

Interviewee: Donna Connolly
Interviewer: Gina Tremblay
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Transcriber: Cori Schollard



Overseen by: Professors Leslie Choquette and Maria Parmley, Assumption College

Abstract: Donna Connolly was born on May 25, 1956. She is married to Timothy Connolly, and has two sons: Sean who is 22 and Mark who is 18. Donna grew up in Long Island, New York and first came to Worcester to attend college. She graduated from Assumption College in 1978 with a degree in social and rehabilitation services, and also graduated from Worcester State College with her Master's degrees in Human Service Management in 1989. She works for the Colleges of Worcester Consortium, and specifically works at South High in Worcester where she works with students and their families with the process of applying to colleges. She is also on the board of directors for a mental health agency called The Bridge of Central Mass, and she is the president of the Alumni Association at Assumption. In this interview, Donna talks about the importance of family and education. She talks about her rough childhood and how her mother's re-marriage was a change for the better for her and her family. She also talks about the strengths, issues, and changes she's seen in Worcester, and gives words of advice to young women today.

GT: Donna can I ask your permission to record our session today on November 11, 2009?

DC: Yes.

GT: Ok. Alright, so why don't we just start off, what is your full maiden name?

DC: Donna O'Neil

GT: And your married name?

DC: Connolly is the last name.

GT: Ok, when were you born?

DC: 1956, May 25th.

GT: Ok, so you're married?

DC: Yes.

GT: And your husband's name is..?

DC: Timothy.

GT: Timothy. Ok, do you want to talk a little about him? How did you meet?

DC: I met him here at Assumption.

GT: Here at Assumption?

DC: Yup [laughs]. Yup, he was a year ahead of me at Assumption, and we probably started dating when he was a senior and I was a junior.

GT: Ok, do you have any children?

DC: I have two sons. They are 18 and 22.

GT: And do you have any grandchildren?

DC: No.

GT: No? Do you want to talk a little bit about your family?

DC: My, my sons? Or my immediate family?

GT: Your children.

DC: Yeah! My son, oldest one, the oldest one is Sean. Sean now lives in Cambridge... graduated from Bridgewater State...He is a starving actor [laughs]

GT: [laughs]

DC: Working there to kinda pay the bills to do things that he wants to do with film and standup comedy. He went to school here at Burncoat High School in Worcester, so, you know we raised a family here. Mark just graduated from Burncoat in June... and he just started as a freshman at Quinsigamond Community College, and he's a musician. So those are my guys [laughs].

GT: What does your husband do for work?

DC: He's the Communications Director for the Worcester County District Attorney [Joe Early]. So he deals with the media on a daily basis.

GT: Mmhmm, ok, what is your family background? What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

DC: My father was Irish and Mom is Italian, but I feel like I identify more with the Italian side of the family, cuz I grew up with my mom's side of the family, grandparents, and that kind of thing. My... I was one of five children, I was the oldest, and my dad died when I was thirteen. He was an alcoholic so mom was left with five kids and we grew up on Long Island. And a couple years later, my mom married a guy who had four children, so then there were nine of us!

GT: Hmm

DC: And then when I was a sophomore here [at Assumption] they had a child. So I have a brother who was born twenty years... earlier... later... than me... whatever that, yeah [laughs].

GT: [laughs]

DC: Ok, I was a sophomore when Bryan was born, so I come from a large family, and we're all kind of this one big blended family

GT: [Laughs]

CS: The Brady Bunch!

DC: [laughs] yeah and more!

GT: Ok, so you already talked a little bit about your parents... but is there anything else that you want to talk about, and do you want to talk about like growing up and your home life when you were growing up?

DC: I grew up as I said, very close to my grandparents and my mom's side of the family. It was pretty rough growing up because my father wasn't healthy at all... so, and as the oldest one I think the burden of a lot of things came upon me, and I watched my mom struggle a lot. She, you know, got married very, very young, and then had children, and, cuz that's what you did in those days, and really hadn't worked much outside of the home, didn't work outside of the home when I was younger. And so, I think what all that taught me was that you need to be able to do things on your own and make sure you have a career, get an education, have a career, so that you can take care of yourself if that needed to be. And I think that probably the best part of my life was when I was a teenager, when mom remarried and I had this, got a bunch of more brothers and sisters, and that was a good thing for all of us, and continues to be, cuz my parents are both still

living and they both had a second chance at like a new life, and we all did, so it was a good thing!

GT: So you said you were the oldest in your family?

