

Interviewee: Laura Porter  
Interviewers: Emily Hanlon, Emma Mailman, and Alyssa Whitney

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Worcester Women's Oral History Project

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**Abstract:** Laura Smith Porter was born in 1958 and raised in Illinois. After pursuing her undergraduate degree at Smith College, she continued her education at Princeton University. At Princeton, she met her husband Mark Richmond. After living in various areas, Mark was offered a job at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. In 1985, they settled down in Worcester, near Indian Lake. In this interview, Laura discusses the obstacles that she faced throughout her education and her career. Growing up as an only child, the early deaths of her parents inspired her to become a writer. After obtaining a master's degree from the University of Illinois, she taught at the college level and then decided to pursue the career path of a freelance writer and editor. Laura is motivated daily by her two children, Max and Zoey, and her husband, Mark. In addition to working for the *Telegram and Gazette*, she balances her home life, while also contributing to the pro-choice organization, the Jane Fund. Furthermore, Laura works one-on-one with high school and college-aged students who have disabilities. In this interview, Laura also discusses the evolving culture of Worcester, such as its diverse population.

**EM:** What is your full name, including both the maiden name and married name?

**LP:** Laura Smith Porter.

**EM:** When were you born?

**LP:** When or where?

**EM:** When?

**LP:** 1958.

**EM:** Have you ever married? If yes, what is the name of your husband?

**LP:** Yes. Mark Richman.

**EM:** Do you guys have any children?

**LP:** Yes. Max is 27 and Zoe is 23, and they are both Richman.

**EM:** And no grandchildren yet, right?

**LP:** That'd be bad news [Laughs].

**EM:** What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

**LP:** I guess Jewish at this point. Yeah, yeah. I converted so, I don't know, yeah, anyway put that.

**EM:** And then tell us about your parents. Did they grow up in Worcester as well or...?

**LP:** No. My mother grew up in south Texas and my father grew up in Kansas City.

**EM:** Oh, wow. That's far out.

**LP:** Mhm, mhm.

**EM:** Do they still live out there?

**LP:** No. They're both gone now. They died a while ago.

**EM:** Oh, I'm so sorry about that. Did you grow up living in Worcester?

**LP:** Nope. I grew up in Illinois.

**EM:** Oh, wow.

**LP:** We've been all over.

**EM:** What was the neighborhood like in Illinois versus...?

**LP:** Versus here?

**EM:** Versus what you're seeing now in Worcester?

**LP:** It's much more on a grid. I think it's probably the best, yeah know? Sidewalks and the little bicycles so you can ride your bikes down without going over the curb. You know, very laid out like that. Otherwise not too different. It's a flat world out there, so flat grid there and here it has so much more character, I guess, and it's younger too. There's a sense of history and the homes aren't as old.

**EM:** Since you weren't born here, when did you first arrive in Worcester?

**LP:** 1985.

**EM:** And why did you come?

**LP:** Because my husband teaches at WPI [Worcester Polytechnic Institute]. So that's when he was hired.

**EM:** And then you said you live in Worcester right now?

**LP:** Mhm.

**EM:** So, where in the city do you live? Or have you moved to multiple spots in Worcester because it is pretty big?

**LP:** Well, actually we've only lived in three places. We lived on Salisbury Street in an apartment across from the art museum. Then we bought a little cape out by the airport, and now we live on Forest Street near Indian lake.

**EM:** And are all your family members out towards Illinois?

**LP:** Yeah. I was an only child, so I'm the only one left and my husband has a sister in Chicago.

**EM:** And is the only connection to Worcester your husband coming over?

**LP:** Yeah. I think we felt we were going to be here for a couple years. And you know, that was thirty years ago [laughs] and I finished my dissertation here the first couple years too, so anyway... I don't know how detailed you want me to get.

**EM:** However detailed you want. Whatever you feel comfortable with.

**LP:** Okay. Well, I mean—okay, we met when he was at Cornell and I was at Princeton, and we were introduced by friends and then when he got this job, I finished my dissertation here so that's the first couple years. They were all academic.

