

Interviewee: Carolyn Dik
Interviewed by Caitlin Sullivan
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Abstract: Carolyn Dik was born in 1928 and moved to Worcester at the age of eight. In this interview she discusses growing up in Worcester, graduating from Clark University with a major in geography in 1949, the effects of the Depression on her family, and the effects of World War II on daily life. Carolyn relished her role with the League of Women Voters and its impact on the community and state. She explains its Worcester origins during the time that women first got the right to vote in 1920. She explains how she came to be appointed by Jimmy Carter's White House to the United States Judicial Nominating Committee and her role in local and state politics.

Caitlin Sullivan: Today is October 23, 2007 and I'm sitting here with Carolyn Dik. Do I have your permission to record your oral history today?

Carolyn Dik: Yes you do.

CS: Okay let's get started. First I would be interested to know a little bit about your background; when and where you were born?

CD: I was born in Melrose, MA on March 25, 1928.

CS: So you are not originally from Worcester?

CD: Not originally; I moved here when I was six years old. I can remember Melrose.

CS: I live in Stoneham so right down the rode from Melrose. So you came to live in Worcester when you were six.

CD: At six we came here only for a two-year stint because of my father's job, but my father liked it here and bought a little business here so we stayed. My mother was a little upset because she loved Boston so she dragged us to Boston to the dentist for several years...and there wasn't a good enough dentist in Worcester [laughs].

CS: Mothers, right? [laughs]. What business did your father buy here?

CD: Well he came here for an insurance company and was in specialty bonding to set up a branch office and he had done that in Albany and other places -- that was his job. It usually took a couple of years, so he did that but at the end of the two years, he bought a

small insurance agency from someone he had met who was old and retiring and we bought a house in town and we stayed.

CS: How did you feel about the move? I mean you were young...

CD: I don't remember having any feelings about it for or against, it just kind of an adventure of doing with my family. I had one sister who is seven years older than I and I think she probably had different feelings, but the second day we were here she met a young boy in the neighborhood and she was then 13 and they -- eight years later were married, so worked out well for her! [laughs].

CS: So where did you go to school then throughout your education?

CD: Well I went to the first grade in Melrose and kindergarten, so I started the first grade then, and then went to Midland Street School in Worcester and then to Classical High School and I graduated from Clark University in 1949.

CS: Oh wow! So what was your degree in?

CD: My degree was actually in geography. I had majored in geology but they didn't have a degree major in it.

CS: Oh how did you come to be interested in that?

CD: Sort of by accident. I started my first year as a chemistry major because I had a great teacher in high school for that and then the second year, I took a first course in geology and I liked it, so I changed to geology.

CS: My bro is at Michigan and doing similar stuff like that, geography.

CD: Oh, interesting, it's having a bit of a comeback I think, geography. I think it is more tuned in to present day life than when we took it. It was a strong major at Clark but then it kind of petered out from what I have heard its coming back with economics.

CS: Well then it's good that you have that background.

CD: It is. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed it. I had the opportunity for two years to do a study project in geology to choose a topic and it was a sort of defining moment in my life. I have to say, I didn't really know what I was getting into when they said that I could do it [laughs]. You started with a blank piece of paper and went out into the field and selected your own question, some geological question and of course it was all new to me and of course I had a faculty advisor and its just something that's been part of my life ever since

CS: That's a neat experience.

CD: It's a wonderful experience to this day I like to start with a blank piece of paper and see what comes out of it.

CS: It's exciting for me because I'm a history major and I don't get to do scientific study like that, so it's neat to hear about that. When you went to school, I know you said you were a chemistry major but what did you want to use your degree for?

CD: Well I actually lived in Worcester of course, and I was 16, kind of on the young side but my father knew Dean Little at Clark and it happened that the Little's went to the same church we did and he sat me down and said I really feel like you are too young to go out to school so I want to you to go to Clark because it's a good school and you can go for a year or if you want to stay two years and then you can transfer. But I loved Clark and I stayed for all four years but when I was there only 30 percent lived there and most were commuters but it's just the opposite now.

Otherwise I probably wouldn't have liked it if I were the 30 percent living there [laughs]. I would have felt like I was missing out on a lot of things but as it turned out it was a wonderful school. I don't think I'd exercised my mind a whole lot through high school so this was a whole new experience.

