

**Interviewee:** Louise Carroll Keeley  
**Interviewer(s):** Amy Chiasson and Jessica Jané  
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**Transcriber:** Amy Chiasson and Jessica Jané



**Overseen by:** Professors Maryanne Leone and Regina Edmonds, Assumption College

**Abstract:** Louise Carroll Keeley was born in 1952 in Honolulu, HI and moved around during most of her childhood due to her father's military career. She lived in Washington D.C. for the better part of her adolescence. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She then went to Boston College for graduate school and received her PhD in philosophy. She met her husband at Boston College and they moved to Worcester after they became engaged in 1983. She got a job teaching philosophy at Assumption College where she was the 12<sup>th</sup> woman to become a professor. For 23 years Professor Keeley was the only woman in the philosophy department of which she is now the chairperson. She currently resides in Worcester with her husband and four children. In this interview she discusses what it was like balancing career and family, growing up in many different places, and how she chose to study philosophy.

**JJ:** We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experience. 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 with Louise Carroll Keeley. Thank you for your help with these important projects.

**AC:** The first set of questions is going to be about general history, family, and Worcester area. We will start off with is your full maiden name and if applicable your married name.

**LCK:** Well my full maiden name is Louise Ann Carroll and my married name is Louise Carroll Keeley. So I took the Carroll which was my last name and put it into my middle name. And our children all have that name as well. And my husband as well.

**JJ:** Really your husband? Wow, interesting. Question number two is when where you born?

**LCK:** I actually have no problem saying when I was born, January 17, 1952.

**JJ:** January 28!

**LCK:** Yay! My brother's birthday!

**JJ:** Really? Wow!

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

**LCK:** I have four children. Oldest son is Matthew Augustine and Matt is twenty-one. Second son is Austin William and Austin is nineteen. And the third one is Teresa Louise, we call her Tess and she is seventeen. And then the youngest son is fifteen and his name is Sean Richard.

**JJ:** Are they going too... are the two oldest ones going to college?

**LCK:** Yeah, the two oldest are in school already. Matt is at Boston College, he's a senior and Austin goes to Stanford University and he's a sophomore but he's studying in Paris right now, yeah so his life is really tough.

**AC:** Wow.

**JJ:** That's really far. Have you ever married?

**LCK:** [laughs]

**JJ:** We kind of went over that but...

**LCK:** Interesting question to ask after children. Yeah I got married once, I got married when I was thirty-one years old, and my husband was thirty-three. It was a first marriage for both of us and we will be married twenty-five years this December. And so only once, and the four children are the product of that marriage.

**JJ:** How did you guys meet?

**LCK:** Oooh! You know that's debatable, it depends on who you ask. If you ask me or if you ask my husband. My husband says he noticed me at a lecture, kind of like a philosophy lecture in a place called Haley House, which was sort of part of Boston College and I was a graduate student there and he was working. He was working on his graduate degree but also working full time direct from the PULSE program. But I remember meeting him the first time, the first time I remember meeting him was, not meeting him, seeing him, was Easter of 1977, before you guys were even a glimmer in anybody's eye. And I saw him in church. I was in, going to mass at St. Ignatius in Boston. And I saw this guy and he was wearing this really dorky hat but I noticed that he has these beautiful curls and then when he put his hat on the way out of church it totally ruined his look, you know, his curls, and I was taken by it because you know most graduate students didn't go to mass and I had seen him around and I thought, "oh this is interesting he's in here for mass." So I [inaudible] him and then I left BC for a year and when I got back at the end of that year .. it was really really hard for me to come back it was a long story, I left...now I'm saying should I've been anonymous, I left because I had had a broken romance with someone I thought was really important with me, and I just decided I needed to get away and I finished my doctoral course work and I went to San Francisco because my high school roommate, this is so funny, my high school roommate was entering a convent, we were about twenty-five at the time, and she was going to go into a convent and she has an apartment in San Francisco where I could live and so I thought I'm going to leave Boston, I'm going to go live and start writing my

dissertation and live in her apartment when she goes into the convent and at the end of that year which was this really fantastic year, I worked as a waitress, I worked on studying for my doctoral exams, I got my ideas for the dissertation and I didn't feel the pressure of anything really, and it was really hard for me to go back to Boston and to take my exams, you know I had this dissertation hanging over my head. And it was really hard and when I got back I met Dick, my husband. And I really honestly think it was the work of God that brought me back.

**JJ:** It sounds like fate!

**LCK:** Yeah, I really do because I went kicking and screaming. A part of me just wanted to throw in the towel and say 'oh the heck with this stupid dissertation'. You know, I... I, being a waitress wasn't that bad. You know, like most young women I'd done plenty of that. So but then I met my husband and he actually had an office right across from mine and I remembered him by having seen him in church, and he remembered me from having seen me at this Haley House thing. And so he invited me out.