**EM:** Uh, what challenges do you think that the city still faces? What would you change about the city?

**LP:** I think the city's in really good shape now. I think it's really interesting to see what's happening.

**EM:** Especially living on Salisbury Street because you're closer to see like WPI really evolving.

**LP:** Yeah. they're really building their whole—I don't know where you guys are from, or how often you get downtown, but the whole Canal District with Crompton Collective, and Birch Tree Bakery. The thing that I love about what's going on is these kind of pop-up cultural things. I think that's really where the life of the city is going to be. I'm not as wild about some of the justifications for the clearing of buildings, which is also going on at the same time. So I think it's interesting.

**EM:** Yeah there's a building down, I don't know if you know where Coughlin is the old building, I think it was an old building for WPI actually and they just remodeled it into these amazing lofts so that's another cool remodel. Yeah.

**LP:** Yeah. That's right. I know what you're talking about.

**EM:** What distinct characteristics besides the pop up culture that you mentioned make Worcester like Worcester?

**LP:** Diversity. I think that's been so cool. And I'm a historian, so I've been doing a lot of writing for the newspaper about this. It's celebrating its 150th year anniversary. So I've been looking at a lot of Worcester history, and you know you see very different groups from the nineteenth century, but it's still so diverse. Such an ethnic city. I think we're supposed to have the largest Ghanaian population in the country, which is cool.

**EM:** Is that this year?

**LP:** Yeah I think so. That's what I heard.

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

**LP:** You know what? That's a good question. I don't know as much about that as I should.

**EM:** Because I had just interviewed my grandma works for Coughlin. She's the CEO of Coughlin yeah so I had to ask her.

**LP:** So did you grow up here?

**EM:** Yeah, I'm like ten minutes down the road. So I'm like right there.

**LP:** Oh. So I'm not going to tell you anything you don't know.

**EM:** And I had asked similar questions for a different class, and she just said that she's seeing a lot more women coming into higher roles within, like, different work places. So, like, have you seen any of that? Or are you involved in any of that?

**LP:** Yeah. I don't know if I've seen it. I mean I have friends who are lawyers and doctors and it's very hard to tell whether that's Worcester per se or whether that's the wider culture, and now it's really 50/50 in med school and maybe more women in law school. You know? Sorry I live in my own little bubble of...

**EM:** No, that's okay, and you said you attended Princeton?

**LP:** Yes, for grad school.

**EM:** What about before that?

**LP:** I went to Smith for undergrad and I did my master's at the University of Illinois. I basically went home for a year to see if I wanted to go on and I went to Princeton after that.

**EM:** You already answered the graduate colleges. What were your challenges in education as far as, like, getting into the college, and once you were at college?

**LP:** I have a lot to say about women and education. I think there is such pushes to—I don't even know how to put this. I think that my biggest challenge from kindergarten to defending my PhD thesis. Why don't you talk more? Why don't you smile more? Right, I think there's such—it's hard to crack past that. It's hard to yell over the guy who's saying nothing, but saying a lot of it and getting all the attention. I think that's really tough. And I found that and some of it is personality and some of it is gender. There's plenty of women who are falling off their chairs answering questions, but I found that the professors I worked with, it wasn't really male culture it was either patronizing or it was diminishing. I could not wait till when I came here. And Mark got his job and he was teaching, and I was finishing up, I couldn't wait to get out of Princeton.

**EM:** Really?

**LP:** I loved working with my dissertation advisor because it was one on one and he was a good guy. He was an interesting guy, but I couldn't stand the classroom part because of all the stuff.

**EM:** Did you see that at all three schools, like Smith?

**LP:** No, not at Smith. Smith was fine [Laughs]. Smith should have prepared me for the rest of it. Yeah know? Illinois, not as much. I don't quite know why. It was a smaller—no. Actually, it was a bigger department. So it was less of a community. I think more, I was taking classes I wasn't teaching and it was a really tough environment and I don't know what it's like now but 30 years ago it was hard.

