

Interviewee: Louise Clarke

Interviewers: Hannah-Lee Hilsman and Paula DeCosta

Date: November 18, 2010

Place: Worcester, Massachusetts

Transcribers: Hannah-Lee Hilsman and Paula DeCosta

Overseen by: Dr. Carl Keyes and Dr. Maryanne Leone, Assumption College

Abstract:

Louise Clarke was born in Hadwen Park, Worcester in 1952 and attended Worcester public schools throughout her life. She continues to live and work in the city of Worcester with her family. After Louise finished her studies, she started a family and got involved in volunteer work in the community. This volunteer work led her to her current position working for the Worcester Public School System which is an important part of her life. In this interview, Louise discusses the importance of the role of the “regular woman” in the history of women that is being told today. Louise shares that the regular woman and the relationships she builds with others, displays the true stories of women in history. The relationships that Louise built with her family, and the networking she was involved in, shaped her character and make her story unique.

HH: We are completing a city wide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women’s Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women’s education, health work, and politics/community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences as a woman and how it has shaped your life. Thank you for your help with this important project!

PD: Our first question is, what is your full maiden name and if applicable your married name?

LC: My full maiden name is Louise Ida Lehtola. And my married name is Clarke, with an e [laughs]. It’s always Clarke with an e, that’s the name [laughs].

HH: When were you born?

LC: I was born March 27, 1952 in Worcester.

PD: Were you ever married, yes?

LC: Yes

PD: What is the name of your current husband?

LC: Jeffrey Clarke, current and only.

HH: Where did you meet?

LC: We met through mutual friends, and we went on a blind date. Actually my husband was drying his sweater with a hair dryer [laughs] and he was in his mother's living room and the other fellow picked me up for this double date. We had childhood friends who knew each other, and us.

HH: Do you have any children?

LC: I do, I have two. I have a daughter who is 33, she lives in Amherst. She is married and has two little boys. I have a son who is 31 who is also married and lives in Jefferson and he also has two little boys.

PD: Tell me about your parents.

LC: My parents were first generation Finnish folks, their parents, all of my grandparents, came from Finland so I'm a blue blood. They left Finland hoping to find a better life in America; life was tough on the farm. I think a lot of people... I think they thought they would go back, but they just came and stayed. My mother had 10 brothers and sisters, and my father had six brothers and sisters, so they came from large families. My father went to Boy's Trade and became a tool and dye maker which I think is a skill that probably doesn't exist anymore with technology. My mother went to Commerce High School and graduated, and then pretty much stayed home with us when we were kids. I have a brother who lives in Spencer.

HH: So you said you were born in Worcester. Did you grow up in Worcester and spend your whole life here?

LC: I did. I grew up in an area called Hadwen Park which---it's a nice area of Worcester, it's kind of like isolated. You're still in Worcester, but it's almost in Auburn. I went to the Heard Street School and then what was Woodland Street Preparatory School for seventh and eighth grade. And then I graduated from South High School. I went to Hadwen Park Congregational Church. And where I grew up the neighborhood pretty much centered around the church and the little grocery store. It was a nice community, I look back and I'm happy I grew up there.

PD: Were a lot of people in the community Finnish?

LC: No, not in that community, no. We had---the Finnish population was in a area called Belmont Hill in Quinsigamond Village---but we had... A friend of my mother's moved out to the Hadwen Park area, and she liked it so that's why we moved out that way.

PD: What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

LC: Well, there are a lot more cars than when I was growing up [laughs] that's for sure. When I was, you know, really little, every family had one car, if that many. And now people have---each household has two or three cars. On the street where I grew up, it was a neighborhood that had been built up in the '60s cause of the baby boom. There were kids in every house, you know at least two or three or four. And where we live now it's not the case. There aren't children in most

of the houses. So after school we would go out and play with the other kids. And now I think the children have to be transported to visit their friends. I've seen the city change a lot. We have a huge immigrant population coming in and we had been stable from the influx of the early 1900s for a long time. And I think the last couple of decades we've had a lot of immigrants come in. I've seen---you know, there's been a lot of urban development. What I think the sad part that I see about Worcester is we used to have a very robust downtown area, and now that's sort of a skeleton of what it used to be. On Saturdays we used to--- a friend of mine and I would take the bus and go downtown and shop, go from one store to the next, have lunch and then go home. And there's really nothing there anymore. We have to go to malls to go shopping, so hopefully we'll see that redevelop. But I'd like to see that in my lifetime, to see it come back. I think that's pretty much, I don't know any other area you can think of?