**AC:** Aww.

**JJ:** That's exciting.

**LCK:** We had real dates in those days. I don't know if you, I'm told that you guys don't do that.

**JJ:** Not really.

**LCK:** That's a shame you really should do that.

**AC:** Would you say religion plays a good, like, big role in your life, considering what you just said about like you know how God played a big role in you meeting your husband?

**LCK:** Yeah, I really do but I think. You know I was raised in a fairly ordinary Catholic family. My dad was, never went to college but as a young man he pretty much sat down and read *Summa Theologica* which is Thomas Aquinas's work. So he was kind of an intellectual kind of person. And looked at religion that way. My mother was about the kindest person you could ever meet. But sort of, you know, she saw the joyous side of religion, so I kind of had both of those experiences. But we weren't over the top, you know, religious, my parents, I went both to Catholic school and not Catholic, you know, public school, private school sometimes. I went to a private high school. But for whatever reason I think this was temperamental, it was really important to me and, but for many years of my life I guess what most distinguishes me in term of religious experiences that you know I thought of myself as a seeker, you know I was always looking, I always wanted to know and it mattered to me what the truth was. I can remember... you're really going to have to tell me to stop talking.

**JJ:** It's fine.

**LCK:** I can remember as a little girl, my sister was thirteen months older and I distinctly remember this, we always had a room together, and we were very different but we are very close,

and I remember lying in bed a night saying to my sister ‘Nancy, don’t you ever wonder about you know, I think it was the assumption of Mary or something like that, don’t you ever wonder if that’s true?’ It sounds pretty hard to believe and my sister shot back in the dark “I never questioned those things it so much easier if you just believe’. So I was never somebody who just believed to believe. It was kind of hard work for me; I was always a seeker and more intellectual in terms of that. That would be how I’d go at it. And there were times during my college life as I think happens to most people that I was just one big dangling question mark. You know? I was just you know, I didn’t know the answers and I would look to other people to steer me, but I also wasn’t satisfied with that. I can remember , seriously, sanding up in one of my classes, I’ve told this to Jess’s class, and asking my teacher, not asking I was demanding, ‘Does God exist or not, will you just cut to the chase and tell us?’. And I loved this teacher but he was stunned because I wasn’t like that at all but I really desperately wanted to know. And so it took a lot of work, honestly, you know to determine myself with what I believed in and to try to live in according to it. Which I don’t always achieve but it does matter, and we’ve raised our children that way.

**JJ:** That’s good, do you mind talking a little bit about your parents?

**LCK:** Not at all. No not at all. I’ll start with my mom.

**JJ:** Okay

**LCK:** She’s the easiest. My mother actually died a couple of years ago, three years ago.

**JJ:** Aww, I’m sorry.

**LCK:** Yeah, she was, but it was good my mother was never afraid of death and she was always, always happy, I have never met a happier person in my life. My mother used to always say I could be happy anywhere. And as her very temperamental and introspective daughter I never could have said that. I was much more demanding as a human being, than my mother. My mother was a nurse, she went to high school and then she went to nursing school and she grew up in Rushville, Indiana which was this small, exceedingly boring little town. I’m on record now! And went to nursing school during the first part of the Second World War. Her sister had gone into a convent, this seems to be a theme, and her parents where really upset about it especially her dad and so after nursing school my mother went back home and lived with her parents during the war and worked in the local hospital. And it was kind of sad because what she really wanted to do was join the navy and be a navy nurse. But my mom as a personality was hard to describe, honestly you can exaggerate your parents (word). She was a very simple uncomplicated person; she was really a good human being she loved to have fun. Far more fun than I could ever be. She was always the life of the party, and she was very, I remember as a child I would go to other people’s houses and I would always think ‘I’m so glad I have my mother because my mom’s the best and she was she really was. And she was very generous... to a fault, just to a fault. The only thing I would fault my mom for would be, the kind of the belly side, of what I just described, the good side, is when I was growing up and I was moving out of the house I always wanted my mom to say ‘why don’t you come home, I miss you’. And she would never do that. And I knew why she didn’t to put any pressure on her kids to come home if they didn’t want to. But as I got older I realized she never made demands either, you know. She

should have said sometimes, you know, 'get your tail back her, get your sorry little tail home'. And she wanted to see us but she would never ask. So there was that side that kind of muted 'I won't ask for anything for myself', which I see often in women which I don't think is all that healthy. I think it would have been healthy. I think it would have been better had she been able to say 'Yah I'd like to, you know, you to do this or that'.