**EM:** I'd say it's better now at least here as far as the classroom goes and stuff but...

**LP:** Yeah. I mean it was more attitudes of male professors towards female graduate students.

**EM:** Oh, teacher to student?

**LP:** Oh yeah. My colleagues, I hate that word, but my friends in the program were fine. It was male professors really being patronizing to the female graduate students. Yeah it was bad but it was set still at that point. It seems crazy in the humanities to think about the imbalance but it was there. There weren't as many female professors.

**EM:** Yeah, especially us growing up now. It's changing and really evolving.

**LP:** And I think about the women, the senior and the full professors who were in that department then. There was one woman, and there were assistant professors, but they didn't have tenure so, anyway, I can go on and on about that.

**EM:** When finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options as far as like coming out to new schools and new school options?

**LP:** Right, right well I mean well we were sort of in—at first when I first finished I wanted to go the academic route and as I finished, I was teaching at Holy Cross as an adjunct and I did that for six or seven years. But for me, I mean it was a gradual awareness that I really didn't want to be a part of that world. I wanted to write and do my own world, do my own thing, you know? And it took a while to let go of everything Princeton had ....

**EM:** Instilled in you?

**LP:** ... Yes I was going to say done to me [Laughs], but I like that better. Because you feel like you're not serious, you're jumping off the track, and there's something wrong with that. It took me a while to come to terms with that and so I think when I started, I said I will just follow this and eventually Mark and I will decide what we were going to do about that. We knew a lot of people who had commuting marriages and were without kids and we'd done that in grad school so we weren't anxious to repeat that but I think it was a gradual awareness of what I wanted to do.

**EM:** While you were in school what support networks and mentoring were important to you?

**LP:** The only mentor I really had was a young woman assistant professor, who I house sat for and worked as her research assistant. I mean my advisor was an older man, he was fine but we worked well together. I mean he was a nice guy, but we worked well together because he was hands off and I liked being left alone [Laughs].

**EM:** Was the assistant professor at Princeton?

**LP:** Yeah, yeah in the history department.

**EM:** Alright, now just moving on into work, what was the first job you got like coming out of college?

**LP:** Holy Cross.

**EM:** And how long did you say you taught there?

**LP:** Six years.

**EM:** And since then, what other jobs have you had and what do you do currently?

**LP:** I do currently what I've done since then. I am a freelance writer and editor so I've edited a few books for people, but really my daily life is, I write a lot for the [Worcester] *Telegram* and I write for various other publications and I also work as an academic coach for high school and college students who have learning disabilities. So, I've been at basically all the colleges in town and some high schools too, so it's very—it's an independent life.

**EM:** And how did you come to do this work? Like, why did you switch? What triggered the switch?

**LP:** Okay the writing switch was, when my father died, when I was thirty five and I thought. "You know what? I'm an only child and if somebody doesn't write this stuff down nobody's going to. I'm going to forget it. There's nobody left to ask." I had started out wanting to write even before I went to grad school so for me it was also a coming back to that. I was doing that and somebody who did some tutoring in the colleges just as I was thinking maybe I should do something like that, asked me if I wanted to take a student she couldn't work with, and then it built from that it became a business. But I love that because I love the one on one with students you know? I missed you guys [Laughs] but I really enjoyed that I've been doing that for fifteen or sixteen years.

**EM:** It must be incredibly rewarding.

**LP:** Oh yeah, it's great.

**EM:** And between you and your husband, what are your primary responsibilities in terms of like house work, and child care as they were growing up was it like 50/50 or...?

**LP:** Yeah we're sort of funny, well he is anyways. When the kids were little it was mainly me during the day because he was the one with the full time job. But other than that timing and also that means when somebody's sick, I was the one that was home most of the time. Apart from that we were interchangeable when he was home, we were interchangeable unless they were in one of

those “we need mommy phases” but as they were growing up and I became busier we really were interchangeable. I mean he did a lot of sports stuff with them and he would leave. They really came first for him over his job. We were always on the sports fields but it was both of us. Housework, I guess I’ve done most of the cooking. He’s done most of the cleaning up. Now nobody’s in the house anymore so I don’t do anything [Laughs]. Yeah it’s really bad. I mean he’s doing all the laundry and I mean it’s fine but I feel a little bit like a slob. He does 75% of it, but I handle all the mail and bill writing and stuff because if you left it to him he wouldn’t open an envelope. I guess the simplest way of doing it for the most part, we’ve chosen the things we were good at and the other isn’t good at with the exception that when the kids were little it was me and if I had a full time job it would have been different.