HH: No we just—I know you said you wished that the downtown could be the same that it was. Was there anything else you wish had stayed the same or any other changes that you do like?

LC: Let me see, staying the same, I think it's the downtown that I just, I feel badly about. Other changes that I do like... It's really hard for me to say that and I think that Clark University has done a great job. I think the colleges have grown. I think that's a real positive. They are really nice anchors. And if you think about Worcester, we have a college almost in every neighborhood, which is... I don't think that many cities can boast of that. So I think that's a good thing. I think we've seen some good new industries come in, the biotech industries they really help the city. But I think we've lost a lot of industry too, the manufacturers have all left. The high tech manufacturers are all here and there will be biotech—more manufacturing but I think the old heavy industrial manufacturers are gone. We've lost a lot of families that were anchors in the city because of that. Businesses have been sold.

PD: What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?

LC: Well, I think the cost of living is reasonable compared to some of the other big cities in New England. I think we are becoming a bedroom of Boston, and especially if we see the rail improvements, we'll have more people commuting. My husband and I always said that we liked Worcester because it's an hour to a big city or cities like Boston. In an hour you can be at a pretty decent ski place, in an hour you can be at the ocean, so I think there is accessibility to a lot of different things. I think Worcester is still a pretty city, too. I mean, you go on [route] 290 and you drive through Worcester and you think ick, you know yuck, but then you come up here, and what a beautiful neighborhood this is. So I think we still have some stable beautiful neighborhoods. And the other thing that I think has been interesting, is in my growing up in Worcester, is the ethnicity. And we've kept some of the flavor of that. We still have Shrewsbury Street with the Italian restaurants. And I still belong to a Finnish organization. So I think the ethnic groups, although we co-exist very nicely, I think that we still have the Irish clubs and I think it's fun to celebrate all of those different ethnicities.

HH: What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been, generally?

LC: Wow...I still am not sure that there is parity with regard to wages in Worcester. I think there are a few women in top CEO positions, but not that many compared to what it could be. So I think there is still a bit of a glass ceiling. I think women's access to education has been very good here...with regard to the---I guess that's about it. You know if we look at education, that's still a heavy, heavily female populated occupation... I don't know, I guess, I don't know---good I guess. I mean there are groups that women can belong to. We have the YWCA, girls growing up--I went to Girls Inc.[Incorporated].There are organizations like Women's Worcester--- Worcester Women's History Project. So you know I think there are a lot of social networks that women can join in Worcester. When I was younger, I belonged---ell I still belong---to the Junior League. So I mean if you want to get involved and network through the community, there are roots for networking.

PD: Alright we are moving on to education, so where did you attend school?

LC: I went through the Worcester Public Schools as I mentioned, and then I went to UMass Amherst and then I got my master's degree at Anna Maria College. And I've done some graduate work through UMass and Worcester State.

HH: You said that you went to UMass Amherst, so what was your major?

LC: I majored in Sociology and minored in History.

HH: And do you feel that your gender impacted the quality or your experience through your education?

LC: ...I guess, I mean---I---think as a female going to UMass, the lucky thing that happened to me was, I met up with eight---in my dorm there were eight women who were all good students, and we just kind of hooked together and I think they were my anchor going through UMass. Whereas if I had been a guy and got into the drinking networks and stuff, it probably would have been a very different experience. But I found some very conservative young women who---we still had fun but it wasn't crazy, you know, we really buckled down and studied. And we were in an all female dorm. And there are no more all male dorms anywhere at UMass because they were just, you know, animal houses [laughs]. So I think they changed it so like even on the Towers, you've been there, every other floor is female, you know. So I think, I think we started out to attend school for the scholarship and that's what we did.

PD: Did you feel like you experienced any discrimination?

LC: I don't know if I faced discrimination. I think if I had been a guy, I probably would have talked more, you know, in discussions et cetera. I was shy and I think that was probably... I don't know that maybe...When you go to UMass, you have to...You're on your own, no one seeks you out, so either you make it or you don't. But I think I've done this kind of study that when I go to meetings...I'm getting a little off track and you may want to do this. If you go to a meeting and you... you know there are questions at the end, the guys always ask most of the questions even if it's a 50/50 audience. Just do your own little observation. So I think, maybe, if I

had gone to an all female school, maybe I would have had more confidence at that level. But as far as discrimination with grades or, no I didn't, I don't think there was anything.