My dad was an air force lieutenant colonel. He was a really...he died when I was in college, when I was twenty-two, very surprised; it was real traumatic for me. He was ... he was an intellectual without a lot of education. He was interiorly really complicated just as my mom was interiorly really simple, and the most difficult thing for me was that my father was an alcoholic. And that did not become apparent to us until I was about ten or eleven years old. And my father suffered immensely from that. Which I believe runs in my family and that was a real torture for my dad and made it more difficult for the siblings and my mom. And I say that directly because I know that lots of students, it's not something I'm faulting my father for, I believe it honestly to be a disease and lots of evidence now there is a genetic component, but it factored greatly into my sense of who I was and who my siblings are for them as well.

**JJ:** How many siblings do you have?

**LCK:** I was going to say too many but I don't have enough really. I have an older sister, her name's Nancy. And Nancy is great, Nancy's like my mom, fun not serious, really generous, she's got three kids. Her oldest son just got married and to be honest we never left the dance floor. My sister has a dance named after her because she is so much fun, I mean just in the immediate family. It's sort of an insult to her too because its one of these old lady dances, but still you know she is a lot of fun. And she went to college, she runs a law firm right now, but she didn't go to law school and she is divorced and she has three children who are in their twenties. And then I've got a brother Bill, and I'm really close to Bill too. Bill is a physician out in California and for many years he was my closest sibling, because you know I had to do the sisterly thing and fight with my sister now both of those are really really close to me. He's married, he as three kids, he's just great, he's wonderful, he's a good athlete and even at fifty something and a sweetheart. And then I have a brother Mike, and Mike is ... you know I don't know how much to say for the record about Mike, Mike is my most difficult sibling and I think it would be fair to say, I'm trying to think of a way to say this. Mike has had issues with substance abuse as well, and I'm just asking myself if I want to put this on the record.

**JJ:** You don't have to.

**LCK:** No, I know but it's the truth and I'm not afraid of the truth, I think it's important and has struggled with that pretty much throughout his whole adult life. He also is the smartest of the siblings, the funniest of the siblings, in addition to being the most difficult of the siblings.

**AC:** Where did you live during your life, did you grow up here in Worcester?

**LCK:** No I didn't, in fact it's a fluke that I'm here. I was born in Honolulu, in Hawaii

**AC:** Wow!

**LCK:** I know right! I wish we were there now! Partly because my dad was in the air force and so he was stationed there after the Second World War and remember that was the place where Pearl Harbor was bombed. So we lived on, I can't remember the name of the base right now, but that's where I was born. I was born in Tripler Army Hospital and everyday my mother would take us, being fun as I told you she was, she would get my sister and I up and we would go to Wai Ki Ki beach. And so I spent my first couple years on the beach and I still to this day love the ocean. We had one experience I don't remember it where apparently a tsunami was coming, forecasted, and you know I one of those great big huge tidal waves, and we had to all go up on one of the high mountains in Anna Wahu to escape the tsunami, but it never appeared! And then we moved to Washington D.C. I spent a lot of time in Washington D.C. By the time I was four or so I was there and those are, three and four, and those are where my first memories are from. My dad worked on Andrew's Air Force base at the time. And we've also lived in Illinois on Scott Air Force Base. That's where I learned to ride a bike. I remember that very well. I was in three different second grades. I was moved so much because then we moved to California and lived on another, you know I think Travis Air Force Base, in California and then we moved, on the way back we had to live for a brief period in Indiana, not my favorite. Then we moved to Germany, and I went to third and fourth grade in Germany. And I loved Europe! Loved it! To this day I love it! Loved that experience. We lived in a, at that time they called it on the economy, which means kind of an arrogant way to say it but meant we lived in a German Village, basically, we didn't live on the air force base. We did later move to the air force base. But actually for six months I lived in a hotel in Germany which was really fun. Every night we would go down to the restaurant and it was great! You know! So I loved Germany. And then we moved back to Andrew's Air Force Base, and I lived there from fifth grade all the way to high school. And then I went to college! So I've lived lots of places!

**JJ:** If you were not born in Worcester, when did you arrive and how did you come to live in Worcester?

**LCK:** Oh boy! Well, Worcester was kind of a fluke for me. You know it was during my graduate studies at Boston College, and when I finished, how did this work..? I guess I finished in the spring semester of 1983 and in January of that year my husband and I became engaged. So it was a crucial year for me because I was finishing, I was engaged, I was trying to find a job somewhere, locally, and it's hard enough to find a job in philosophy. So I applied, actually Holy Cross had a position, but it wasn't up my alley, it was different. And Assumption had a position. So I applied all over. But I was hoping for Assumption so my husband could keep his job and we could be married and live in the same town. And just by, again I'm going to call it the grace of God, I got this position. And apparently there had been an internal candidate and they wouldn't agree so they went to me! And so I was able, well we were going to get married anyway, but we got married and we actually got to stay here. So I came in August of that year, my husband who wasn't my husband yet, we came out and we found a place to live, and I lived there until we got married and then he moved in. And that was in December. So '83 was a really big year for me in lots of ways, I haven't even told you, but that's how I came to Worcester.