CS: But that is the good thing about college, you get to take classes that you are interested in and get to focus on what you're passionate about.

CD: And if you have good teachers, you know really get you involved in the subject..

CS: Did you have any teachers like that in high school or college that stick out?

CD: There was one teacher in high school. Classical High School in Worcester was very well known as an excellent public high school and you could take four years of Latin there, and you had teachers who really expected a lot of you, I did have the advantage of that, high expectations, but so the chemistry teacher just inspired me when I was a senior when I took it and I was like wow! It wasn't that you were trying to do homework, it was well what are we going to do today!? [Laughs]. Well that was primarily my experience there, but in college, at Clark whether you've taken a course with a professor or not, the whole faculty involved themselves with the student body, it was small, the war hadn't started [ended] when I started in 1945 so there were very few men on campus and the women's college had only started 2 years before that.

CS: You were there right in the beginning.

CD: Kind of an interesting time to be there, small. If you did something or if there was some question that a professor thought about and didn't know, he left the answer in your mailbox. I can remember a history professor though I never took very much history. Wow, we were getting bombarded with encouragement from all sides.

CS: So you had to become interested! [laughs].

CD: Yeah you just grew from it and [it] really was very good experience.

CS: It's nice to have a small community for education like that.

CD: Of course by the time I was a senior, it had grown considerably because hundreds of men after WWII used the GI Bill and many of them wouldn't have gone to college if they had not had that, so the doors were broken down and we had huge classes, but that was okay too.

CS: So, what about your experience, talking about World War II, you were in college during the war?

CD: It was really during high school. The war started in 41 and I started high school in 41 and those four years in high school and the first year, the first semester really at Clark. And by the second semester there were a lot of young men who were discharged and then started, then a whole block of them came in. So it was really -- and I think at that age, I understood, of course we had no television, we had radio which we listened to faithfully and if you went to the movies they had newsreels and it was the news and it was who knows how old it was, or whether it was accurate, it was very graphic and so you and everyone was involved. My father went out every night; we had a neighborhood watch to make sure that the dark curtains were drawn.

CS: What were the black curtains for?

CD: Because in case we should be bombed. Norton Co. was in Worcester. It was true, probably not in small towns, but in cities with factories that were doing defense work, regardless of what the factory did to begin with, most factories changed over to some work that helped the war effort, and we were near Boston probably in a flight pattern to NY, and it was just one of those precautions.

CD: And then you know, we had rationing so you could get a pound of sugar once a month, or I'm not sure how often, and other things were rationed, gasoline of course was rationed. When I was in high school, you could get your license when you were sixteen and so my mother had a license and my father had one so they thought it was a good thing to get it at 16, but you couldn't get parts for your car because all those parts were being used by the military and so we had this car with gears with no second gear so you had to switch from first to third so you had to learn how fast you needed to be going so when you switched over to third and I practiced like that before the test and when I went to take the test I just told them I had no second gear, but they accepted that.

CS: A whole new way of driving!

CD: Those kinds of experiences became part of your daily life, so they didn't seem -- as a teenager they seemed more normal than probably if you were older and you had to make these kinds of changes.

CS: Because it was new anyways to you.

CD: And it was new and it was kind of painful. There actually were a lot of effects on your daily life because of the war, even though it was you know, way over there and way over there, it still had an impact of sorts.

CS: Just talking about history, because that's my major, what about prior to the war, like when the country was going thru the Depression, did you see any effects of that here in Worcester?

CD: Well, see I was born in 1928 and the crash was I think in 1929, and my father always said that he felt that he was very lucky that he had a job that even though it wasn't a spectacular job, it was secure and he knew so many people who lost their jobs and who -- I just noticed an article the other day in the paper about suicide and that peak was 1929-1930 so it was hard year and I think my parents were young enough that they didn't have much money in the stock market and so as a whole it didn't affect them as much, but not disastrous they were grateful for that, and in terms of me I don't think I had any sense of money or that kind of stuff.

CS: You were so young.

CD: What we had was what we had. There were probably other impacts that I'm not thinking of, by and large, we were all in it together, some kids when I was in high school had brothers in the service and my sister was married in 1943 to the same boy she met the day after we moved to Worcester and he was at MIT, and they speeded up his education so he finished it in three years and became in the navy and was sent to Cal Tech to get extra training and was sent to the Pacific and my sister went out to marry him. By the time I was in high school, you then began to know a lot of people that were in the service.