HH: Well why, I know you said if you were a male you think you would have had more confidence, why do you think that being a female made you less confident?

LC: I think that, just that women are more self-conscious. I mean you go to the beach and women cover up for the most part, you know, and these guys walk around in their bathing suits and they don't care if they have this like big huge beer belly hanging over. And I just think that we're more self-conscious about our looks and how we sound and "did that seem silly?" Whereas I don't think men---some men do but this is broad brush strokes---men just have more confidence about their public appearance, or maybe they just don't care as much, too. You know like, "I'm just gonna say it and so what if I sound like an idiot?" [laughs]. They don't dwell on things.

PD: Upon finishing your formal education what did you see as your options?

LC: I got out of school much like the time is now when there was a huge unemployment rate and the prospects for employment weren't all that wonderful. So I, when I got out of school, most people got married right out of college. So we decided to have our family at that point, and so I put off my career for a few years. So I stayed home with my kids, but then I got involved in the community, so I sort of had an alternate route than a career. So I didn't jump into a career right away when I got out of school.

HH: Do you feel that you had a choice in whether or not you could have gotten involved in your career right away? Do you think it was your choice to start a family or do you think that it was almost what was expected and so you just did what everyone else was doing?

LC: Well some of it was expected, but as I said the market was awful. And I had started student teaching at the med school. In fact Faisal Hussein, who was a prince, was one of the students there. But there were no teaching prospects unless one went into special education which maybe I should have done. I ended up working in a job in a bank that was so boring, where I had to track the stock market everyday and it was not my field of interest. As far as social services and education were concerned, there was nothing out there. So I don't know if that answers your question.

PD: When did you begin working and what did you do, or what do you do now?

LC: Okay, I started working as--- I started working at that bank that I just mentioned. And then I didn't like it at all, so I decided to get my master's degree. And I worked for Family Services as an outreach worker while I went to graduate school and got my degree in Counseling Psychology. And then I took some years off, and as I said, I got involved in the community through Junior League and some other organizations. And I was one of the founders of the Mini Grants Program for teachers. We met in somebody's living room and just got this going because education was in dire straits then again and Proposition Two and a Half had just passed in

Massachusetts so there was a limit on tax levy. So I was involved with a bunch of different organizations and I ended up being the director of the Mini Grants Program. And then my career just kind of grew from that. So I went from being a program director to being a director of development at an organization that was then known as the Alliance for Education. And so I was a fundraiser, so I kind of learned it and that's what I do now. I'm a grant writer development person. So it just evolved. It was not like I decided to go and be a brain surgeon. You know I mean just--- the doors opened and I went through them.

HH: You mentioned the mini grants, can you explain more about that?

LC: Sure, when the Proposition Two and Half passed, teachers didn't have enough supplies in their rooms or it was perceived they didn't. Morale was pretty much at an all time low for teachers. And so we went---a group of us formed this nonprofit organization--- went to some businesses to get money for schools. And then we put it out to the teachers that they could get a \$500 Mini Grant through the organization through a competitive process. They had to write and say what they wanted it for and it had to be a little project, something innovative that they wouldn't do every day. And then they would get a check made right out to the teacher for \$500. As long as they spent it as they said they would, you know everything was fine. Then we would go and visit the projects and it really, it served two purposes. They could buy some needed supplies and they also felt good about themselves.

PD: What were and what are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework?

LC: That's a very interesting question because about 15 years ago my husband and I were at church, and our minister said his wife was in law school and so he had become the tsar of the laundry [laughs]. So we left church that day and I said to my husband, "What would you like to be the tsar of?" and it's not gonna be my laundry, you're not going to do my laundry. I said, "Would you like to cook, clean? Would you like to go grocery shopping?" And he chose grocery shopping. So he does all the grocery shopping. We kind of share household duties; he vacuums and I do a lot of the kitchen, the kitchen floors and stuff. And laundry--- he takes most of his clothes to the cleaners, I do my own so we-- it's a pretty shared---the chores are pretty much shared. I do the cooking, so he gets what I need and then I cook.