DC: Of... the oldest of that five, yeah.

GT: Ok, so then...

DC: and then I became number three

GT: Ok

DC: Yeah [laughs]

GT: [laughs] So being the oldest, what were your responsibilities?

DC: Taking care of younger siblings, almost protecting them from the craziness that might be going on in the house, doing a lot to help mom with just making sure, you know, the house was kept up, but babysitting was a big part of it, just helping with that kind of thing. I feel like I got a job young and was also working, and trying to make my own money so I could pay for things that I wanted, and stuff like that, cuz there wasn't a lot of money around.

GT: Ok, so where have you lived your whole life? Have you, have you lived in Worcester your whole life?

DC: No, I grew up on Long Island...

GT: Oh yeah, ok.

DC: ... came up to Assumption, you know, freshman year, went back after graduation for maybe a year and a half or so... and then got married, and I've been in Worcester ever since.

GT: And you've been in Worcester...

DC: So now I've been in Worcester longer than I was in New York.

GT: What made you choose Assumption?

DC: (Sigh) I wanted a small school... I wanted, I liked New England, my father's side of the family was from New England. I liked this area... so I was just picking some different schools, applied to them, and quite honestly Assumption gave me the most scholarship money.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: So here I was

GT: (laughs)

DC: but I knew no one here, was four hours from home... so it was different, but it was

GT: Yeah

DC: you know, decided that this is what I needed to do.

GT: Was it hard being away from home, and like all your siblings?

DC: Yes. It was. It was, I was a baby for a while, it was hard.

GT: Yeah

DC: But it was like probably a really good thing because it made me grow up and, you know, be a little bit more, even more responsible but not having those home responsibilities.

GT: Alright, so what was your old neighborhood like?

DC: I grew up in a really small town on Long Island. It seems like everybody knew one another in the town, probably 5, 6,000 people in total in the town. The neighborhood was very different then it is today cuz you could just ride your bike, walk all over the place... a lot of kids in the neighborhood, so all the families knew one another, you grew up with that, so it was very peaceful, very quiet town that I grew up in.

GT: What about your childhood, like what did you used to do for fun and you mentioned jobs so how old were you when you first got a job?

DC: I was twelve or thirteen. My mom's family owned a beer and soda and ice business in town, and so I started working there, and worked there all through high school and worked there in college too, when I'd come home for vacations or summer time, and that's what I did. And what you were talking about...what else did I do...

GT: Just growing up

DC: I, to be honest, I don't have a lot of these really fun memories of growing up and it's probably cuz it was a crazy... house... where, you, you kind of felt like you walked on egg

shells. I don't remember bringing, I didn't bring home friends a lot, cuz I didn't know what you were going to expect. I've never played sports but it wasn't a, that wasn't a big thing for girls my age to do.

GT: Right

DC: There wasn't the organized sports like there are now. You know, my brother's played sports. I didn't do that, I read a lot... I was a fairly quiet child so it wasn't until high school when I felt like my life was getting better because it felt like I was in a more stable home life, became very active in things in school, and I think that's probably when I more came into my own.

GT: Ok, umm, Ok, so where does your family live now? Are they still in Long Island?

DC: My parents are still in Long Island. A number of brothers and sisters are still there, one brother lives here in Worcester, another brother lives in Providence, the youngest one that was born when I was here. I have a sister in North Carolina, and a sister in Virginia.

GT: Are you close with your family would you say?

DC: Yes.

GT: Very close?

DC: Very.

GT: You talk all the time? And...

DC: Yes.

GT: And your parents too?

DC: Yes.

GT: That's good.

DC: Yeah.

GT: How does that make you feel? Like...

DC: That's one of the most important things, and I've tried to instill that in my sons, you know, they don't see their cousins a lot, except for the one that lives here in Worcester, but you know, try to foster those close bonds, getting together when we can, when there's big family get

togethers, like next spring and summer we have three huge family events, so everybody's looking forward to everybody getting together, cuz there are twenty grandchildren on that side of the family, so...

GT: Ok, so in Worcester what challenges do you think the city faces?

DC: [laughs]

GT: And what would you change?

DC: Well economically, things are really tough. I'm afraid that the schools next year are gonna be in horrendous shape. There gonna lose a lot more teachers, a lot more services. I think that we will also be faced with problems with staffing levels in the police department and the fire department. I think it's just a really horrible time right now.

GT: yeah

DC: And I don't know how it's gonna get fixed.