CS: So there was even a close connection for you.

CD: One of the things that I am in dismay about in the current [Iraq] war is, well, I think probably the previous war in the Gulf, you realized how managed the news was, and I know when they started this war, they had this policy of embedding reporters and when I thought about that, I thought well, they are still managing the news, they are embedding these reports, these are not free to say anything to any extent that they wanted to. And then of course at a young age, I didn't really think about that. At age 12 or 13, I'm not sure, there was a man named Wendell Wilkie who ran for office I think for president and I think he was a Republican, and he wrote a book called "One World" and my father had the book and I read it, which I didn't -- I read but I was not at the age when I looked at the bestsellers to pick out a book. I picked up that book and read it and sometime later my mother and I were downtown in a bookstore and in the corner they had a cardboard cutout of Wendell Wilkie and by this time I think Wendell Wilkie was absolutely fabulous and I said to my mother oh look at that I wish I could have that, and she went over to the store manager and said how long are you going to have that display there and

they said until the end of the month and she said well my daughter would just love to have it and they said oh fine, if you stop by on such and such a day, you may have it, and we drove home with it in the car and for three years I had this great big cutout of Wendell Wilkie. And my friend gave me a silver disk and on the back it says “one world” that was a life moment for me [laughs]. And I had not traveled but it’s kind of amazing how somewhere you collected all these thoughts together and you said yes!

CS: That is really funny that they had a cutout because of his book. I think it’s really interesting when you just mentioned about comparing the war going on today and WWII, and I feel WWII is always seen as a good war and now there is a lot of controversy about this war. Did you feel that there was controversy I guess about WWII at the time?

CD: I don’t think so, I think first of all, we responded and I think that was clear to me at some early stage to this crisis and we believed in the end rightly that we had to go over and do that; countries were falling right and left and because of this person whom we thought was crazy so we had no feelings about that it was a wrong war. I mean we were saddened by so many people were killed and we knew many people or people who came home disabled emotionally or physically. No we believed it was the right thing. It wasn’t until Vietnam that I really experienced the fact that war is not the answer and so I guess at that age and at that war, and we thought although that might not be the answer we had to do it and it was kind of saving humanity.

CS: So what was your experience, moving a little forward, during the 60s and during Vietnam?

CD: Well in the mid-fifties -- I have two children, and they were born one in 55 and one in 58 -- and so I was wanting to get away from diapers and not talk about babies and I joined the League of Women Voters at the invitation of a couple of friends and that was a life changing experience for me, really. I went to a meeting first on foreign policy and you know I’d never been to a meeting on foreign policy, but I’d read stuff in the paper from Worcester at that time. So I joined them and by 1968 I was president of the Worcester League. We had 444 members which was a big organization and we had two meetings a month, it was a great big job, a full time job, more than I expected really, but they took positions on local, state, and national issues and the league studied them and then came to consensus, each league all over the country or state if it was a state league or your local league. And based on that consensus, then we would sit and say, “okay how can we act on this, what can we do about this?” And so we’d create some action positions and we’d agree on them. You would move into action, to understand what it was to act, to file legislation, one of the things I always say was about a discovery... I was on the state board for four years so I chaired a study on the court system and whether it worked or not, and I learned something that was valuable. Nobody told me, suddenly I realized that when you try to do anything in the community, some action, there is sort of a timeline, and very often, at the beginning of the timeline are kind of radical, kind of wild-eyed, truly people, and you don’t really listen because usually their methods are off-putting or their extremes to which they go are off-putting, or whatever. So that happens and then gradually they go and more people join and it becomes a little more understandable and

sort of facts and reasons come there, and then league comes along and really studies this thing and they decide to file legislation or else support legislation, and it could do this wonderful job because we had 110 leagues in Massachusetts for example, and we could get every league had a committee on what you were trying to do and they would lobby their individual legislators and they would have programs and they would create public opinion so it was very effective and in the state league we would do the same thing locally, so here's the league, so then finally the legislature looks and sees how people are thinking, and they decide that they can jump in and they'll support the bill which they probably haven't done up to this time. And so then you'd lobby and you go there and blah blah blah and they'd finally pass it, sometimes it would be six years that you're supporting a bill or more and then they'd take credit for it, even though they never did any of the scut work, people in the beginning, these wild-eyed people did, but if you knew that, then we were probably satisfied for that role, we didn't care if we got any credit for it, we'd done this wonderful thing here, you know? And we understood what it was and we could go on now and work on something else.