HH: Previous to that time in church, how were the duties separated?

LC: Well around that time I had started to work full- time, but I was primarily at home or I worked like 10, 15 hours a week. So I did most of the chores before that time. But then it was sort of coincidental that I had gone to work full- time and so had this... The minister's wife was a friend of mine and she was in law school full time. So you know, I guess we were all evolving around the same age, you know. The kids were pretty much busy in high school, or whatever, junior high school. And we had more time to work or go back to school, so...

PD: How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles and interests in your life?

LC: I don't have a minute to spare [all laugh]. You know, right now I need to work so that's what I do. And then my next priority is my family and my dogs, I have two dogs, two collies, and so that's where most of my time is spent. I also have a mother who's in a nursing home. We have a vacation house in Maine. So, and then my hobbies kind of take a backseat. I'm trying to get my swimming back up to the top of the list, but it's hard. There aren't that many hours in the week...to fulfill everything.

HH: Have your priorities been like work, family, dogs et cetera, has that been in the same order for a long time now or was it different before and how has it changed?

LC: Well as I said, I was home with my kids until they were seven and nine, so they were my top priority. But I think, as I said they went off to school--- to junior high, to high school, college---I was able to make my work more of a priority. I say family and work is about equal cause if my family needs me, I don't mind taking time off from work to do, to help them. On the other hand... [technical difficulties].

PD: Okay we are good [laughs]

LC: On the other hand if I have to work on a Saturday, or whatever, I do.

HH: Oh okay.

LC: Yep.

PD: How would you characterize the personal and professional cost of your chosen path and what about the benefits?

LC: Okay, my chosen path and personal....I like what I do, so I think that's a huge benefit. You know, I think if you can find a career that you really like and you don't mind getting up every day and going to it, that's the biggest benefit of all. Pay-wise I think I'm paid fairly and benefits, like health benefits, excellent. You know, the cost is that I don't have as much free time, you know, I don't have as much discretionary time like to have lunch with my friends or go and play golf. but that's---it's been a priority. We've been able to buy a second house so you know there are some material things that you get from work... I've been able to help my kids with their,--- like the down payments on their houses, etcetera. So I - I feel like we've, you know, shared too as a family.

HH: I know you had mentioned that you had gotten -- gone for your Masters in Counseling Psychology. Do you regret not having, you know, become a therapist? Or, do you - I know you said you didn't really choose the path that you took, it just kind of happened - do you wish it had happened differently?

LC: I never saw myself as a clinician, I didn't know what I --- I really didn't know what I was going to do. I --- I really . . . I --- I, no I don't regret it. I --- I just don't--- I think I would've taken on everybody's problems, and I (laughs) . . .

PD: Too much (laughs).

LC: Too much. I think though, the career has helped me deal with all kinds of people. You know, I mean the--- the--- my studies... Cause I can, you know, kind of try to figure people out, and then, figure out the best way to work with them.

PD: What type of work does your husband do?

LC: He is---- he sells life insurance, pension plans, investments. So he's in the financial world, sales.

HH: Do you consider yourself active politically?

LC: Not so much. I should be more, but I'm not.

HH: Like, do you vote on a regular basis?

LC: I do, I always vote. And I sometimes write checks for political candidates. I'm an Independent, so I --- my goal is to vote for whomever I think is the best candidate. So I'm not, you know, party bound. I don't --- I read up on politics a little bit, but not, you know, I'm not the best first person on politics.

PD: What does it mean to you to be a woman and have the right to vote?

LC: You know, I think it's something that -- that I've always taken for granted. You know, and I think about the world that the --- the women back in the, you know, suffragette movement, the -- --- all they --- they did to get the vote, and we --- we all take it for gran... I think most people take it for granted, that it's something that we've always had.

HH: Right. Have you been -- well you said that you have been involved in volunteer work outside the home. What, like, led you to the volunteer work? Was it, you know, you -- you said you stayed at home a lot, was it just to get you outside of the home?

LC: At first it was just to get me outside of the home. And then . . . I've joined different--- some things for causes--- but mostly it's probably been because someone's asked me to be on a board or something, so . . . I'm really not, you know, it's not because of the cause, it's more the networking.

PD: What kind of work did you do?

LC: In community work?