GT: Have you seen any changes over Worcester, over time?

DC: I've seen a lot of changes,... believe it or not, there's a lot more to do then when [laughs] when I first came here. There's a lot more cultural things going on, ... things like they have tried to have more involved with the colleges so you could be actively involved with some of the things that are going on at the different campuses. Obviously many of the colleges have grown significantly in that time. I think Worcester has been a good place to raise a family.

GT: Yeah, Ok, what characteristics do you think make Worcester what it is?

DC: That for a good a good size city it's almost like a small town. I feel like, you know, whenever I meet people, or friends of ours, everybody is related to one another, they know one another. People from Worcester tend not to stray too far it seems. So, I just think that that is kind of a neat thing, because it is a good sized city, but the neighborhoods I think make it different and people, there are still a lot of long standing relationships. I know friends who are still friends with people that they went to elementary school with, and high school with, and they still are here in Worcester, and now their kids are friends. It's very different.

GT: what do you think women's experiences in, in Worcester have been?

DC: I think that's a tough question!

GT: [laughs]

DC: I think that, little by little, women are, you know, more engaged, and more involved with the political process, more and more, there's more women who are running the colleges, running some of the big businesses, that kind of thing. So I have seen a change that way in the time that I've been here.

GT: So do you want to talk about, maybe women's roles when you were growing up as opposed to now?

DC: Well I think using my mom as an example, she graduated from high school, worked for a little bit, and had her first child at 19, was married, so, you know, she said there weren't a lot of options available to you. She never saw herself as going to college, but that didn't seem to be something that people did. So not really having a career, and then you know, her role was to take care of the home, take care of children, no matter what was going on, and obviously that's very, very different, and knowing that, I think that getting an education is key to getting yourself moving. So it's very different now, and I can't imagine not having you know, my children, or my nieces going to college. I mean that's a given, or having a career that they can take care of themselves in.

GT: So growing up did you, you, did you always feel like you, you didn't want to take part in the home like your mother did? Or did you, what did you think?

DC: No, I knew I wanted....

GT: You knew you wanted more?

DC:to go to college.

GT: Right.

DC: I always loved school. I was a good student. So that was important, and, and probably again because of my home life I always thought that I want to be some kind of counselor or social worker. That was my ideal. So, that was important to work towards that goal.

GT: Were you expected to stay in the house and like do chores, and clean, and cook? And...

DC: Well I think

GT: And things like that?

DC: I had to do some stuff more than the boys

GT: the boys

DC: had to do

GT: Right

DC: [laughs] I mean I think that was sort of a given, you know.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: But I remember thinking that that's not fair, but then once we had this huge combined family and there was a lot of things to do it be-, we were working more of a, like the boys had to take a turn in washing dishes one night, and we had to make this line lunches for school the next day, and it wasn't just the girls that were doing that. So, you had to, everybody was participating. So little, by little, but I think it was out of necessity because there were so many people in the household.

GT: Right. Did you, so did you ever really think that it was like not fair that the boys

DC: Oh yeah!

GT: did things

DC: absolutely! Cuz I feel like they could go out and play and go play basketball or go do something and you know...

GT: Mmhmm, can you remember any like...

DC: But I didn't have a lot of options.

GT: Yeah. Can you remember any like specific examples of, of when you felt that way? ... Or like situations maybe?

DC: Not really.

GT: So your, your brothers would like go out and play and...

DC: Oh yeah.

GT: What would you be doing?

DC: Just sort of more being around the house.

GT: Right

DC: Unless I had, you know making some plans with somebody and doing something. You know it was easy to get around cuz you could like just ride your bike around and get to people's houses and stuff like that, but, but I was more of a homebody too, so, I suppose that all played into it.

GT: Hmm, ok... So, just talking now, I want to like get into your educational background...

DC: Mhmm

GT: So, growing up like where did you attend schools, and the names of the schools?

DC: I went to Islip High School, which is in Islip, New York, on Long Island, about an hour from New York City. It's a public high school. I have to think now... maybe a 1,000-1,200 students in the graduating class so it wasn't a big high school. And then came to Assumption and graduated from here with a rehab degree in four years, and then once I was back up here working, decided I wanted to work on a masters, so went to Worcester State, and did part time work for my masters degree which I got in... it was about 1989 in human service management at Worcester State College.

GT: Ok

DC: So did that.

GT: So, you graduated from Assumption College in what year?

DC: '78

GT: '78? Umm... did you ever face any challenges in education?