**AC:** Where do you live in the city now and have you lived in more than one area of Worcester?

**LCK:** Yeah, we live right now off Burncoat Street on Kenwood Ave and we really love it there. Have you ever been over Jess?

**JJ:** No, I haven't.

**LCK:** Ohh! Well let me go back a little bit. When we were first married we lived on Alvarado Avenue, that's the apartment we picked up. And it's right across from UMass, you know where the medical school is, and they were probably advertising for medical students, but we got in. It was the second floor of an apartment owned by this elderly couple. Honestly, they were in their late eighties, when we left they were 93 years old. I remember when we went in; just let them live long enough to have one year in their apartment! And the rent was really cheap, and they were lovely. But the guy, the 93 year old, his name was Lawrence, he took a kind of shine to me, and I couldn't get in the house without him stopping to talk to me. And even to this day my husband and I still laugh because after we were married, obviously Dick, my husband, moved in and Mr. Marvin, which is what I called Lawrence, looked at me and looked at my husband as we were going in after the wedding. And he goes; he says in the most growling way "is he staying in here?" And I was like "yeah...we're married now! He's staying here!" But he liked me, he kind of had this little crush on me I think and so that was the first place we lived and we were really sad when both of them died. Especially Mrs. Marvin we loved her! Her name was Ethyl, and she was a sweetheart. Then we moved, our first house, we were in our thirties, was on Montague Street which was in, it's not in Main South but it's kind of in that area, behind Our Ladies of the Angel's Church and that was the house that has the most sentimental value for me. It's not fancy, it's not a fancy neighborhood, it's just the opposite, kind of like a run down neighborhood. But we brought all our kids home to that house. And my husband was always putting banners out, you know "Welcome home Matt!" as if everybody knew who Matt was. We still have those. That was where we were raised. And we only have one bathroom and there was six of us. A big mud yard, all the kids in the neighborhood would play in the yard. And it's just very sentimental to me too. So we loved that house. Then when my oldest son was twelve, so they are six, eight, ten, and twelve, we lived in that tiny little place, and then we moved to Kenwood and we love our house there! It's this great big old 1910, 1912 house and it has all, it felt like I'd died and gone to heaven, with all its bathrooms and room for all the kids and everything. And we just lucked out by finding this place.

**JJ:** The next topic is education! Where did you attend school?

**LCK:** Well do you want me to go just to college or back?

**AC:** Well we already talked about the other schools.

**LCK:** College I went to Marquette University, which is a Jesuit school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And I went there from 1970 to 1974. I then went right after that to Boston College. I actually applied to a lot of different PhD programs and actually got into them. And I sometimes wonder if I made a mistake because I got into Notre Dame and I got a full scholarship to Notre Dame in Indiana to do graduate work in philosophy but I just wanted to get out of Indiana, my family had moved back there. So I went to Boston College and I think it was probably not a mistake because I did have my husband and all my kids. But once in awhile I would think, "

Oh, I wonder what would have happened if I had gone there". So got my MA and PhD from Boston College. After many tortuous years. Those were not the best years of my life because I worked so hard and I don't have much of my mother's, my mom used to always, my dad used to always say, seriously, if I brought home a 99 his famous line "what happened to the extra point?" My mother would say "A C is just as good an A if you had fun getting it!" And so I didn't have enough of my mom in me, I had too much of my dad, and so I worked very, very hard. And I didn't have enough fun and now I look back at life and I think it's really important to close the books at a certain point. And I know that sounds counter intuitive given my profession, but life and people are so important. And so is learning, I greatly value it.