PD: Yeah, or volunteer work.

LC: Okay, as I mentioned, I was in... Well first with the Junior League, and that's--- Junior League's mantra is trained volunteers, so . . . With that was one of my favorite projects in volunteer work was a people/pet companionship project where we brought puppies into nursing homes. And we started that. Yeah it was really good, it was --- that was a fun one. That was probably the most--- 'cept having to bring them back to the animal rescue league wasn't that much fun. I've been on the board of the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], I've been involved in a number of fund grant raising campaigns for different organizations. When I was at my other job, the Alliance for Education, we were the beneficiaries of the PGA [Professional Golfers' Association] at one of our golf courses, so---- cooked hot dogs in the concession stand, walked around with professional golfers. When the Virginia Slim's Tennis Tournament, Ladies Tennis Tournament, was in Worcester, Junior League was involved, so we were invol--- in charge of the volunteers. So I had a hundred ball kids that we managed --- because when you're a--- have a tennis tournament you've got like eight kids at any given time catchin' the balls and they're, they're in each corner, so getting them all sh--- tennis shoes at once was fun. (___???) had this big room full of tennis shoes . . . I was involved in the --- my children's, the PTO [Parent-Teacher Organization] at their school, church, so I --- I've done a lot of volunteer work.

PD: What role – you mentioned that, like, religion played a large role – you know, like – like, what kind of role did it play for you and your family?

LC: Well we, I wish I did this now but, we went to church every Sunday and I went to Sunday school. My father stayed home, my --- he always said he was a home Baptist (laughs), and my mother was at church with us. I think, when I look back . . . I don --- the religion I am --- I ---I am a believer. But I think the important thing that the church that I grew up in--- we--- we--- there were great role models. And I look back at, and think about the people who were adults --- my age now, and I was a kid at the time ---- and I jus--- they were just really, they were good people. And I always said to my kids, “You have to have some kind of spiritual connection as well. You know, if---- whatever religion you decide to be, you know, it's important to have something that you can --- that you believe in, you know, it gives you a good foundation.

PD: So did it provide, like a social network for you, in a way?

LC: It was a social network, yup.

HH: So how have health issues impacted your life, or those in your family?

LC: Knock on wood, so far so good (laughs). I think we --- you know, we've been lucky. I grew up in a family where we went to the dentist and we went to the doctor regularly, so we still do, so I've had good health care. My mother's still alive, so I--- you know, we've been lucky in that respect, with everyone's been fairly healthy. So I – I can't say that health has been a huge issue for us.

PD: Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

LC: My mother's, I'm her healthcare proxy, so---- never thought I'd be doing that (laughs). My husband's responsible for his own, so I --- just my mother and myself. But she is, you know,--- being in a nursing home they really monitor her health. I'm just --- I make the decisions, but they're the ones that take care of her day to day.

HH: How do you get through tough times, and what kinds of thoughts keep you going?

LC: Well, I have four grandsons, so they keep me---- I get --- they're my therapists, so when things get tough I go and see them because they're bright, and lively, but . . . A couple of years ago I – I lost two of my best friends, like within six---- one died on---- one was buried on Ash Wednesday, and the other one died on Maundy Thursday, so that was a tough time. But as I said, now I – I have my grandsons. Music helps me a lot. I am a believer, so I do pray, but I play the guitar, so sometimes tough---- when things get tough I play the guitar. An --- and physical activity, I like to swim. I always--- you know how you think “Oh gosh, I really don't feel like going,” and then I get back and I feel so much better.

HH: Right.

LC: So, I think you just have to keep the chemicals in your body – healthy.

PD: When did you start playing guitar and, like, swimming?

HH: Yeah, I was just going to ask that.

LC: Oh, when I was 10 I got a guitar. I had a clarinet...-

PD: Oohf!

HH: Ooh!

LC: But I had it --- then I (laughs)...-

PD: I had one too (all laugh).

LC: And I always wanted a dog, so I--- when I was nine, I received a puppy,

PD: Oh!

HH: Aw.

