

Interviewee: Sharon Ann McLaughlin  
Interviewers: Jose Fernandez and Jay Killion  
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Sharon McLaughlin was born in 1958 in Worcester, MA and attended Burncoat Senior High School. Her father was a professor at Worcester State College and her mother a homemaker. Sharon runs her own college admissions consulting business which was inspired through her father's love of education along with her own passionate interest in adult education. In this interview, Sharon discusses some of the struggles she encountered in her career and personal life. She gives insight on finding what you love to do and the emotional adversity she has faced with an ill boyfriend and aging parents.

**JF:** What is your full maiden name and your married name, if married?

**SM:** My full name is Sharon Ann McLaughlin and I don't have a married name.

**JF:** Okay, when were you born?

**SM:** On [ ] 1958

**JF:** Have you ever been married?

**SM:** No.

**JF:** What cultures, ethnicities do you identify with your family background?

**SM:** Irish and English.

**JF:** Can you tell me about your parents a little more?

**SM:** Both of my parents are still alive. My father is a retired professor from Worcester State College, he was a speech therapist, and he had worked in the communications disorders department and actually he was there when they formed it because when he first started working at Worcester State the speech pathology department was part of the drama, it was the drama and speech department, so he helped organize that and prior to that he was an elementary school teacher and my mother has been a homemaker all her life.

**JF:** Okay, and when your father was you know doing all that stuff how old were you?

**SM:** He was an elementary school teacher when I was in elementary and middle school.

**JF:** Was he your teacher in elementary school?

**SM:** No he worked, although he worked in the Worcester school system he taught at a different school. He also taught out in Shirley, he taught fourth and fifth grade, he taught a split so he taught both in the same classroom.

**JF:** And when did he get in to being a professor?

**SM:** I believe I was in junior high school.

**JF:** Okay.

**SM:** I actually went to class with him when he went to graduate school—

**JF:** Oh really?

**SM:** I, well I was in, well yeah [phone rings] he was taking graduate classes when I was in like the first or second grade and I had had chicken pox or something and so my hearing was off and you know how they test your hearings in schools –

**JF:** Yeah.

**SM:** Well I had residual hearing issues that spring so I flunked my in-school test so they used me as a guinea pig in his classes that summer [laughter] so we would drive up to Amherst every summer.

**JF:** Did he ask you to be—

**SM:** Yup, yup. They would feed me candy as my reward [laughter]. So I always say I went to grade school, I mean grad school when I was in the first grade.

**JF:** Well, at least you got something out of it so.

**SM:** Yeah.

**JF:** Where have you lived during your childhood?

**SM:** I grew up and lived in Worcester. Initially I lived over on \_\_\_\_ Street for the first few years and when I started elementary school we moved that summer to Darnell which is off Holden Street and I lived in Worcester until I graduated from college and then I moved to Connecticut for a few years and worked there—

**JF:** Oh really?

**SM:** And then moved back to Worcester so I did run away for a few years [laughter].

**JF:** How was, like the, social era at that time, like in Worcester, was there a lot of other cultures in the area you lived or no?

**SM:** My neighborhood when I was growing up there was a lot of French, Italian—I think Irish, English, French, and Italian in my neighborhood. We had one Jewish kid in my, one Jewish family in my elementary school everybody else was Eastern European, Irish, English, French, Italian.

**JF:** But I mean you experienced other cultures right?

**SM:** Right, right I did more so when I went to junior high school because we had more Jewish kids and more African-American and Puerto Rican kids in junior high school so I had a very, very white Anglo elementary school experience.