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

**LP:** How do I like to do the “how do you do it all” thing”?

**EM:** Yeah.

**LP:** I mean you’re talking to me at such a funny time because my kids are gone. It’s like this weird thing that happens to you, you’re always fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting for time and all of the sudden it’s four o’clock and you don’t have to watch someone play field hockey. You have the whole night. So now I can’t even say that it’s a problem. Now if I have any problems with balancing it’s my own procrastination or too many deadlines or saying yes to too many things but that’s all me that isn’t anyone else’s doing or any structural issue.

**LP:** I’m pretty happy; I like it. I mean I don’t think I’ll let go of I could be doing more, I could be working harder, I mean that little voice right, but I’m glad I’m really glad I’ve done what I’ve done yeah. I don’t wish—occasionally I think about my dissertation and I think I like the mental gymnastics. I miss that a little bit because it was a good topic but I love what I’m writing and I’m also doing some of my own writing too

**EM:** So, no regrets?

**LP:** No not really. It’s so weird you know I wouldn’t have answered that question that way five, six, seven, eight years ago. I wouldn’t have.

**EM:** What do you think the change would be now, from then to now?

**LP:** I think it’s just having more time. Yeah I mean I know I have time to do what I’m telling myself I want to do... is this too much?

**EM:** No!

**LP:** Alright



**EM:** Moving into politics.

**LP:** Oh, cool.

**EM:** Do you consider yourself active politically?

**LP:** Yes.

**EM:** Have you ever been involved in volunteer or community board. If so, what groups are you most involved in?

**LP:** I'm on the board of the Jane Fund now which is an abortion fund. We give money to women who can't afford abortion care, so I've been involved in the pro-choice movement a lot.

**EM:** Totally support that.

**LP:** Thank you. What else have I done? Oh, temple stuff. I mean that doesn't really seem like community service. I mean you get drafted on committees, but I've done a lot of it. I'm done with it now, some religious stuff.

**EM:** What led you to join with the Jane fund?

**LP:** Because I really believe in the issue. And its predecessor was a pack called the Wachusett Coalition for Choice and we put out a voter's guide every fall telling voters where candidate stood on choice. And that evolved into a more direct service.

**EM:** And what are the organization's main goals like currently?

**LP:** Well, I mean we are always raising money because it goes, 90% of it goes directly to women who need help. We are also doing some outreach like we tabled at START last week we are beginning to get out there. Bit nervous about it, but experimenting for sure.

**EM:** What would you consider since you've been involved with the group, the major accomplishments that you've seen so far?

**LP:** I think that we've gotten to a point, I mean we actually have money. When we first started we had you know two nickels. And now we actually, we are giving away a lot of money which is great and we're helping a lot of women. We get about 30 calls a week. I answer the hot line too, and a lot of those are from out of state and we can only give 300 dollars a week to women from out of state.

**EM:** Oh, so that's really competitive?

**LP:** Yeah. Because we just don't have enough money

**EM:** Right.

**LP:** And we've got our focuses the way that it's a national system so we're the Central Mass fund. So our main focus has to be on local women, or women in Massachusetts. Yeah I think it's been good. I'm proud, I'm proud and you know they wrote a lot (of grants). I was on and off and now I'm back on and they wrote a lot of grants and did a really good job.

**EM:** What role has religion played in your life?

**LP:** I guess the short-term answer is that I was a bad Episcopalian and I converted to Judaism. And you know, I'm not such a great Jew either [laughs]. No, I'm very happy I converted and I did it for me. I didn't do it for my husband who wants really nothing to do with religion at all and it was important. And I'm joking about it, but it's important, it's important to me.

**EH:** When did you convert?

**LP:** Ten years ago. So you know, we tried to do both but there's no doing both. But we still do Christmas, it's just like Thanksgiving with presents [laughs].