DC: You know, I felt like it actually came pretty easy to me. I liked it. I liked what I was taking so there wasn't a lot of challenges there. Schoolwork was like something that I could do and that I felt like I was good at.

GT: [laughs]

DC: So.

GT: Umm... so do you want to talk about your college school experience... What did you do for fun? Like did you enjoy it? Or...

DC: I loved it here.

GT: You loved it.

DC: I really loved it here. I have made, I made a great group of friends and, in fact, this past weekend I was on the Cape with my, my Assumption Girls as I call them. There's seven of us that go away at least once a year and you just feel like these are women that I really bonded with, but we're different, we live in different places, we've had different experiences as far as marriages or anything else, but when push comes to shove these are people that I can count on in my life. So, it was a great thing here. I loved watching basketball was really big at the time. I'd, we'd always go to the games, that kind of thing, and some of the other sports too, cuz you had friends playing and you know, the girls volleyball team or softball or something like that that you do. So sports was a big part of watching things here. I did intramurals when I was here. Worked you know, like, well, what's now below the gym. There was a snack bar down there

GT: Ohh, Ok.

DC: Flipping burgers and stuff like that.

GT: Ohh

DC: Did stuff like that to make some money, that kind of thing. But you know, you did a lot, there was a lot, a fair amount going on, on campus when I was here, or you'd go to the other schools...

GT: Mmm

DC: You'd go to, you know, a lot like you guys do now, go to one of the other colleges if you know somebody or somebody's brother or sister goes over there, you hang out over there, so...

GT: Umm, well do you know what the ratio of like girls to boys was?

DC: Oh. There were more men than women at the time here. It had just been in the, what, the late 1960's when it turned over, so, it wasn't 50-50, but it was probably getting close to that cuz they were accepting more women at the time, so it's not like it is today, where there are more women on campus than men.

GT: Umm, and what about like faculty and staff? Was there more male teachers than female do you remember?

DC: Hmm, that's a really good question. I'm, I'm gonna say there were probably more men...

GT: More men

DC: Just because that's what I think it was, but I don't know if that's real or not...

GT: Mhmm

DC: But that's my, that's probably my impression.

GT: Yeah, Okay. Um... when you finished education what did you see as your options?

DC: I wanted to, be a counselor, social worker. I wasn't sure exactly what path I was gonna take. I'd done some internships here, worked with kids; I think I ruled out more what I didn't want to do. [laughs]

GT: Mmhmm

DC: But, you know, just started applying for jobs in the whole human service field, trying to see, well, let me find something and see if that's gonna work, otherwise I'll try a different population (laughs) you know.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: And that, and that's what I did, so it sort of evolved from there.

GT: Ok, um, what made you choose you're major?

DC: Just wanting to kind of be that helper person

GT: Yeah

DC: You know wanted to take care of everybody, and make sure everybody is doing okay, so, that's where it all came from.

GT: Mmhmm, ok, um do you mind if we talk like a little bit more about your childhood and growing up? Did, did, do you think it was hard for you growing up in your house? Or...

DC: Yeah, yeah.

GT: It was

DC: Yeah, yes.

GT: Do you mind talking a little bit more about it?

DC: Oh of course not. Cuz my father, you know, could come home drunk, he was verbally abusive, physically abusive more to my brothers than to me so, you know, you felt like you just didn't know what you were gonna come into, and I could see my mother, who I felt was, is, a very strong woman, but, just beaten down, but not knowing, like, you didn't divorce at the time...

GT: Mmhmm

DC: It just wasn't, so you just felt like you had to stay in it. I felt like, she didn't have a lot of resources available to her. Her family was around and they were supportive. They knew what was going on, but you kinda, didn't, you know you just didn't walk away, and then here you are, you end up with five children, and you don't really, you don't have a job that you can do to take care of things. So what are you going to do?

GT: Mmhmmm

DC: You know, so that was tough. It was. I, I know I blocked out a lot of memories of when I was younger, cuz it's just like, you don't want to, I don't want to deal with it.

GT: Right

DC: You know, and I can remember trying to protect my younger brothers and sisters. So, I, I know there's just a lot, that, it's just, it's not worth even thinking about.

GT: Mmhmm, Ok. Alright, so talking about um your work now, so when did you begin working? Like what do you do now? Do you want to just talk about it a little bit?