**JF:** Okay, and what high school did you go to?

**SM:** I went to Burncoat Senior High School.

**JF:** Oh, you went to Burncoat Senior High School?

**SM:** Yeah.

**JF:** Oh, okay. What was your neighborhood generally like?

**SM:** Very residential. All single family private homes, most of the families had three or four kids.

**JF:** And you're the oldest or...

**SM:** I'm the oldest of four, yeah. I've got two sisters, it's myself, a sister, a brother, and another sister.

**JF:** So you take charge in the—

**SM:** I try to, I try to [laughter]

**JF:** If you were not, oh, you were born in Worcester.

**SM:** Yeah.

**JF:** You still live in Worcester, right?

**SM:** I do, I moved back so I've been here since 1986 I moved back.

**JF:** From Connecticut?

**SM:** From Connecticut. So I was away for about three or four years then I moved back.

**JF:** Okay and do all of your brothers and sisters and parents live in the Worcester area or no?

**SM:** No, actually it's just my parents and I. My younger sister now lives in Framingham; I have a brother who lives in Rhode Island, down in Jamestown, Rhode Island. And my sister and her family live in Texas.

**JF:** In Texas? Wow.

**SM:** Yeah in Allen, Texas north of Dallas, about 45 minutes north of Dallas.

**JF:** And do you live with your parents right now?

**SM:** No I don't, not at the moment. They're at that age though, that that could change. You know I may be one of those adults that needs to bring my family into my home or, you know, move in with them to take care of them cause they're in their late 70's, getting up to almost 80 so.

**JF:** And how's your relationship with them?

**SM:** Oh very good and me being the oldest and being the oldest girl, and the one that's geographically the closest, you know, I'm checking in on them a lot more than I used to so you know, I'm going to go get corn beef and cabbage on Sunday for them ,St. Patrick's Day or the day after, but yeah we—I was just with them last weekend, we tend to stay close as a family even though some of us are a little further apart. Birthdays are a big deal in my family as an excuse to get people together so yeah.

**JF:** Okay, that's good that's good. How about your younger sister? How's your relationship with your younger sister, you said she lives in Rhode Island or—

**SM:** No she lives in Framingham.

**JF:** Oh in Framingham?

**SM:** Yeah and we're close because she works in education, she's a faculty member at Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill and so she's close geographically and we share a lot of things in common yeah.

**JF:** And how about your brother who lives in Rhode Island?

**SM:** He is -- he works a lot, we do stay close—

**JF:** He's a workaholic? [laughter]

**SM:** Well the type of work he does, this is going into his busy season, he manages a boat yard down in Rhode Island, so you know people who buy boats and yachts will buy through their company—

**JF:** Oh, he sells them?

**SM:** He sells and initially he worked on them. When he graduated high school he went into the Coast Guard. And he became what's called a fireman there the ones that repair and maintain the engines on all of the vessels. And when he came out of the coast guard he worked for a boat yard doing that but then as he got older and he didn't like being out in the cold in the winter working on machines, and of course those things get heavy and as you get older it's harder to do that work.

**JF:** And what year did he go into the Coast Guard?

**SM:** He went in; well he's about four years younger than I am, so I graduated in '76 so probably 1980.

**JF:** 1980? So it wasn't during any time of war?

**SM:** No, no it wasn't. See when he was in the Coast Guard, unless we're at war they're part of the department of—they're not a military thing until we're in war so they're in a different jurisdiction. So he was stationed down in the cape and then down at Point Judith for a while and that's why he ended up living in Rhode Island.

**JF:** When did he end up getting out of the coast guard?

**SM:** He only did one tour in the coast guard, so probably the mid 80's. So he's been working at different marinas down there since then.

**JF:** I mean, how did that make you feel that he went to the Coast Guard at that age, did you want him to?

**SM:** No I didn't have any adverse feelings about it. I mean knew he was not going to be going off into war, because we were not in a war.

**JF:** Well, I mean since he was gonna be away for so long did that make you feel like you were—

**SM:** No cause there was, well he was, stationed at the Cape and he was stationed down on Point Judith so, we really saw him fairly regularly.

**JF:** Well that's good, a lot of people you know, well I mean my friends in high school they went off and it seems like a lot of people don't see them as much.

**SM:** I think it depends on where you're stationed—

**JF:** Yeah.

**SM:** He was pretty much close to home, other than when he went through his training which was down in Camp Maine in Jersey he was around. You know he had a motorcycle so he would just tool up from the cape on his motorcycle at that point so yeah.