**AC:** What support networks and mentoring have been important to you in your education?

**LCK:** That's a good one. My father first of all because my father really had a very severe, in a good sense, standard for the life of the mind. He didn't have the opportunity to be educated, but he valued it greatly and that rubbed off on me. So in that respect, my dad. Secondly, my professor in college, a man that goes by the name James Rob, the man whose class I stood up and said "just tell us if there is a God!" He influenced me a lot. He was a really, really good man but most of all he really challenged my mind. I studied metaphysics with him and a number of other things. I really esteemed him greatly. As a graduate student, I would have to say that it was the lack of mentors and the lack of support systems in place for graduate students that was really sort of negatively impacted me. I found it in my student friends, but not so much in my...in the scholars I worked with. I actually did my dissertation with, I would say eminent; I wrote under, his name is Jac Tomenol. But he was so busy that everything I said to him he'd say "Ahh!" This is good." He didn't ask for suggestion for improvement. And I would have to say that. I would say honestly the best mentor that I ever had, you can laugh at this but it's true, other than my father, would have been Kierkegaard. And he's a philosopher and I learned a lot by reading him. I really learned a lot about the soul from him and the interior life and it made me think a lot about what I wanted to do with my life and how I wanted to live it. And I was introduced to Kierkegaard, I mean he was dead, but I met him for the first time in his books when I was a sophomore in college. So I'd say he was really, really crucial.

**JJ:** Our next topic is work, and were you ever a stay at home mom with your kids?

**LCK:** Mmhmm. Yeah, work is not my first priority.

**JJ:** That's how I feel.

**LCK:** Put it on record here, for Dr. Edmonds and anyone else who hears this! It's a really high priority for me but it's not my first. To be honest, I know lots of people will disagree with me, my priorities are, though I don't always live them and I'll tell you why in a minute, my first priority is; my relationship with God, my second one is my husband and my children, my family, and my third one is my professional life. And to be honest the reason I don't always live them is because God often takes a back seat to my kids and to my family, you know, my husband. It was really, really imperative to me that I be home with my children. Long story, I had our first son, I had my children late I was thirty-five when I had the first child, and I came back to work half time teaching a couple courses, well I stayed home for a year, then I thought okay lets just try it.



And I came home and I would rush back to the house that we lived then, nurse Matt, rush back here because I wanted to breast feed and go back and nurse. And I remember thinking this is ridiculous. And when he was a certain ... we had a young women whom my husband knew really well, who now has five children herself, who came in and stayed with Matt when I was rushing back and forth. And then for a very brief period of time he was in daycare, again this wonderful women whose husband was a pastor of the local church, and she had it in her home. And I couldn't do it! I just couldn't do it! Something in my soul was just torn. And I told my husband, I can't do this, I don't want to do this. And I wasn't quite tenure, but I didn't care and I was pregnant with my second son, Austin, and I was up for tenure, and I just said I can't do it, I don't want to do it. I could have done it, but I didn't want to. And my confidante here on campus was Dr. Knowles. Do you know Dr. Knowles, English department?

**JJ** and **AC**: No.

**LCK**: She was my dearest friend and she said, she does have children but she's married, and she said, "just get tenure." So I said fine, but I'm not going to go back. So I actually came up for tenure it turns out a semester early. We didn't quite realize it but because I'd taken a leave of absence for Matt it was a semester early. And I can honestly say at that time I didn't care if I got tenure or not I was just doing it in a certain way for Lucia [Knoles]. I got tenure, and so I asked for a leave and they gave me a year. And I had the second child and I can't tell you the details of it, because I don't remember, but I just kept asking for a leave. And they kept giving it to me. And then I thought... ahh I'll ask for two years, and they gave it to me. And I was tenure. It honestly to this day is the greatest, not the greatest, but one of the greatest gifts of my life. And I would have quit if they hadn't given it to me. So I was home with my kid for eleven years. Until the littlest one, Sean, went to pre-k. And then, how did this work, I guess I went back half-time when he went to pre-k, and full-time when he was in full-time school. And those were not the easiest years because I was, we were poor really. I taught in Continuing Ed. But at that point in the evening my husband was home. So I would be with the kids all day, run and teach a course for three thousand dollars, come back. But my kids either had dad or me with them. I am immensely grateful for those years and for honestly, Joe Hagan who was the president then, who thought it was compatible with the family values of Assumption. And after that, school proposed a maternity leave, so that wouldn't happen now. I just feel like the luckiest person in the world. I feel like I've had the best of both worlds, at a cost, but still. And my kids are happy about it too. I think they were happy when I went back to work too, it's like phew!

**JJ**: You said that they didn't have a maternity leave?

**LCK**: No. No we didn't have a policy then. It's hard to imagine, Jess and Amy, back in the day there weren't any women in academics. When I came I was the 12<sup>th</sup>, number twelve, and that counted part time women and for 23 years I was the only woman in my department until we hired, luckily, Molly Flynn. Women were rare and women who got pregnant were even rarer and rarest of all, well, many faculty women and again, this is their right, you know had /have children and wanted to have children and work, and more power to them. It's just not what I wanted. So at that time there wasn't a policy and that's why I was so lucky because I kept asking and I kept getting. Now there is a policy and it's, I don't know what it is because I'm too old to be pregnant [Laughs]. It's not what it was for me. I lucked out.