DC: Yup! I work, I work for the Colleges of Worcester Consortium. So, this whole thing that you guys hear about sometimes and I work there on a federal grant out at one of the high schools here in Worcester, South High. I work with low-income, first generation, college students. So, my focus is with kids who need extra help in, with their families who may not be familiar with the whole college process. I have a lot of immigrant students, or families who are immigrants, so they came here looking for a better life, from many, many different countries, and helping them with the whole college process, the financial aid process, filling out the FAFSA forms, doing all that stuff. And I've been at South High for fourteen years. This is my fourteenth school year there.

GT: Ok, so what is a typical day for you? When does it start and end?

DC: I have to be at school at 7, and schools over by about quarter to two, and I'm out of there, you know, 2:30/3:00. I don't think there is a typical day, cuz um, there's always something different going on. I work in the guidance area so, you know, maybe doing field trips with the kids, working one on one with students, working, college rep coming in, so talking with them with a group of students about what particular college has to offer, helping kids choose college stuff, so a lot of different things like that.

GT: What kind of issues have you been facing lately?

DC: I think some of the tough things are standards for many of the schools, I feel like just continue to grow, um, because there's a lot of students right now trying to get into college.

GT: Right.

DC: So it's tougher to get to, you know schools that used to be 'Oh this is easy to get into no problem.' Well, not so much. So that I think is a harder thing. Standards have been raised in the high schools, and with kids whose English is not their first language that can be very difficult too. And financially for students to be able to afford a place like this, you know.

GT: Yeah

DC: There's only so much money to be given out.

GT: Who do you work with, collaborate with?

DC: I work with, in the high school with the guidance counselors mainly, so they're all Worcester Public School employees. I am not, but it's kind of a seamless transition. So, I work with them and I do a lot of work in the other high schools with my colleagues who do similar things that I do, and also I work a lot with the colleges.

GT: Ok.

DC: Admissions people mainly.

GT: Umm, what's your support system?

DC: My family is definitely my support system, my husband, my kids I guess to a certain extent, and, I have a, you know, my b.f.f. [best friend forever] here in Worcester, that we've been friends since our kids were little. We started taking care of our kids. So I have them. You know, I think I have a small group of women around that, you know, I can go to lunch with, I can talk with when things are crazy, a couple of friends that I exercise with, you know.

GT: Ok. Um, so what is a job like mean for you?

DC: For me it really is about giving others an opportunity to have what I had and not, maybe not having the support at home, not because parents don't want to, but maybe they just can't give it for whatever the reasons might be. So making sure that they can have an education, have a career, that they can also be giving back. So it really is about giving back, so, you know, I never thought I'd be working with high school students. If you had said that to me when I was at Assumption I would have said, 'Oh no way! There's just no way!'

GT: [laughs]

DC: But, I really like it, because they make me laugh. [laughs] you know, there's always something funny. They don't realize, you guys don't realize how funny you are sometimes.

GT: [laughs]

DC: So [laughs] in a good way, in a good way it really is kinda fun. So you, there's a lot of life, there's a lot of joy. That's a good thing. There's also some heartbreak. Some of these kids have some really tough stories, but it's fun, and it's good, and you're helping, and when you see, kids come back and tell you what they're doing. It's so rewarding.

GT: So when did you realize that this is like what you wanted to do?

DC: I had been working for many years in mental health agencies with adults who had maybe been at Worcester State Hospital with different psychiatric issues and stuff, and I liked that very, very much. I liked working with the adult population, and kind of helping them with skills and figure things out and then once my kids were younger I was working part time again for a mental health agency, but doing more, some administrative work, some development work, some marketing. I was you know, kinda helping that way because working and being say on-call with people having rough problems was not gonna work with having young children too, so I had to kind of find a different way, and that was good for awhile because the hours met my needs. And then I was laid off, probably, oh gosh, probably 16 years ago now or so, and tried to figure out 'Okay where do I want to go now? I have kids in elementary school, what was gonna work best for me?' And a friend was working at Saint Mary's high school here in Worcester, and they were looking to job share a guidance position.

GT: Mmmhmm.

DC: And you didn't need certification because it was a small private high school. She said, "Why don't you do this with me?" She was also an Assumption grad. So I said 'Yeah, why not?' Sounded good.

GT: Yeah

DC: Well, I worked in there and I found, 'gee, I really, really like this whole college thing.' So did that for a little bit and then moved on to the job I'm in now.

GT: Right. So what other jobs from when you were little until now? Like what were they?