**JF:** How about your sister in Texas do you stay in touch with her?

**SM:** Yeah we do a lot of—I visit her every couple of years they're up here every couple of years, we're on the phone a lot. She has two daughters so I'm helping them—I'm helped them last year with college admissions and financial aid questions for her oldest daughter.

**JF:** Are they coming up here for college or no?

**SM:** Her daughter is up at SUNY [State University of New York] Syracuse.

**JF:** Oh really?

**SM:** Yeah in their environmental and forestation program up there so yeah.

**JF:** So you see them a lot too right? Your neices?

**SM:** Yeah, not as much as obviously my brother and sister here in New England but you know we're on the phone or every other year they're up visiting family.

**JF:** Oh that's good.

**SM:** So hopefully they'll visit us this year. Cause last year they came up only because they were bringing Sara to college so they didn't do family stuff they just brought her to college.

**JF:** They had to drive up here right?

**SM:** No they flew.

**JF:** Oh they flew?

**SM:** They flew from Texas.

**JF:** Oh alright. Okay let me see what else I have here. What challenge do you think this city faces still from the times that you were living here?

**SM:** Well I think historically, being someone who was raised and born in the city, there is a complex that residents have about, there's nothing to do in Worcester and they always look to Boston to do things and this is something that I used to just cringe at when my friends at high school—

**JF:** They would say that about—

**SM:** They would say it back then in the 70's. You know look at all the colleges there are, all the different things that you can do. They were always "Worcester's dead there's nothing to do in Worcester."

**JF:** So what did you guys do then, what did you say to your friends?

**SM:** We just went and did the things that we wanted to do and hung out with the kids that we wanted to hang out with and did the same kind of things. So, you know, we just—they weren't gonna buy into the fact that there are a lot of really good things to do in the city, then we're just gonna drop them as friends.

**JF:** Yeah a lot—

**SM:** Sometimes you can't change their mind you just move on [laughter].

**JF:** Yeah some of my friends say the same thing too.

**SM:** So that's an old complaint and I think too I know a few people who are new to the city and they feel like they have a hard time breaking into the culture in here. Particularly businesses I have friends who are not from the area who are trying to grow a business and they find it hard to get people to come out and do things. I have a woman who's a friend and runs a yoga studio and is having a hard time getting people to that side of the city so it's very—neighborhoods, you know broken down into neighborhoods and I think sometimes people just don't want to go across the city to do something.

**JF:** Yeah, I mean, Worcester is the second biggest city in New England isn't it?

**SM:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**JF:** What would you change about the city?

**SM:** Oh gosh, where do you begin? You know I'm doing a lot of work with networking groups and trying to bring awareness to some of the businesses in the area. So I'm doing some of that stuff to try and get people to think about spending their money and their time in the city. I'm a member of Worcester Local First and some other area chambers of commerce, other networking groups so you know I'm letting people know about the different businesses that I'm meeting and the different opportunities that there are for people. Obviously I talk a lot, when I meet with people, I talk about all the educational opportunities, having our college planning service and with twenty plus years of experience working in colleges in admissions and financial aid so I try to advocate for those things. I would like to see more people get involved in voting, and more minorities so that we can get more, a more diverse city council, and a more diverse school committee because I think when we bring more different cultures into the government we can really provide more opportunities and maybe change the way we do some things in the city.

**JF:** Yeah 'cause I live in Auburn, and you know, my family they came from the Dominican Republic and my mom she always wants to vote so she's always trying to vote, you know every time.

**SM:** Right and that's the other thing. I do belong to the Worcester Women's League of Voters of Central, you know of Worcester, so I'm always promoting the type of thing to.