CS: So what are some of the, do you remember some specific things that you worked on? Like a bill or something like that?

CD: Yes, many. While I was in Boston I did the court study. So the first year we did study study study, we had 110 leagues and each league had a committee and each league put on unit, what we call study meetings, and eventually we had these meetings for consensus, so by the end of the year we had a pretty good outline of what was needed in court system to improve the administration of justice, you know, they were our courts, they don't belong to judges and lawyers. So it was sort of an interesting time because things were happening in other states and I got involved with, involved with state countrywide program in Chicago and we traded information and things we were doing so I filed two pieces of legislation. One was to have judicial conduct commission because all they had was impeachment, and nobody ever gets impeached because they..and we had some bad judges and there was no mandatory retirement and the oldest judge was 94, and you would go and sit in the court and they would go to sleep! Nobody ever said anything, but what kind of justice is that if you go to a court and the judge is listening and then wake up and wake up (every few minutes). That was a little small thing but its still not justice...so we needed a conduct commission that handled those kinds of maybe minor problems but not minor if you are the defendant. And so legislature wouldn't pass the bill, two years, second year and so I had gone to the supreme court judicial court kind of rules in terms of the court system, and I had met with them two or three times and one day I got this telephone call and they said "we've decided to create the conduct commission ourselves." Which was, why that was an unusual move, and you'll know this as a historian, that the three branches of government usually don't tread on the other branch's territory. They could do it legally, but it really wasn't their territory, this was a legislative thing but so it was brave of them to do that! And so then, I had proposed to have three judges, three lawyers, and three laypersons. Laypersons would very important, but the very fact that they call you a layperson, look at you, you're only a layperson! Never mind in my court! And they created this thing, with those three types, with three of each of those, and they called and asked if I would serve. So here's another thing where

you have a blank piece of paper and you have what they've described and so you sit there with 8 other people and you create a commission, the rules you are going to follow and blah blah blah, very exciting.

CS: I think that is amazing that you had such successes! That is really great.

CD: And then the other bill that we had a judicial nominating committee. Because in Massachusetts the governor appoints all the judges, which is a much better thing than being elected, some states have them elected, which then people give them money, so they support them..So the governor appoints and I used to go once a week to the governor's office to talk with his legal counsel and there would be lined up all these people wanting to know, applying for judicial positions, sort of hangers on, and you know it was not, it was much better system than elections, but it had its faults and the crux of the matter was, we also lobbying for, we were the only person who lobbied for a mandatory retirement. And ah, we represented that position against the judges and against several of the lawyers, and several other groups who alone represented, and we won! And it created 58 there were 58 judges who were over age 70, so they had to automatically retire, and they hated it, can you imagine a governor, making those...so Bill Young, the governors counsel called and he said, "Can you come over?" and I said, because I used to go four days a week to their office, and I said, "yes," and so he said, "Governor," I'm forgetting now who, Frank Sargeant, he said, "Governor Sargeant wants to create this thing," and again, 3 laypersons, 3 judges and 3...or I don't know if there were judges, I don't think there were judges, but there were 3 laypersons at any rate, "and he wants to know if you'd serve on the committee." And I said, "Yes!" Well we interviewed 550 lawyers for the committee so you can see it was a big job. Even though it was interesting, if you get out and work and if you have your facts and if you really work on your facts and if you really think thru what would make a difference, what would make the courts more just a lot of it is just structure of government, its not holier than thou kinds of things, that can really make a difference.

CS: Yeah those can really alter the way..

CD: Yeah, the other thing is also, the government is a process, so you never ever really change. At the moment this is accepted you've changed something but then you know, new things take place and so then down the road (it needs to evolve) you need to have more reform, it's a constant, its not...but nevertheless you have glory for a day! We won! Yay! So anyway that was a lot of talking about it...

CS: Oh no it's really interesting, I never really understood what the League of Women Voters actually did so...What did it mean to you the fact that it was an all women's group? Or is it?

