals three in their case -- it was more than just each of them coming together. The synergy was very positive. I've seen the buildup of UMass Medical School. I've been very involved in that. I'm trying to think of all the other things that we've done. We got back money, the \$25,000,000 is the foundation for CitySquare. That will now be used – the demolition is about to begin. We've seen the train station and bringing the trains in. I was the Vice Chair of Transportation and I pushed hard for that and also worked hard to get – I'll say this and you're going to laugh because you read the papers today – but the Worcester Transit Authority, they were in danger of bankruptcy. We turned that around. We found a whole source of money that no one had applied for and we got them moving. We got the credit in the state to back them – not just Worcester but all the transit authorities, so that they are now much more solvent than they were, much, much more solvent. I really see a great many things. When I was on the School Committee, a number of schools, I think of Roosevelt School and North High School, I was involved in getting money for that. I just toured that yesterday and I used to teach there when I first came to Worcester when it was over on Salisbury Street. So, there are a great many things. I've been very active and honored by the Worcester Cultural Commission, actually the Massachusetts Cultural Commission for supporting the arts. The arts are much more important than we give it credit for in Worcester. Our arts and arts community keep us from being a Lawrence or a Haverhill or a Lynn or a Springfield. We're proud of those arts and we want to keep them strong and I've worked hard to do that.

MRD: How would you define success personally?

HC: I don't know. I really don't know. I don't think of it as success in that way –I think it's getting a job done. Very goal oriented, maybe that's what success is to me – getting a job done. And I don't dwell on it too often because I'm off to the next issue that I have. So what I did yesterday – and that's true of politics anyway – what you did yesterday isn't important – what are you going to do today and tomorrow. That's the important thing. That, I think, is getting the job done and seeing it to fruition.

MRD: Based on your life experience, what recommendations, what advice would you give to young women today for their futures? What could they learn from you?

HC: I think they look at life differently. I think they look at life in terms of goals that we just – they have a different set of goals than certainly I had. I don't know whether family is as important as it was to my generation – as it is still to my generation. I look upon my husband of



fifty-one years, and my children, and my grandchildren as probably being my biggest success. When each of them is happy and doing what they want to do, that's what success really is about.

MRD: I'd like to touch on that briefly and get the names of your husband, children, and you mentioned grandchildren. If we could have that on the record as well.

HC: Surely. My husband is Burton Chandler. He's an attorney in Worcester. I have three children: Frank Chandler who's married to Suzanne Cohen Chandler and they have two children, Eva and Nathan, ages right now seven and five. I have a daughter who is Victoria Chandler, she's married to Ben Silver and her name is actually Victoria Chandler Silver. She uses her husband's name and she has two children, Matthew who is six years old and Peter who is four years old. And I have, my youngest son is Edward Chandler. And each of them is productive, hard-working people and I'm very proud.

MRD: It sounds like you have every reason to be proud of them.

HC: I really feel that way. That's really success.

MRD: You had mentioned earlier in the interview that you did not grow up in Worcester. Can you tell us a little about your early years and where you did grow up?

HC: Sure, I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, but I grew up in Bloomington, Delaware. My mother was a nurse and my father was a lawyer and I'm an only child. And I think that had an enormous impact on me. My mother and father both made me feel I could do anything I put my mind to and I really believed that I could do anything. And as I've grown older, I think that it's true. If you try your hardest, you can do things. I don't think I was ever pigeon-holed in any way in terms of any limitations of what I could or couldn't do and I had an excellent education. They took care of my college education and anything after that I took care of myself with fellowships and scholarships. I graduated from Wellesley College with a bachelor of arts degree and came to Worcester and taught at North High School in the afternoon session at the old North High School, they are now apartments across from the Worcester Art Museum. And I taught social studies, and it's interesting because – I only taught for two years, but several of my students I see on a rather regular basis. Phil Palmieri was my student, Ginger Navickas from the Y was my student, a woman who's very involved in West Boylston who was my student. And you know it's one of those things for teachers to see their students succeed – That's success. It's a wonderful, wonderful feeling.

Because I had to get a master's degree, I went to Clark. They were very kind to let me go for – they encouraged me to go full-time. I took one course the first year and I literally had to save my money because between the two of us, my husband and I, were making all of \$7,500 a year. And I really had to put aside money to be able to go to Clark and so I could only take one course that first year. And then Clark gave me a full tuition scholarship and a teaching assistantship and that's how I got my master's degree at Clark. And then I went back to school after I already had my first child by the time I got my master's degree and I really wanted to go back and get aPh.D.