**JF:** I can let my mother know about that.

**SM:** Yeah, yeah definitely.

**JF:** Yeah she likes that stuff. So what distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?

**SM:** I think it's just the diversity of the colleges. I really like the fact that although it's a city you really do have that sense of family and neighborhoods. There's a lot of green, I mean when people drive through the city on the highway they don't see a good side they see all the buildings, but when you get off the highway and you see Elm Park and you know some of the really nice green areas, that's really important to me. And just all of the cultural events that are available, whether you want something that's classical music or something that's avant-garde, you know the whole thing. A lot of the Tornados [baseball], the Sharks [hockey], there's a lot of stuff that's available for families, you know if they actually get up off their chairs and away from their TV's, so there's stuff to do, there's a lot of stuff to do.

**JF:** They've got a lot of events at the DCU center too.

**SM:** Right and there's a lot of free stuff that people can get involved in. Activities, events, fairs in the city, you know the start on the street and different things that are happening, people can get involved in. The parades [laughter] I mean every time you turn around there's a Columbus Day Parade a St. Patrick's Day Parade I mean Veteran's Day Parade, Memorial Day Parade, you name it. So there's a lot of different stuff, and with the colleges there's a lot of stuff going on at the colleges that the community can access as well.



**JF:** What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

**SM:** Oh gosh. Well I think it happens in some of the different groups I belong to. I know that sometimes women feel they still get the women's jobs. And I was just having this conversation recently. I was at a networking event talking to one of the women who was running the event and—

**JF:** What makes them feel like that though?

**SM:** Because there is still an old boy network in some of these groups. There are some male clubs that have been historically for men only in the city. The Worcester Club. There actually was a separate door where women used to have to go through. I don't know if that's the case any longer but if you were a woman you couldn't go into the Worcester Club unless you were brought in by a man who was a member of the Worcester Club.

**JF:** In your time?

**SM:** Yeah and you would even have to go in through a separate door.

**JF:** I did not know that, wow.

**SM:** Yeah so I think there's still some remnants of that where women feel like they're not given opportunities for leadership like that. But I see a lot of women in the area make opportunities by creating other groups and organizations, so there are some networking groups that have been developed by women that are open to everybody, but they have been established by women so that women can take the greater role in it.

**JF:** That's good. Where did you attend school like elementary or high school?

**SM:** I went to what was then called Indian Hill School, it was an elementary school on Arrarat Street and then I went to Forest Grove, it was called a junior high school then, and then I went to Burncoat Senior. My undergrad I went to Framingham State and then I came back, when I came back to Worcester, I went to Worcester State for my graduate degree -- so all public schools.

**JF:** You went to graduate school, you already mentioned that. What were your challenges in education throughout your school years?

**SM:** I think the biggest challenge for me was I was a very shy kid, I was a bright kid but I was a very shy kid. So I didn't like raising my hand--

**JF:** No, you and me both [laughter].

**SM:** You know, so I would sit in the back and the teacher would yell at the class I'd be the one to cry [laughter]. So I think going to college was really good for me because it kind of pushed me out of my shell that's why I went to Framingham instead of Worcester State because my dad was teaching at Worcester State and I figured I wanted to go out to someplace where no one knew my family and I could make my mark. I could flop or succeed on my own. But I think that was very important for me.

**JF:** When you finished all of, you know, your school years what did you see as your options?

**SM:** Well when I graduated with my undergraduate degree I started working in, I majored in English, minored in journalism. My first job out of college was working for a program through the city called \_\_\_\_??? which was employment training I actually was an instructor for that program and that lasted a year because it was federally funded and it was eliminated and then I started working in colleges and college admission. So, when I got that job and realized that I liked it and I wanted to continue working in colleges, that's when I went back and got my graduate degree and when I was looking at graduate degrees you either had the choice of elementary or secondary education, and since I knew I didn't want to work in either of those two areas, I knew I didn't want a degree in that and I found at the time I was living in Connecticut and working at Post College in Waterbury, Connecticut and I found at that time that Worcester State ironically had a master's degree in education with a concentration in adult education so that's why I moved back to Massachusetts and to Worcester. That was an evening program. So I ended up, I actually ended up working in the financial aid office here at Assumption for three years while I was going to graduate school at night. So, yeah sometimes when you go out and work and you find something that you like, that leads you on to what you want to do for graduate work if you're not quite sure.