DC: For many years starting out working at my family business with the beer and the soda and the ice and stuff like that, all through that, did some things up here with you know, food service and stuff. Umm, and then had a number of jobs in some different mental health agencies running half way houses with folks coming out of the state hospitals, or giving them skills. Those were the kinds of things I did.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: Mainly with that population, and I liked that a lot, so I did that for many, many years. Then had some of that part time work, and now I've been working in high schools.

GT: Ok. How long have you had the job that you have now?

DC: This is my fourteenth school year.

GT: fourteenth school year

DC: Yup.

GT: Ok. Um, in terms of home, what are your responsibilities between you and your husband? Is it shared housework? Things like that.

DC: Oh well he would say it is but...

GT: [laughs]

DC: [laughs] And no he's a great guy and he does a lot, but I do, I do the cooking, I do the grocery shopping, that's kind of more my thing. He will do things when he has to for that particular area, but that's sort of gone down that way. He, I think he's a better house cleaner than I am, and if he needs to do things there's never an issue about that, we'll just do that. He's much more thorough. I'll kinda do what you can see sometimes, you know, cuz I don't have time. I wanna move onto something else.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: You know, I have to say he does, he and my sons do more of the yard work, but I've made sure my sons can vacuum, can iron...

GT: Right.

DC: They had to start doing their own laundry when they were 13. They need to do this stuff. You know, I've been working full time, I can't do it all! You know? So, trying to make sure they understand to so that hopefully, whatever young woman they find will appreciate

GT: [laughs]

DC: [laughs] that I tried to teach them things.

GT: How have you balanced priorities and responsibilities like roles and your interests in life?

DC: You know what? I think I'm better at it now. I think it was very hard when my children were younger, because I felt like that was my primary role.

GT: Mhmm.

DC: And, you know, my husband definitely was the bread winner. He was making more money than me and when we had the kids the decision was made for me to work part time so I wasn't contributing as much financially, so a lot of that all came to me. And he had jobs that he was gone a lot of hours from the house working in Boston, so I was the one who had to make sure the kids were getting back and forth to school, or whatever else, or the doctor's appointments, or just everything, and those were tough years, just because, even though I had a supportive spouse, I think it's just not easy being a mom, and your head is spinning sometimes. So getting out of the house, even part time, was the best, you know, that was for my mental health more than anything.

GT: Right.

DC: But I didn't feel like I did a lot just for me. Everything revolved around my home life, my family life, the kids would always come first, so I'd think about going over to the Y and taking an exercise class, but it seems like oh well that didn't always work because I had to this or I had to do that. As they got older it becomes a lot easier to do that kind of thing. And I really have to say in the last couple of years, probably as my youngest son was moving towards getting out of high school, and I wasn't going to games all the time after school, or doing things at his school...

GT: Yeah

DC: It made it a lot easier then to focus on me, and say ‘Well I can go out and do an exercise class that’s important for me.’ Or, you know, get out more, meet friends for dinner some nights, just be able to do those things that you just need to do to still be your own person.

GT: Yeah, so it was important for you to like worry about yourself first some of the times, but it was hard when you were a mom?

DC: Very hard, Very hard. It just, no matter what, you had that mother’s guilt, I mean it’s all so real, and I don’t care what you know, I think you know, it, in many ways it’s easier because people understand, you’re trying to balance a lot of different things, but you know, I think the bulk of that stuff, still, in most relationships it falls on the woman.

GT: Mmmhmm.

DC: So that can be tough.

GT: Yeah. Were you ever resentful towards your husband?

DC: Oh god yeah.

GT: [laughs]

DC: Oh god yeah. When I’d be working my little part time stuff, he was working in Boston, I’d get a call from the kids’ school that one of them is sick, and you gotta pick them up, well I was just really annoyed because you were no good to me. You couldn’t help me. Now I had to leave. I had to do that, you know? And I think that’s hard.

GT: Yeah.

DC: Or you have to work later hours, and you’re just there, and you know, they’re having meltdowns around dinnertime and doing homework or whatever else. You had to run them out to something else, you know, so it, you know, it could be hard.

GT: Yeah. How would you characterize personal and professional costs of your chosen path?

DC: I don’t know if there were like costs. I don’t know that I really have anything to say to that, cuz you know I feel like I, it hasn’t really, my work hasn’t impacted a lot. I don’t have a lot of nighttime things or late-afternoon things that I have to do. I can choose to do some things. So, I don’t know if that’s, yeah...