**JJ:** That's good.

**AC:** What has working at Assumption meant to you over the years?

**LCK:** Wow, that's a tough one Amy, that's really, really tough. That's a really hard question for me to answer you know because when I think of Assumption I really think of two things. I think of, actually three things. First of all, my students, who even when I can't remember all of them, there all always some that I remember with greatest affection and Jess is going to be one of them, she doesn't know it but she will. And, in fact lots of students that I remember in that way never knew it. I remember them and that means a lot to me. It always is extraordinary; it happens very rarely that you ever hear you made a difference but just recently I went up for a promotion and I had to ask students from the past to write letters, some from the present too and some of the students actually sent me copies of their letters, they're not supposed to but they did, I didn't ask for them and that was really gratifying because then I thought, "oh, it did make a difference" because usually you just hear you know, students are mad at you on the evaluations they write nasty things and it's always like you know you get the complaints you don't always get. So the first thing is the students and the second thing is the community here. That's meant a lot to me and its been saddening to me that in the last couple of years there has been a lot of gutter sniping on the part of faculty and administration here of the people whom I really cherish and one thing I really like is that though people ideologically in a principled way differ, you know some are really liberal, some people are really conservative, some people are really religious, some really not, I've always been able, and I love this about Assumption, to cherish friends across those categories. Categories haven't meant very much to me. So when there's discontent it troubles me and then the third thing is the life of the mind. A lot of the opportunity, I mean I am so privileged to have a job I love, to teach and to you know, to teach lots of different things. So in those three ways: students, the community, and the life of the mind, that's what Assumption means to me. My religious heritage, I'm saying this on the record, is still honestly more Jesuit than Assumptionist, I still feel much more of a kinness for the Agnation spirituality than I do for the Assumptionist spirituality, though I love Saint Augustine and two of our sons are named after him, for me finding God in all things is much more the way I would approach God.

**JJ:** Before we go any further do you mind stating what you do and where you work because we haven't discussed that yet. [Laughs.]

**LCK:** What do I do? I'm a professor of philosophy at Assumption College and I teach philosophy.

**JJ:** Now the responsibilities of housework, do you share them with your husband?

**LCK:** Yeah we really do and this is the amazing thing about my husband. I'm about to tell you the most amazing thing. When he was, actually it's not the most amazing thing, but, when he was young he grew up in upstate New York, you know where Kodak is. Kodak has huge office buildings and one of my husbands first jobs was to clean the bathrooms at Kodak and he is the best, most efficient bathroom cleaner I've ever met and now that we have many bathrooms he cleans them all and to me this is like a godsend, I have a husband who cleans bathrooms.

Actually to be honest, I think it is shared very, very equally in my family. I don't think that was true when I was home with the kids and I don't think it should have been at that point. You know he was off earning the money and the house was a mess anyway, you know with the four kids, and I would cook the dinner. I tend to do more cooking and he tends to do more cleaning up. We always clean on Saturday mornings believe it or not. The kids all have their little job and they're lousy cleaners. But Dick, my husband is, we're just like this, we go through it, so generally we have a pretty clean house and I have no complaints in that category.

**JJ:** Does he cook dinner too?

**LCK:** He does occasionally. He has some specialties as they say. He makes, well he used to make whole wheat bread, when we were courting as they say, that used to be one of the presents he would give me, is homemade bread. It was really good. But now he doesn't have time to do that, but he does cook dinner. I think I cook more than he does. Occasionally he cooks, what are his bests? He has a couple of things, his best dinner is pesto. This is silly but we always have pesto on Christmas Eve. Isn't that funny? All the kids love pesto so we always have that on Christmas Eve.

**AC:** What kind of work does your husband do?

**LCK:** Dick is the associate dean in the School of Management at Boston College so he's in charge of the undergraduate students in the school of management there and that's a long distance from when I first met him and we got married and he was the director of the PULSE Program which was a philosophy and theology program where students did internships in social justice or social advocacy type placements, like what you would call service learning.

**JJ:** Have you been involved in volunteer or community work?

**LCK:** Yes, but not as much in the past as I should be. The community work I was involved with in the past was working in the Catholic Worker House and that was a number of years ago in Boston and I actually lived in one of the satellite communities just across from the Catholic Worker house on Montgomery Street. So I did that and when we came to Worcester I worked on the Board of Directors, maybe it was called the Board of Advisors, of an organization which I named, called COMPASS and I named it because it was a group that worked with adolescents and so it was Community Providers of Adolescent Social Services, Compass, the idea was to put the kids in the right direction. I'm still really proud of that name. So I did that. Also I work at our church, community service at church. I'm a lector and I have been a teacher in the confirmation program and also an RCIA which is the adult right for confirmation. I was also involved a bit, with the church, in the Worcester, gee it's an inter, I forget the name of it now but it was an inter church effort to house homeless families.