**JF:** Do you work outside of home, your home area?

**SM:** I work—my business is out of my house. I don't have a separate location for my business so I have a home office, but when I meet with my clients, I have clients all over the country, so I do a lot of work over the internet and the phone and when I have clients locally I go to their homes or I meet them.

**JF:** You don't travel at all to other different states to meet them or no?

**SM:** No, no 'cause—

**JF:** It's not necessary?

**SM:** No it's really not necessary because I will be meeting with them for a couple, an hour or two at a time doing research and then meeting with them to follow up so it's, out of state clients, if it's in you know northern Rhode Island or northern Connecticut, yeah or New Hampshire I might do it, but yeah the only one out of state I went to visit was my sister out in Texas. Other than that no, you know Skype is wonderful, internet is wonderful, phone is wonderful so.

**JF:** When you said that you really fell into working in college admissions I mean did you also have your hard times like you know did you struggle to get to where you are right now at all?

**SM:** Well throughout my career I've had points where I was not working. I've had jobs that have disappeared. Three years ago I was working, let me back up, I was working at Massasoit Community College in the late 90's early 2000, 2001, 2002 and my boyfriend at the time who I had been dating for five or six years became ill and I was living in Worcester and commuting to Brockton and he ended up with brain cancer so he ended up having surgery and he had to quit his job because he became disabled as a result of the cancer. So I struggled from that point on because I ended up leaving my job because I was worried about him and the commuting and taking care of him. Although he didn't live with me, he lived with me for a few months after his surgery, I made him do that because he was on so much medication, but then he moved back to his apartment. But I was still worried about him because he didn't have, his family was from Minnesota. He had a son who at that point was 14 and a half 15 years old. So he didn't have family here other than a son and his ex-wife and her family so I was kind of keeping an eye on him. So I quit my job to find something to do locally so I had a couple of jobs that I was doing. That's really when I started my consulting business, I took my college admissions and financial aid experience and transferred it into something I could do part time or full time. And then after he passed away I ended up working at the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation. I worked out of my home for them I would visit the colleges in the area, sell their little products, but with the Affordable Care Act the federal government tacked onto the bill the elimination of the Federal Student Loan Program which lead to the closing of the company that I was working for so I became unemployed again and with that I was doing the consulting part time, my college admissions consulting part time, so when I became unemployed again I decided I was going to focus on that. So over the past few years I've been struggling to build my business on a shoe string. So there been some challenges in life and in business but they're from outside sources, things that I didn't have any control over.

**JF:** Who do you work for right now?

**SM:** I work for me.

**JF:** For you?

**SM:** I work for me.

**JF:** Oh, you're your own boss now?

**SM:** I'm my own boss.

**JF:** That's good, that's good.

**SM:** Yeah

**JF:** What has this work meant to you?

**SM:** What has what?

**JF:** What has this work meant to you, like your job?

**SM:** I love doing what I do because I get to meet with students and talk to them about what their career goals and college plans are—help them find the college that they’re going to be comfortable at and help them be able to afford it. You know talk them into different scenarios and help them along the way. It’s nice to see kids go and really kind of blossom in college. You know, the ones that the parents worry about, “He or she is too shy to do this” or not going to adjust well to living out of state or taking care of themselves and they come back in December and say, “I can’t believe what a different kid this is” [laughter]. So, that’s where I get my fulfillment.

**JF:** So it satisfies you more to see you know these kids grow up and get an education, rather than just the money.

**SM:** Right, yeah I mean, you need the money to live by, but I wouldn’t be doing this if I didn’t enjoy working with the students and seeing them succeed.

**JF:** Yeah, that’s good. Yeah, always have to find enjoyment in anything you do so that’s good. Do you want to ask a couple questions?