CD: It is. League of Women Voters members, voting members are women, but we have men in Worcester who belong (who are involved, okay that's what something I didn't realize oh okay)... but it arose out of women getting the vote in 1920 and in Worcester called the equal franchise club and it was an interesting group, we have the original

notebook that they used from 1910 to 1920 that the secretary recorded their meetings and the lobbying they did to get the vote and so in 1920, there were people who were ready, who wanted women to be ready, if women got the vote to come together and act, you know, and you know child labor laws. They had this agenda of umbrella lines, and they needed attention, you know there were all these men in Washington were doing, so anyway, so the Worcester league was formed in 1920 and not a lot of other leagues came along later but this was one of the early ones so, the fact that it was women we really related to, but I must say that I probably didn't learn that women didn't get the vote till I was maybe 9 or 10, to be really conscious of it, and I remember thinking, "women didn't have the vote?" You know I just couldn't believe it. So, so it was kind of normal and natural for this to be a women's group based on the fact that they didn't have the vote.

CS: So I know you are wearing the button, and its Konnie Lukes, the name of the candidate, do you want to tell me just a little bit about why you support her and what you are doing to get her elected?

CD: Well, when I got through with the League job, I was on that board for three years and then I worked for, I lobbied a lot and did a lot of stuff just for example, several of us from around the country got together and asked President Carter if he would have a United States judicial nominating committee, because they never had it. They had it at the state, local level, and lo and behold, he said yes! And these were to do with the circuit courts, not circuit courts, oh I guess they are circuit courts, there are regional courts around the country and in Mass for example it covers NH, Mass and RI, so he, I think Massachusetts might have been the first one that had it because there was an opening. So I got asked to be on the committee, but this is for the White House! And I'm still proud of that!

CS: I'd be proud of that too!

CD: So we met in Boston and there was a professor at Harvard whose name was Paul, I think he's still alive but I'm not sure if he's still teaching and he was the chairman and so we, so there was one they could see, so he handled that. So the way they did it, NH has one and I think there were three judges in MA. So there was then another vacancy and he created another committee and I served on that, and, and served on it three times, three times in all, and so that was then the kind of 70s. And you know, and that was why I cared about the Vietnam War and became very aware because you know, we were, we had foreign policy as part of the league study, and you know I realized I learned from these other people, my mother was a person who, kind of a product of her times in that cooking and housekeeping and you know hand work and stuff was her, was what she expected of herself and what she thought other people should do, and she did it very well and she was a lovely woman but she was not ever caught up in this kind of stuff. So I think, you know, I certainly didn't learn it at home. It was this wonderful experience that I had, and I owe a lot to the women on the state board. We had all done studies and some of them worked for years, and I really owe them a lot because just sitting at a board meeting you are learning all the time so it was like a whole new, a whole different education. So anyway that, I don't know what the question was...[laughs].

CS: I don't either, no, [laughs].

CD: Oh, dear! [laughs].

CS: Oh, I was asking about how you got involved with Konnie Lukes.

CD: So in the 70s. 1974, Nixon resigned you know under a cloud, and, but I had done all this stuff for the court system and I really wanted to run for office, so you can't run against an incumbent very easily and I've never, and I've always been non-partisan, I was independent you know. I knew that I couldn't be a Democrat and win because there were so many overwhelming number of Democrats in Worcester that worked for the party and you know if they decided, and if a Democrat ran, they would be supported and all those things, so I ran as a Republican, and well I had an opponent, and went around knocking on Republican doors during the summer. And of course then Nixon resigned and I remember going to one friend's house-- and I graduated from high school with her -- and she looked me right in the eye and she said, "I hate to say this but I can't vote for you after what Nixon has done!" [Laughs] So I ran, the district was 6-1 Democrat to Republican and then there were Independents, so you know you start, and anyway I loved it, I loved the experience, and I lost by a little over 500 votes. So that was pretty close, but you know you run to win. I was crushed. But it didn't last long and I do value the experience. So since then I have supported women running for office, mostly locally all locally, and I have worked, I have worked very, very hard in a couple of instances and this time I'm not working really hard because I'm getting too old, but I still hold signs at the street corners, and that's an important job. And I find a place to hold a sign and I've held a meeting every Saturday for the last, oh probably eight or ten weeks and it's just -- and we are doing kind of scut work and that's fine, addressing envelopes and I don't know, yeah that's right, and today a couple of us are addressing thank you cards for contributions, but anyway there is hardly a woman candidate who I haven't worked for or supported, and I have to say Konnie is very capable. I've know her for 25 years and I've supported her with a little money so since 25 years she's been in office and held signs and stuff. This year I decided that I was going to gear up because it's making history that she could be first woman elected to be the mayor of Worcester.