Clark was willing to fund it and let me go on a part-time basis. It took me seven years to get a Ph.D. I did my doctoral dissertation on American/Soviet relations during World War II using the American Embassy in the Soviet Union as the focus of what relationships were like between the Hot War and the Cold War. Fascinating. I had several fellowships that allowed me to do research. The Embassy was an incredible place because Harrison Salisbury was there, George McKenna was there. It was – Averell Harriman was the ambassador -- and I had the chance with the fellowships to interview all these people. So, it was really a remarkable opportunity for me to go in and stay there for long periods of time. It was really a fascinating period and a fascinating study.

After I finished my Ph.D. I taught at Clark, and I taught at WPI, and I taught at Tufts. But I was really determined to go into the for-profit sector and I took a job at Brandeis as the director of their 65,000-member National Women's Committee. So, I've had my experience by fire [laughs] working with a lot of women at a very interesting time when women were going into the workforce in the 70s and early 80s, when women were starting to go into the workforce in greater numbers. And the Women's Committee were volunteers – it was a very difficult, difficult time for women. I also had had a fellowship at Radcliffe Institute that allowed me to participate fully in the Bunting Fellows program and it was wonderful and supportive for me to find that there were other women who felt as I did that we wanted to work outside the home. That wasn't a period when a lot of women were doing that. I was able to hear the scholarship that was being done by women and it was not an easy time. From there, I started to get an M.B.A [Laughs] I mean this is typical of a woman who sees degrees as the steppingstones in a career. Believe me you don't need these degrees, but I didn't know that at the time and I had no role models to follow so I had to get an M.B.A.! Because the Ph.D. was a handicap if you're going to work in the private sector. People think : "Ivory tower --what do you know about the real world?" kind of situation. So, I got an M.B.A. but I got it at Simmons Graduate School of Management, a women's school. So I had two women's programs, Wellesley and Simmons. Fascinating, fascinating place to go to get a business degree. Case studies were women's case studies, because we don't know the rules of the game, basically, an opportunity to learn all the things that I would never have...

Tape change

HC: So, I got my M.B.A. and went to work in high tech. I told you about my mother becoming sick and I'd work there eight to ten years by that point and left. That was the start of my third career in politics. I'm not sure if I had been able to do as much, to move as quickly, maybe have as much confidence if I had been young – younger, less experienced, had children to worry about. You can't be two places at the same time. And Boston is still an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes away and I wanted to be with my children. I think it came at the right time for me.

MRD: I have an eye on the time, I want to get you out of here on time. But I have one last question. And that's simply is there something else that you would like to tell us that perhaps we did not ask you? Something else about your life that you want to make sure is in the record?

HC: I guess I should say I had very loving parents who encouraged me, and that, I think, made a lot of difference. I was not, as I said, I was always encouraged to do whatever I felt I could do, but to be the best I could be. That's something I always encouraged other people to do. I've had lots of young people as interns, particularly I do this with women, I've encouraged them to just go on because it's very important to not be afraid to try things. That's very important, too. We tend to be, as women, a little more recalcitrant about putting ourselves out there, but you know nothing ventured, nothing gained. I think that makes a difference. I guess I've always been achievement oriented and I – nothing was planned. I would fend a little better [laughs] if I had planned it. But I think I've had some wonderful opportunities to do some wonderful things. I just came back in April from a trip, there were four of us who went and I was the only woman, who went to the Ukraine to talk about democracy and what it means to be in elected office and women in Ukraine really have to struggle and they've struggled because they are really not a democracy. They have the democratic façade, but the roots are not there, nor have they been there for years, for generations. And the fact that they saw a woman, me, I think made a difference because if women see someone who has been able to be elected, who has been able to do these things, it makes a huge difference.

Also, in the midst of all this, my first year of politics, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. And I was very concerned -- first that I was going to die, and second I was concerned that people would think I was going to die and that I probably should give up my position. This was within eight weeks of being elected. My mother had just died of breast cancer so I was very concerned. It was a difficult time for me because I had a very aggressive form of breast cancer and I had aggressive treatment and it isn't easy wearing a wig and not wanting anybody to know that you were sick. I didn't want anybody to know anything. So, I planned my chemo on Thursday late afternoons so that maybe might take off Friday, and by Monday I was all ready, but all that was not easy. I don't think, I think I was concerned that I was the first woman on that School Committee in a long time and I didn't want people to think she gets sick, she can't handle it. I think I was sensitive to when you're the first you want to do the best you can, you want to work probably twice as hard in order to be able to do that, but I'm sure this is what you've heard from other two hundred women you've interviewed. There's a tremendous pressure to do the best you can.

MRD: Well, we thank you very much. That was wonderful.

HC: You're welcome