**JK:** How have you balanced all the different, like your work and your family in life, how do you balance all of that?

**SM:** That is tricky, you know that is tricky. It was hard when my late boyfriend was alive and I was trying to watch him. It’s one of the reasons why I left that job because I was commuting for over an hour each way I had long hours. You know, you’re working for a school and you’re working in financial aid you have to work later at night to get any work done because you’ve got people coming in your door all the time. So you have to make decisions about what you’re gonna do what you have to give up. I’m at a point where I’m the oldest as I said and my parents are in their late 70’s and they’re in pretty good health but they’ve had some challenges the last year or so. So you know I’ve been yelling at them to do this, that, and the other thing. One, because I want them to stay in their homes and be self-sufficient for as long as they can because they’ll be healthier that way, but also it’s kind of a selfish thing because the healthier they are the less they’ll need to rely on me and as I said, I’m not only the oldest I’m also the one that’s closest so when things happen they call me. And it can be difficult so you know that’s always in the back of my mind. If they’re thinking of doing something, like my parents have been heating with wood and every August they’d get the delivery and I’d say you know let me know I’ll come over because I know that my father’s gonna move it and stack it so I would go over and help. They’ve come to the decision where they’re not gonna rely on wood any longer. Which for me is good

because it means less opportunity for him to get hurt moving it or my mother because she'll pick up the slack [laughter]. I had a situation last, perfect example, last winter with all that snow that we had my dad was having a problem with his leg and he couldn't shovel and we had an extension on the house where, an addition, so my father would rake the roof and shovel the roof, but my father couldn't do it and I found out that my mother was on the roof. She had climbed through the window in the bedroom upstairs and was shoveling the roof and I yelled at her I said, "You can't be doing that." "Well no, no, no let me do it" "Well no by the time you get there..." - you know all that stuff. And I said, "If you had fallen off the roof he's not going to be able to help you cause he's got a bum leg and you've got to bring him to PT two times a week, you fall off. Best case scenario is I'm bringing both of you to PT [laughter] four times a week, if you don't kill yourself!" I had to at that point call in my siblings and say look this is what's happening and they would call and berate them for doing stuff like that.

**JF:** And then that way they got control—

**SM:** Right, right so you know have to bring in the family to kind of help watch them so. I'm at that point I'm kind of in a point where I'm just ,you know, waiting to see what's happening, you know, a few years down the road probably have to make some more adjustments.

**JF:** Well you know they were so used to probably doing everything themselves and—

**SM:** Right, right it's that and as you get older you just don't want to admit that you can't do things because you're afraid of what the ramifications will be.

**JK:** Now that we're working to tell a full story of the history, what else would you want us to include, like what questions?

**SM:** Oh, I don't know. That, I can't think of anything.

**JF:** Okay, that's fine. I just have another question. What major historical events in Worcester have occurred during the time that you've lived here?

**SM:** Oh my goodness. I was a young kid when, I think it was, he was probably at that point Vice President, when Lyndon Johnson was a speaker up at Holy Cross cause I remember—

**JF:** Oh he came here?

**SM:** Yeah I remember my grandparents lived on Southbridge Street and we all went over to Southbridge Street to watch the car go by. What else has happened here that I was, oh good gosh, I was here during the bicentennial year, I was alive for the city's bicentennial year so I was here through all those celebrations. The Cold Storage Fire.

**JF:** Can you explain the bicentennial year a little bit more?

**SM:** Well, when the city reached its—what's bicentennial— 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, and they had celebrations throughout the year celebrating the fact that the city had been a city for 200 years.

**JF:** Oh okay, and you said you were here during the Worcester fire when the six firemen died?

**SM:** Yeah. So that was, I was here during, when I was a kid there was a blackout in New England in the 60's, I remember that.