**JJ:** This is kind of going back but we never asked you what made you choose philosophy?

**LCK:** You know its funny I don't know why I'm just saying all this as honestly as I can, I'm just telling you the honest truth. I chose philosophy in part because, initially I chose to study philosophy, this is the truth, and this is embarrassing too for the record but it's the truth because I

really liked this guy and he was really into philosophy and I thought it would be a way, this is the honest truth, it is the honest sexist truth, but I thought this looks interesting so I read this book of philosophy, I still have it, it's probably on the shelf somewhere, it's a terrible book and it's called "The Ideas of the Great Philosophers" and I've looked at it since I now know some philosophy and it's a terrible, terrible book. It's got one page on Aristotle, two on Nietzsche, it's just terrible, but immediately after I got to college I had no interest in him but I kind of got sucked into philosophy for real and I liked it. I was always somebody that asked really foundational questions and I wanted to know really about things that mattered so I was interested in it. I also liked it because it was hard and I thought, honestly, I look back I think it was like let's see if I could torture myself a little more, and by the time I graduated I was really torn. I had majors in English and philosophy and effectively in history but they wouldn't let me declare it. So I had basically three majors and I was really torn between philosophy and English. I went to philosophy and frankly I think it was a mistake. I think I'm better suited for literature, and as I say that, it's funny I'm not saying I'm not good at it because I think I am to be honest. I'm trying to be honest, but my real loves in my mind, are more, I find them a lot through literature and that's why I love to teach Philosophy and Literature and why I'm always throwing out examples and because that's more the way I really honestly think. I'm not a rigorous magician.

**JJ:** Well I think you're a great philosophy teacher.

**LCK:** Thank you very much Jess. I love it, don't get me wrong but it's just, I think it was, as a woman, I didn't want to take the easy way and I think when I went to graduate school, I was surrounded by men. I don't know. I wanted to, I really wanted to do what was hard, and even as I look back in graduate school, my best friend who came a couple years behind me, she actually wrote her dissertation on Hegel just because it was hard and it's hard for you to imagine but in those days we women were tokens in graduate school. It's not true now but it was then. I was a token and I was not about....

**AC:** What do you like to do in your free time?

**LCK:** That is pretty random. No. The reason it's random for me, is because I don't feel like I have a huge amount of time to do that it's something that is unhappy making in my life, mostly because of friendship. I feel like friendship has really suffered and you know my guess if you talked honestly to a lot of people my age who are sort of at their peak in terms of our responsibilities in terms of our professions and our families and all the rest of it most of us don't have a lot of time to do those kinds of things. What do I like to do? I love to read and I usually have a book going. That is fun for me and this is ironic because I feel embarrassed putting this onto the thing but the book I'm reading right now is about college students and it's called, and this is the funny part, *Sex and the Soul* and it's actually for your class Jess, for the Love and Friendship class, and it's talking about college students and their reaction to sex and whether or not it has a relationship with religious experience and what they have to say about schools like Assumption is fascinating, it's really interesting. I'm going to try to import some of it into your class. That's really fun for me to do that. My absolute favorite thing to do, as anyone in my family will know, is to go to the beach. I absolutely love the beach and I love being out in nature, and another silly thing that I like to do is, haven't done a lot of it, but I'm planning on doing it

with my friend Nancy, she just emailed me again, which is beading. We make necklaces. Have you ever done that?

**JJ:** Oh, my cousin does that she comes up with some great stuff.

**AC:** Some people can make really nice things.

**LCK:** Yeah, I've only done it, I've only made two for my friends, and I've never made one for myself, but it's really fun, I really like that a lot, but it doesn't beat the beach though. The beach is like the epitome for me, and part of me is because life is so active and I just love to go sit there. I love the melody of the beach. I love the sound, to me it's so, it's like eternity there, you know, that is my favorite thing, and I will think of all the other things I like after.

**JJ:** Laughs. It's always hard.

**LCK:** Yeah. I know.

**JJ:** How do you define success in your life?

**LCK:** To me, it would be living according to those priorities that I told you about, which as I said I don't always do. If anything I elevate you know, spend more time with my husband and family, in service to them, and I think that's really important and being with them. That's the other thing. I love to go shopping with my daughter. I do love that. We have a blast when we go together. And I love to just go sit in Starbucks and talk to her you know, that's really fun for me. So that would be success for me. Professionally, I am pretty ambitious, or I have been ambitious and I wanted to become a full professor and I did so I was happy about that. And I had this interior drive to excel that has fueled a lot of my life positively and negatively I think. But you know, the priorities of God and family and friends and academic, that would be the most important for me.