GT: Ok, just some additional questions... How do you like personally view women? And like

what do you think of like roles? Like what do you think now, should be a role of a woman and a man? Or is it equal to you? Or how do you feel about it?

DC: You know what? I think it has to be an individual decision, cuz I think everybody's strengths and weaknesses will come out like that. I know plenty of people who, you know, the husbands are the school teachers, and they're home in the afternoon, so they're the ones who might be picking up the kids, or getting them to CCD, or starting dinner, or something. So, I think it really, you have to really work at balancing, and trying to, you know, to have as equal a partnership as possible. If I didn't have a supportive spouse, I can't even imagine. And he did, and still continues to do a lot with my sons. A very caring, warm, loving father who will go to the ends of the earth. Sometimes I think he's too good that way with them, because 'Oh sure you need some more money?' I'm like 'no, you're not teaching them anything!' You know? 'Don't open your wallet again!'

GT: (laughs)

DC: But I just think people have to you know, you've got to figure it out on your own, and it's not always easy.

GT: Mmhmm.

DC: Cuz some things that you feel like, 'Why don't they get that? Why don't they see that the laundry is piling up?' Or the whole downstairs needs to be vacuumed, 'I mean come on, can't you see this here?!'

GT: [laughs]

DC: 'Pick something up! Sweep the kitchen floor!' No, but they see different things. Everybody sees different things. You know? Step over the laundry basket instead of picking it up.

GT: [laughs]

DC: [laughs]

GT: Yeah, what role have women played throughout your whole life?

DC: You know, I think because I saw my mom struggle, but I also see her as a very, very strong woman, she had one sister, who's my godmother, who also was a very integral part of my life, and she didn't have children, so she was very supportive of all of us, and she ran this business with my uncle which had been my grandparents' business, but my grandmother really worked hard in that business cuz the house was right next to the business.

GT: Mmhmm.

DC: So, I saw, had a grandmother, who was out working, but still taking care of home things, you know, still cooking sauce on the stove, but taking care of things. So, I feel like I grew up with some pretty strong women.

GT: Can you talk more about the relationship between your mother and grandmother?

DC: My grandmother, now, in particularly looking back on it, they were very close. My grandmother was always there. I know my grandparents were supporting my mother emotionally, financially, when needed, when things weren't good, that whole thing. A very, it was a good relationship to watch. You knew there was a lot of love and a lot of caring there, and they would do anything for each other. As my grandmother got older, they saw her get sick, and she had Alzheimer's, and just watching where my mother had to help out and care for her and that kind of thing, you know, the love and the caring was very evident. You never had to look too far for that.

GT: Mmhmm. What memories do you have of significant historical events that took place when you were growing up?

DC: I can vividly remember when J.F.K was shot. I was in second grade at Saint Mary's School [laughs], and I can remember the nuns crying and being upset, and telling us, I remember saying prayers, and I remember all going outside, and they kind of had a little assembly outside, and it was a November day because it was around Thanksgiving. But I have very vivid memories of that. I have also vivid memories of when Martin Luther King was shot and when Robert Kennedy was shot, I mean I, you know, I have those kinds of things, very strong. And, mainly talking childhood right?

GT: Yeah.

DC: Yeah, and that was all during my childhood.

GT: Yes. Ok, what are your hobbies and your regular leisure activities outside of the home?

DC: I still really like to read, but I don't feel like I read as many books in the school year as I want to, cuz I feel like I do the head bob at night.

GT: [laughs]

DC: I get tired. I'll get through the newspapers and stuff like that. I am much better about exercising, you know like say three times a week, making sure I'm doing that, and I have a great group of women that's in a small class, that I do things with, and that's really good for me

physically and emotionally and everything else, cuz it's, I'm moving, but I'm laughing, and I'm it's all good. It's all good.

GT: (laughs)

DC: So that's become really an important part of what I do. And you know, up until last spring, I was always at one game or another, for many, many years in a row, with my sons. So that's weird, because I'm not doing that.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: Both of them still are involved musically or theatrically, so still go see things that they're doing when I can. And just try to make time to see friends, can make some more plans during the week if it's not so crazy, and trying to get out and do that. I'm on a couple of different boards. I'm now the president of the Alumni Association here, that I just became that in June. I've been involved with the Assumption Alumni group. I don't even know when it exactly started, but because I gradually, because I lived close and was coming up to Assumption for games or doing things, and my husband would teach a class here, and stuff like that, so it was always, like Assumption has been a part of my life for a long, long time, and it still is, so I still will do many things. I'm up here a lot doing some things.