LC: And I'd bring that clarinet case out, and she'd be at the back door. So, we decided (laughs), we couldn't torture the dog. And so then I got a guitar and I --- I still play, I played the other night, actually, with a friend of mine I'd gone to church with. And then --- swimming... I've always liked to swim, I swam as a kid but I – I couldn't do laps. And about 20 years ago I went to the Y [YWCA] and took lessons on how to swim laps, so I - I can do that now. So it's---- I

like doing that, it's good to have a lifelong sport or physical activity, you know. You get older, you can't --- I can't play tennis (laughs). We used to ski, but I don't like to ski anymore. You – you guys ski?

PD: I've never been skiing.

HH: I've never been either.

LC: Oh, well, it's terrifying because I -I like to ski, but then these--- the snowboards--- so all of a sudden you're skiing, and then behind you, you hear kkkhhhh, and you know it's like a 13 year old boy on a skate, a snowboard, and you go, "Okay, I can't do this anymore," (all laugh).

PD: That sounds scary.

HH: Yeah. Did you used to go skiing frequently?

LC: Yeah! We used to take the kids, there's a place called Mount Wachusett not far from here, and we'd go every Friday night, it was fun.

HH: Have you ever tried snowboarding?

LC: No, I never would. It's not on my list.

HH: Not your thing?

LC: No, uh-uh (laughs). Maybe I'll ski again when I retire, when I can go on like a Tuesday morning at nine o'clock.

HH: When there's no one there?

LC: You know...

PD: When no one's there.

LC: When the 13 year olds are in school, except the homeschooled kids (all laugh).

PD: Back to the guitar--- do you write your own music, or do you just play?

LC: I just play.

PD: Yeah?

LC: Yeah.

PD: Is it like cathartic for you?

LC: Yeah, it really is. I took piano lessons for 10 years. I'm --- I still am not good (laughs). No, I just --- I never really got good at the p--- maybe I didn't practice enough. But guitar I've been playing for so long, I just pick it up and I, you know, it's nice, it's very relaxing.

HH: Do you kind of – do you like make, you know, make songs up as you go, or do you play songs you know?

LC: I - I play songs I know.

HH: Are they like--- I know you said you go to church, and I know, like my father plays guitar, he plays a lot of church music, do you play (___???)

LC: No, I play good ole folk music, and, you know, Carole King, an' Peter, Paul and Mary, an' James Taylor, and all that, you know, that's my era (laughs).

PD: How do you define success in your life, and has this definition changed over time?

LC: Well, I think I'm the person I was, you know, 50 years ago, or 40 years ago. For me success is achievement. I'm not competitive, but, you know, I set my goals on what I need to achieve, and that, to me, is part of my success. Another part is just, you know, knowing good people and spending time with them. So, I - I feel like I've had a good, successful --- you know, am I the richest person in Worcester? No. You know, but I just --- I feel like I've had a - a really nice life, with good work – good job, good family, good friends, you know, what else can you want? What – what else is there, really?

HH: In what area of your life do you think you've been, like the most successful?

LC: I don't know, I've --- I've done well at work, and I've been married--- it's gonna be 36 years . . .

HH: Oh, wow.

LC: Yeah, and my kids are like, normal people (all laugh), I have great – (___???) I don't know, maybe it's my outlook on life that I feel most successful on. My dogs are very well trained, I actually - I have a Ph.D. in obedience, I've been to like . . .

PD: Really?

LC: eight obedience classes, yes . . .

HH: Oh really?

PD: Huh. . .

LC: I don't mean a Ph.D. really, but you know, I just – I – we went to a lot of trainings so, they're really nice, so I every --- it's worked out well.

HH: Do you feel you have a legacy?

LC: Oh, I don't know (laughs).

PD: This is a tough - I really like this question, I think it's so interesting.

HH: Yeah . . .

LC: I don- I don't know. I hope so. I don't know what my legacy would be. I've done a lot of work with the --- with --- in career wise. We started a foundation, a few years ago, in 2005, so we started the Worcester Educational Development Foundation. So I hope that would be --- I hope that continues, and that's one of my legacies. And I hope my kids and my grandkids see me as having been, you know, like a really good and fun person. I hope – I hope those are my legacies.

PD: Now that we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women than has been re-recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include?

LC: I think it's the personal stories, like the friendships, you know I – I think it's like - you're the historian?

PD: Yes.