**EM:** How have health issues impacted your life for those in your family? That goes to like in the work place, when you're at school, anything like that.

**LP:** Like my immediate family?

**EM:** Yeah, and yourself.

**LP:** My parents are both—do you want parents too?

**EM:** Yes.

**LP:** Well both my parents died young. I mean they both had cancer so we've been lucky [knocks table]. Yeah, I mean we have to knock on so much wood now not to, you know, not in our family. Taking care of my mother-in-law for the last few years, but she died last summer so.

**EM:** And what are your experiences in accessing quality affordable health care?

**LP:** What are my experiences in? I'm sorry my hearing is terrible.

**EM:** What are your experiences in accessing quality affordable health care?

**LP:** Well I've been fine you know, because we have a good plan. Yeah, so no problem.

**EM:** Who's health are you responsible for besides your own? So obviously your children.

**LP:** A little bit not so much anymore. Now they learned how to use the phone and call the doctor, it's amazing. I mean my daughter does that, my son kind of just ignores everything. So, I guess I'm sort of responsible.

**EM:** We were just learning in class about how normally the wife would normally be in the household taking care of the husband's health, making sure the children are okay, stuff like that.

**LP:** Right. I mean I did that all not so much for him, but my kids both had asthma so I was always running around with that and he—you know I guess I fell into the trap for a while of making calls for Mark. But not for a long time, probably because I was the one home and could get the return phone call and yeah, anyway.

**EM:** Convenience.

**LP:** Mhm.

**EM:** How did you get through tough times? Like what kind of thoughts kept you going, what motivated you? Things like that. So obviously, your writing.

**LP:** Right. I mean that's a good question. I'm supposed to say religion, here aren't I? [laughs]. Yeah, I mean I guess if it involves the family, we talk a lot. You know we aren't a family with too much unsaid. You know the kids grew up with that. We don't let anything slide, but yeah, writing. I think living a normal life. A normal routine is a powerful healing kind of thing. You sort of... you forget how important the little things are normal, just being normal.

**EM:** And for your own life, how do you define success, like how is that?

**LP:** How do I define what?

**EM:** Success, how do you define it? How has it changed over time from when you were in school, to now?

**LP:** That's a good question too. I mean, I think I define it now by—what I think of success automatically as work related. That's probably not fair, but you know that's not very multi-dimensional. But I think I define it in terms of what you feel about what you've accomplished day to day in doing work that you want to do. I mean it sounds so clichéd, but I think it's really that simple. And when I was younger I was much less—I was always feeling like striving was more important you know? I really like what I do and I think that's a fairly recent realization that you know what, this is okay. I don't have to be on the bestseller list to feel .....

**EM:** Accomplished.

**LP:** Yeah yeah, and I think that changes through your life too. You know, I don't know if I'm still there you know, that I'm stuck there forever.

**EM:** What advice would you give to women of today and of future generations? So obviously push for education and supporting yourself.

**LP:** Education. Don't be afraid to change something if it's not the right thing. You know whatever that is relationship, job, field, place. And I think the people your age now are living now careers. You aren't getting stuck in something that doesn't feel right to you. I would give that advice. I mean that sounds so cliché, but if there's something you want to do, do it. Don't let anybody tell you you can't do it and the whole have it all thing? I don't even know what to say about that. Is it possible? Maybe. But is it impossible? Also maybe.

**EM:** Alright, that's all we have written down is there anything else... only other thing I can think of is your parents growing up did they share a similar education you did growing up?

**LP:** My dad did.

**EM:** Or was it significantly different?

**LP:** No, it wasn't significantly different. No, my Mom went to college and my Dad actually had a doctorate in History, so that was similar.

**EM:** So, did they always push for you to like go to school, get a job, and support yourself? Was it ever like - we're just learning a lot about how it used to be women - like are brought up to say like - Oh, you're going to have a family, support a family, the man's going to work. Did they ever encourage that?