**JF:** How long did that last?

**SM:** I think it was overnight.

**JF:** Overnight?

**SM:** But it hit, it was a wide one, it wasn't just Worcester, it was all of New England and then into New York.

**JF:** And you saw that happening or no?

**SM:** I don't remember what the cause of that was. That would be a good thing to go back and see.

**JF:** Did any of those events impact you personally at all?

**SM:** Well, of course the big blackout in the 60's did because we all were without electricity and I can't remember what time of year that was either, I don't remember—

**JF:** Was it wintertime cause that was—

**SM:** I was a kid, I was a kid so I don't remember what time of the year it was. But, the Cold Storage I was here. One of the members of my parish was killed in that, my aunt's best friend's brother was killed in that. So it impacted a few people. Obviously I was around during the terrorist attack. I was actually working at Massasoit at the time and since it was a state institution the state closed down so we had to go home so that was kind of an eerie drive back because there wasn't really anybody around and I remember, I was over off of June Street and I remember the first time an airplane flew after the attack I just sat on my front stairs and watched it cause we hadn't had airplanes flying for a couple of weeks. So, yeah I remember calling families and trying to figure out where everybody was.

**JF:** Yeah, that's a good idea how you did that. Let me see if I have anything else here, yeah that's pretty much all the questions that we wanted to ask you, but thank you for taking your time here and everything.

**SM:** You're welcome, thank you, it was fun talking to you guys.

**JF:** I learned a lot from you, especially moving up, you know, how you said you are your own boss, that's pretty much what I want to do in my future.

**SM:** Yeah, there's some good and some bad about it, if you guys maybe want to—I'll give you each one of these. [paper rustles] If you guys just want to chat about stuff like that. What are you majoring in?

**JF:** I'm majoring in international business, but now I'm kind of deciding entrepreneurship, but we'll see where it takes me.

**SM:** But like I belong to a variety of networking groups and if you ever just want to test out one of the networking groups, let me know. I'll make sure that I'm there so I can introduce you around. I belong to a couple of the chamber groups. I belong to a—have you ever heard of BNI? Business Network International? There chapters all over the place.

**JF:** No, but I really like to be interested in it.

**SM:** BNI, I wasn't there this morning because I had the radio show but BNI make a commitment once you do, once you are in business because it costs to get into it, but you can come as a guest just to see what it feels like. You meet every week on the same day. We meet at quarter of seven in the morning until about eight thirty and the members get to do a commercial about their business so they get forty five seconds every week to talk about their business. And you network before and network after and you refer, you get to learn about the different businesses and its seat based so every business, there's one business for each seat so you can have more than one lawyer but they can't do the same type of law, you can have one yoga studio but you can be over \_\_\_\_? at the studio when the acupuncturist. You can't be in a competing business, so you get to know those people, you're meeting with them every week at the same time and they start referring business to you and you start referring business to them. The group I'm in has about fifty seven members and they already have about half a dozen members in their group that are clients of mine and some of them have actually referred their friends and clients to me. That might just be something that you would want to just fit in on and get an idea of what a BNI or business networking event is like, so feel free to email me.

**JF:** Yeah, definitely.

**SM:** My email address is not on that, but you have mine, because you and I have emailed back and forth. But either one of you, I belong to the Worcester Chamber, I belong to Local Worcester First, the Westside business network is a smaller one that was just developed by the woman who runs Sprouts Flower Shop on June Street, so it's geared towards businesses in this side of the city and there's something downtown called the Worcester Club, which initially was just the downtown Woman's club and it's been changed to the downtown Worcester Club so we always invited guys to it, but it's been changed and we're getting more guys into it. And there's no fee

for going into any of the downtown Worcester events. You know what I'll do I'll send you an email.

**JF:** Yes, please do.

**SM:** With the links to each of these and any of the ones that you want to visit. I'll make sure because I usually go to most of these. I'll make sure I'm there on the day that you come so I can introduce you different businesses just so you can – because if I had known about networking a lot earlier. I would have been further along. It's not just passing cards pack and forth, if you go frequently enough you get to know people and they get to trust you, building up the trust.

**JF:** Alright then. We'll keep in touch.

**SM:** Yeah, excellent. Well it was great meeting you both and I'm really sorry, I ended up being late.

**JF:** No, no it's okay, that's fine.