**AC:** Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women today and future generations?

**LCK:** Oh boy

**AC:** Sorry for the hard question

**LCK:** Yeah that is a really hard one. I don't know if I could put it in a nutshell. You know, instantly when you say that I think of my own daughter who's seventeen and the million and one things I say to her, most of which she doesn't want to hear. Let me think on this because it's an important question to me. One of the first things that comes to mind is, discover something to do for your life's work that you're good at and that brings you joy and you know, lots of times we want to do something but we're not good at it or we're really good at it but it doesn't make us happy and, or thirdly, that it's not of service to other people. I think it's really important to do something that you're good at, that brings you joy, and that contributes to the world. I would really want my daughter, and all women, to think about that. I really think it's important to

reflect, really seriously on the ways in which, and I believe this very much, the ways in which, insidiously, women are diminished, even today in our culture, and I believe that very strongly. I see it with my daughter and her attempt, even though she's been raised in an environment where she has parents who believe firmly in, you know, quality and authenticity and all the rest of it, where she still, in a certain way, tries to please the boys. You know, what the boys think is really important and I think it's really.....whoa, our light just went off.....no worries, we have that other light. I just think it's really important for her to see how insidious that can be you know, I think that's really important. I worry about that even in class you know, I worry about, you know, unintentionally calling on more guys than women. I think it's really important, this is so Socratic but to know yourself and to spend your whole life in the service of coming to know who you are and how authentically difficult that is. I think it's really important to become as radically frank about who you are as you possibly can and I think it's really important for women and men, everybody to be seekers, to look for what's important in human life, and I also think, and this is from my own experience, it took me a while because I was in college, feminism has never been a bad word for me. It is now for some people who have my credentials, I mean when I say my credentials I mean I'm Catholic, I'm conservative in many ways, I'm socially, somewhat liberal. But feminism has never been a bad word, quite the opposite, but for me it's a feminism which is more in tune with someone like an Edith Stein than it is with anybody else. So I came into graduate school after college and I was a feminist really, but when my children were born I tried by coming back to work, this is just me, I'm just speaking for myself, to ignore, not ignore but minimize some part of myself. I tried to think by coming back to work initially, and I wasn't faithful to my deepest self when I did that, so for me, I was being most honest with who I am and what I valued when I actually said "tenure me or don't tenure me, I don't really care!" You know, and left, and that, I sometimes think women do a disservice to the deepest longings of their heart by getting in step with whatever it is society says we should be whereas I really firmly believe all of us ought to be attentive to our inward voice and when I did attend to it, for me it meant being with my kids and it again is something I'm just immensely grateful for. So I would tell my daughter or the women to attend to your deepest voice, don't try to remake yourself in anybody's image, including the culture's. Listen to your deepest self.

**JJ:** In conclusion of this interview, is there anything you would like to add?

**LCK:** Well I would say since it's a Worcester project, I think Worcester is a really terrific place, and I really mean that. I know we get teased about it a lot but in terms of living here and actually raising a family and teaching here and meeting terrific students like you guys and finding friends of the heart, you know it's been a wonderful place for me and I think Worcester has a lot to offer, and granted Boston is more exciting, I can't resist that but I really do love that so, my kids can't, how would I put it, one of them is anxious to go away and the other is presently seeing the world but I wouldn't be terribly surprised if they reconfigured here, you know back here. But who knows, the world is wide as they say, but Worcester is a good place.

**JJ:** Especially now, after I feel like they're trying to rebuild and making it a better and safer place.

**LCK:** Yeah, I hope you're right Jess, because we are fairly slow to welcome progress I think. When you go to other places you think oh it's like they're doing it a little faster. But just

sometimes the people and the community it's got the best of both the small world and the big world. But I think that's mostly for us where we have connections with people you know, through a family situation, when you're a college student I don't know what the experience would be like. I would hope it would be positive for you guys.

**JJ:** It is.

**AC:** I like it yeah.

**JJ:** It's hard because we're like stuck at Assumption.

**LCK:** Exactly. And you guys don't have the easy access to other students, you know, at Holy Cross and Clark.

**JJ:** Yeah well there's a Consortium bus but it doesn't always come so I don't trust it.

**LCK:** Yeah and who wants to wait for a bus?

**JJ:** Yeah I know

**LCK:** I also want to say thank you for interviewing me and it was a pleasure.

**JJ:** Thank you for allowing us to interview you.

**AC:** Yeah thanks, it was very interesting.