**LP:** No, I don't think so. I mean my mom would—I mean they would talk about when you were going to have kids. I mean what does a mother say? I can't wait to have a daughter like you right? But no not really. They expected me to be a an educated professional. I mean there wasn't any sense of that. In fact, I can't give you an example because my mother died when I was 25, so I was still at Princeton. And not long before she died, I was writing my dissertation. She said to my father, don't tell her she doesn't have to finish if she doesn't want to if it's too hard. And he was appalled and he never said anything. I mean he told me later but I mean that was a little bit—she was pretty traditional.

**AW:** We should probably do the additional questions.

**EM:** Yeah, do you want to?

**AW:** Yeah, there's just a couple extra that we've had just to slide in.

**EM:** Has there been a major historical event since you've been in Worcester, and did it impact you?

**LP:** 9/11 [Terrorist attacks by Islamic terrorist group on September 11, 2001]

**EM:** How did it impact you?

**LP:** Oh my God. Well how old were you guys during 9/11?

**EH:** First grade

**LP:** Fifth grade?

**EH:** No first grade.

**EM:** They have four years on me, So I don't even remember.

**LP:** Yeah okay, so you're seniors?

**EH:** Yes

**AW:** Yes

**LP:** Yeah first grade—yeah it was you know—I watched all the coverage a couple weeks ago and we watched MSNBC [American Cable Network]. I think NBC [National Broadcasting Company] ran whole coverage from that morning time linked. It was just so stunning. There's really just no words and I mean my daughter was in fourth grade so they made the decision while she was at school—my son—no she was younger than that. She was in second grade, and my mother in law lived in New York. So he, Max, left his class because they told the older kids in the middle school and he went into a teacher's office and called his grandmother to make sure she was okay and he was the first to get through, because we couldn't get through and the little kids—I mean maybe your families did this too, we just kept her as away from it as much as possible because of—yeah, I mean that's the biggest one. I mean the biggest local one I think was when the six local fire fighters died in '99. [Worcester Cold Storage Fire] That was really striking

**EM:** They do a race for that every year I think. I think I've run it a couple times.

**LP:** Have you?

**EM:** My mom's like a wicked, wicked runner so...

**LP:** Is she, yeah?

**EM:** So I've ran it with her a couple times I feel like...

**LP:** Oh, cool.

**EM:** Growing up how old were you when your parents allowed you to go on dates and go out?

**LP:** [groan] Oh God [laughs]. This is crazy. I think I went to a football game with a guy when I was 12. But I went to this weird school, it was a lab school, so we were together from like seventh grade to senior year.

**EM:** Oh, wow.

**LP:** So yeah, that was a real date that was just weird. So, I don't know, maybe 15 or 16.

**EM:** What was considered fashionable when you were growing up?

**LP:** Jeans. Fashionable for what age?

**EM:** Like when you were in your high school years.

**LP:** Yeah, just jeans, tee shirts.

**AW:** I don't even know what it is now. I feel like everyone's just so just doing their own thing.

**LP:** That's great. I see a lot of things. I saw adults wearing, you know, from the 60's.

**EM:** Oh yeah, some of the stuff is coming back definitely, like overalls, they've made an appearance.

**LP:** Oh, overalls were great.

**EM:** Yeah, they made an appearance.

**LP:** I'm too old for those now [laughs].

**EM:** Growing up, what was your favorite musical group or song?

**LP:** I don't know, what did we listen to? Three Dog Night, Beatles, Bread [1970's Rock Band]

**EM:** It asks for like clubs, like if there was like an establishment that you guys always went to. And it asks if it like catered to a particular group.

**LP:** A club? No, we didn't belong. There were country clubs, we didn't belong to them.

**EM:** In your school, how were the girls treated before you went to college? Because you told us about Princeton.

**LP:** High school?

**EM:** Yeah, in high school.

**LP:** Really, well I mean we were—it was a lab school so there was this sense that you had to take a test to get in and it was.