LC: Okay, when we used to study history, we'd study all the battle dates, you know. And I think when we studied history, well we know, you know, when --- that George Bush went to Yale, and blah blah blah, and John Kennedy won medals. And --- but I think the more interesting stories are underneath, and it's the relationships that developed, and I think – especially with women – I think we're very dependent on our friends, and relatives. So I think it's that – that layer down that would be more interesting to know about. It's --- you know, great if somebody started off as a bank teller and now they're president of the bank. You know, I mean, that's all well and good, but I think it's maybe impacted--- maybe the story is, you know, what women have had an impact on your life, and how has that had an effect on who you are today. For instance, I was very fortunate to know a woman whose name was Helen Bowditch, and she was very well known in the city. She had been on school committee, and I got to know her through a diff --- few different organizations. And one day she had me over to her house for lunch, and one of the biggest compliments that I received ever in my life was, she said to her husband, "Bob, I want you to meet my friend Louise," and I was like, "I'm Helen Bowditch's friend? This is great!" You know, and then it was just --- she was 30 years older than me, so it was an intergenerational friendship that really--- I think that's the layer that we need to get to.

PD: So like the story of the, the normal woman?

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

LC: The norm-

PD: The regular woman?

LC: Yeah, the regular woman! Yeah!

PD: Not like a big-wig or--- just the regular woman.

LC: Yeah.

HH: The average . . .

LC: Average.

HH: average girl.

LC: Yeah, and the trials and tribulations of raising teenagers, and, you know (all laugh) . . .

HH: There's something to be said for that too, even – even, you know, I think a lot of times history overlooks, you know, the “common” housewife, but I think that there's something to be said for all the work that goes into it.

LC: Oh, there is, yes. Yup, and all that – yeah, I think that's – that's a story that I'm not sure has been told yet. I think it'll be interesting. That every woman could relate to, too. You know, I think with the Worces – Women's – Worcester Women's History Project, and I was on the board for awhile, and I – I think they've done great work, but I'm not sure that every woman can relate to the women who got us the right to vote.

PD: Yeah.

HH: Right.

LC: You know, I think it's now where are we, what about the – all the immigrant women who are coming in, and the struggles that they have in this – in this country. I think that's another story to tell.

HH: And then, we had mentioned earlier that we wanted to focus on your experiences as a woman, and how it has shaped your life.

LC: Mhm.

HH: Like, how do you think being a woman has impacted your entire experience overall? Like, how would it have differed, maybe if you'd been a man?

LC: I don't know, maybe I would've been more "successful," if I had been a man. But I – I focused a lot of my time on relationships, and networking, for social reasons not just financial. I – that's a very hard question, because how – how can you know who you would be if you weren't you?

HH: Who you are?

LC: Yeah. So, I don't know, I think that's – I'm not sure I can answer that adequately.

PD: That's okay.

HH: Are you glad that it all turned out the way it did, and do – you just, you feel, you know, grateful that your life has been the way it has been? And you--- was there ever a moment where you were like, "If I was a boy, this would've been easier," or are you just grateful for everything the way it was, and...

LC: Yeah.

HH: You embrace your gender, and . . .

LC: Yeah, I like . . . Well, there were just a few times, like when my husband leaves the house in the morning. Tthe only person he thinks about is himself (laughs). Now you're not going to like, quote me on these things, right (laughs)?

HH: We do transcribe what you say, but . . .

LC: Oh, okay (laughs). You gonna do the bathing suit part too (all laugh)? You know, I just feel like the only thing that I wish – that I am jealous about men is that they don't have as many responsibilities. You know, like they can leave, for the most part, and focus on their career. Whereas, if you're a woman with kids, I mean you leave the house, but you still have the worries of "how are they getting home from school," yadda, yadda, yadda. You know, "Did they take their permission note to go on the field trip?" "Did they take their lunch?" "Do they have clean clothes for tomorrow?" And I don't think that men carry that with them. So I think it's just --- maybe just to be responsible for myself is one of the things that would've been fun at some points, instead of everybody.

HH: Having to worry about everyone else.

LC: Yeah, and now I have my mother in a nursing home, so I'm not worried about her.

HH: Right.

LC: Excuse me.

HH: Okay.

PD: I think that's . . .

HH: Do you have anything else that you want to add? Or -

LC: Nope.

HH: No?

LC: No.

HH: Okay.

PD: Good?

HH: Well, thank you. -

PD: Thank you very much.

HH: . . . for coming.

LC: You're welcome (laughs).