GT: So being the president, you said, what does that mean to you?

DC: You know, I feel like it's a way to give back to a place that was really important to me. I have met a lot of different alums that I would never have met because they are younger or older than me... go to different events. Next week, I guess it is, there's an event, kind of a career networking event in Milford that the Alumni Association is helping to plan. I will go to that, just kind of representing the Alumni group. I got to sit in on a meeting a couple weeks ago, and they were talking about, looking at names for commencement speakers, and honorary degree recipients for graduation. I get to come to meetings of trustees when they are talking about what kind of plans do they have for expanding the campus, or changing the campus, or doing some things. So you know, that has become a lot of what I do. Plus, there's a mental health agency that I'm on the board of directors for and do a lot of stuff, and help plan fundraising events for them, so I'm still involved, I still go to meetings and do things [laughs].

GT: [laughs] How do you define success in your life?

DC: Success in my life... is that my, I did a really good job raising my sons, and they're good young men.

GT: Mmmhmm.

DC: That really is a big part of my success I feel.

GT: Has the definition like changed over time? Like what did you used to view success as? Like...

DC: Well probably when you're younger you think of it, 'Oh if I have a good job, I'm making a lot of money, I'm doing all that.' Well, doing what I'm doing, I'm never gonna make a lot of money, so that's like a given, and I accepted that a long time ago [laughs].

GT: (laughs)

DC: But I'm fortunate enough, that I'm in a place where that's okay, that can contribute, but I don't have to pay the mortgage, I'm not by myself, you know, so I could make different choices that way. So, I think, you know, your definition of success does change over time.

GT: How do you feel about the choices that you've made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

DC: I think that if I had to do it over again, I wouldn't have gotten married so young.

GT: Mmhmm

DC: I was a baby, and I think that you know, in hindsight that was very difficult. I stuck with the same guy. We were just married for 30 years, but that wasn't easy, and I waited awhile to have kids because I knew I wasn't in a place yet for that. So, that's a regret. I wish maybe I had done more before I got married.

GT: Mmmhmm

CS: How old were you when you got married?

DC: I was 23. Yeah, yeah. So, you know, like, I have a 22 almost 23 year old son and he looks at me like I'm crazy.

GT: [laughs]

DC: [laughs]

GT: How old were you when you were allowed to date?

DC: 15 close to 16... yeah.

GT: And where did you go on dates?

DC: You know, either to friends' houses, to the movies, more than anything, if there were dances at school and stuff like that.

GT: [laughs]

DC: A lot of it was with groups of kids.

GT: When you weren't at home, where would you usually spend your time when you were little?

DC: At my grandparents house, or my aunt's house, or some different friends'.

GT: What about particular areas in the city, now, where you spend a lot of your time?

DC: Besides Assumption? [laughs] I guess you know, going to different restaurants, I love checking out places on Shrewsbury St. cuz there's always good stuff there. And that's probably it. Between Assumption, between going out with friends like that, or stuff, or my husband, or my kids, or the other agency, it's called The Bridge of Central Mass. That's the other agency I'm on the board for, so doing things for them.

GT: Based on your life experience what advice would you give women of today and future generations?

DC: Do what you want to do first, before you settle down. Don't let that guy dictate what you're doing. I think that you know, I see, in the high school that I'm at, I see young girls who really get caught up and 'Oh well I need to do this because my boyfriend really wants me to do that, or he doesn't want me to go away to college.' Oh please. You know? This is not a reason to pick a college. You know, I think really making sure you know who you are, what you want to do, you have some skills to be able to take care of yourself if you're ever going to need that, and never let somebody have that kind of control over you.

GT: Yeah. what characteristics kind of define you as a person?

DC: I'm very outgoing, I'm very caring, I'm probably ultra responsible. I always make sure everything happens, I can be orderly, but not to a fault I don't think. I like to have my world around me pretty much in control, but I will do anything for family and friends. If somebody needs something, I'm the kind of person you can count on.

GT: What's the most important thing to you right now?

DC: I think... as I'm moving towards an empty nest in the house, making sure that I can keep that strong relationship with my husband through the years, cuz that's not always easy to do, but also making sure that my sons continue to make good choices, and be there to help them, if they falter a little bit, and continue to maintain that good relationship with now parenting kind of adult children. That's a tough thing as a parent to be able to do that with you guys {laughs}.

Tape Ends.