**EM:** Everyone belonged.

**LP:** A small class and yeah no, absolutely no difference.

**EH:** What was the size of your class?

**LP:** 37, when we graduated.

**EH:** Wow.

**LP:** I think we started with 50.

**EM:** 37. That's one class at my high school, because I went to Wachusett down the street.

**LP:** Oh, yeah it's huge.

**EM:** Our class, it was like 582 kids or something crazy, so 37? Wow, man.

**LP:** I know it's crazy, huh?

**EM:** Again, in high school, what were your most significant extracurricular - like activities moments?

**LP:** Newspaper, student government, what else did we do? I mean it was a tiny place, everybody did everything. Those are the main ones I think - oh acting theater, I forgot I did all that. That's what I mainly did too [laughs].

**EM:** When you weren't at home, where did you usually spend your time?

**LP:** Friend's houses.

**EM:** Was there like a particular place or was it just hang out where the hang out is?

**LP:** No, we didn't really have a hang out because we were all from all over town, so it wasn't really a neighborhood thing no. We went to each other's house. I mean I'm sure there were kids in my class in school who had fake IDs who were going on campus because university campus is there. I'm sure yeah, but.

**AW:** Times have not changed.

**LP:** No, they have not, they have not changed at all. The drinking age is later now; it was 18 when I went to college.

**AW:** Oh, wow. I have a question. You said you went to a lab school. Do you feel because it was such a smaller school it was different from other schools around?

**LP:** Oh, yeah, because it was small.

**AW:** Do you feel like it was sheltered or?

**LP:** Not really. I feel like it was really academic. It was really you know, there was a real push too, it was hard. And it was a school where actually you know the new math—well not your new math—was supposedly invented or developed in the early 50's and early 60's. So, there was a lot of curricular development and connections with the department of education at the university.

**EM:** Was the school in Illinois?

**LP:** Champaign [City in Illinois]. Yeah it didn't—I guess it probably—I mean by the end you needed to meet some new people.

**EM:** I can't even imagine.

**LP:** Yeah, right right.

**EM:** I bounce around. Even in high school, I was like just all over the place. So I don't think I'd be able to do it. I don't think I'd be able to do that.

**LP:** Well there was 250 in the whole thing. Where'd you go.

**AW:** Hudson High School. So, that's smaller, but not to the extreme. It got bigger. We ended up becoming a choice school so we got different kids; Leominster, Marlborough, like all around.



**LP:** That's funny.

**AW:** Yeah, I could never do that. One of my high school classes like had like 32 kids and that's like your whole class in one class [laughs]. Was your school big?

**LP:** Where'd you go?

**EH:** Billerica, Massachusetts. I think I graduated with like 350, and I didn't think it was that big. What about you?

**AW:** I don't know, I have no idea. I think it was maybe 300 close to 400 yeah.

**EH:** Yeah.

**EM:** Do you have hobbies or do any regular leisure activities that take you out of the home? Well writing probably.

**LP:** Well, I am supposed to go to the gym. Writing, yeah I mean you're probably all over the place.

**EM:** You're supposed to go to the gym [laughs].

**LP:** I like to travel a lot; I'm obsessed with London right now.

**EM:** Oh my God! I was just there this summer.

**LP:** Really?

**EM:** [laughs] Your eyes just lit up.

**LP:** [laughs] Yeah I've been twice. It's the best place in the world.

**EM:** Yeah it's amazing. The soccer team here went to London and Dublin.

**LP:** Neat.

**EM:** So, we were over there for like two weeks, but I've been before. Yeah it's amazing over there. If I could move over there right now I probably would do it.

**LP:** No, I know. One of the things I've done when my daughter was in London two years ago for a semester, and I met her. And through a variety—her plans changed and I ended up there for a couple weeks by myself. And so, last year, this past June, I went for two weeks by myself.

**EM:** Yeah, you can't even see all of London in two weeks like it.

**LP:** No!

**EM:** There's so much to do. I love it over there.

**LP:** And I was doing, I was writing, and reading, and hanging and it was just great.

**EM:** Have you ever been to Wales?

**LP:** No, it's supposed to be beautiful.

**EM:** I totally recommend it. It's like it's amazing, its beautiful. Yeah that's probably my favorite place over there besides for London.

**LP:** Okay yeah.

**EM:** Do you have any questions left?

**EH:** I feel like we hit it all.

**AW:** Thank you so much, we appreciate it,

**LP:** No problem, yeah.