CS: Never been a woman mayor?

CD: Never been a woman mayor, so yeah that's kind of disgusting! We have a congressman who votes the way I like to have him vote. And of course we have Democrats in the White House, which is fine, and I'm now I'm a registered Democrat, but I also believe in the two party system, and I can tell you that its not a good thing to have a one party state and it's not big deal obvious things, what I ran into in the state house for example. I'll give you one example of why it's not fair, why it's not a good thing. There were judicial hearings every Wednesday so I always spent every Wednesday at the, up at the legislature, and I would testify sometimes on things, and so one day I went over there and there was nobody there and I said well where's the... why isn't anybody here, so I went poking around to try to find out, they must have changed or

something, well, the legislature had decided that, they weren't going to have time to hear all these bills, so they arbitrarily cut out these bills, they wouldn't hear them, they didn't vote against them, but the bills were just pushed aside, now, if there were two party system, we would have this open debate about this, of what...and this would never happen and this is just a little example of little, you know, power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. I believe it. Maybe not right away, maybe not with everybody, certainly, I'm not saying that, but it does happen and people get carried away with power, well if you are not the receiving end of not having a hearing, so something you have worked for now is not going to be heard, and its just going to be shunned to the side till next year when you will re-file it, how fair is that?

TAPE OVER:

CD: So that's why I'm supporting Konnie Lukes.

CS: So what is it about, when you are saying you are always supporting women running for office? Is it the fact that they're women; what is it about that?

CD: I do support men. I give money to men. Oh I didn't finish the story, a congressman endorsed another candidate, a man, and he is the son-in-law of the congressman whom the other congressmen replaced and this is a non-partisan election! You know, you don't need to come in here from Congress and come into our non-partisan election and have the Democrat win, and no sooner than that, than another politician, I gave one hundred dollars to this politician, when he ran for office, nice enough guy, he came in and endorsed the same guy. Well you know, I say, you know, I don't know what the reason is, I mean maybe he isn't going to run and a politician wants to run for senator, and you know, you know those political things, but this is a non-partisan election. Would you mind keeping your hands off? You know, it's demoralizing, she's mayor now, by virtue of the fact that Tim Murray went to the state house, so she wasn't elected, but she was the second biggest vote getter.

CS: Okay! So you're working to get her elected...

CD: I'm working because she's a lawyer, her parents immigrated from Albania and she was born in the United States, she's the first person in her family, she has three brothers, as a very young person, she was the first person to graduate from law school, the first person to graduate from college, put herself through college, Simmons College, first person to graduate from high school, first person to graduate in her family from the 8th grade, in Albania her parents were very poor and they you know, worked in the field, or whatever they did then. So here's a woman with brains, and gumption, hard working, she is a little abrasive sometimes but she's had to fight for what is about. She has one son, and she's, she's mostly, I agree with her, I don't agree with everything. But so, we're putting forth much more of an effort now to try to fight this, because you know she gets votes from here and votes from there, she's very much a person of the ordinary person, so she gets votes from all over the place! They walk by and are like, "Oh Konnie Lukes!" aah you know Konnie, so she came in second in the preliminary, but the preliminary is

only a small number of voters, so it's not a gauge. So she can come in second I'm pretty sure, the race of course is for mayor and there are four people running for mayor...and then there were two other men who had run and declared for the mayor and so the day after someone else didn't win, and when Konnie came in two slots ahead of him, they, in the paper, withdrew from the mayoral race, they didn't want to be spoilers! Spoilers for whom? Of course, for someone who lost! And about four days later I get an invitation at the Worcester Club no less that a Congressman is holding for one of the men who withdrew from the race! It's just, like wait a minute; will you guys knock it off? And so, it's, its absolute power. They do what they want to do, and well anyway...and we are all women working but we collected 52 names to put them on the letterhead, and there are probably 20 men on there, its not just a women's committee.

CS: I think its interesting, working with other women though, Like I'm on the College Democrat group here, and we are all women on the executive board of the group and I think its interesting that there's so many females interested in like that are part of the Democratic party.

CD: Well you know, you have to do that, it's still unequal. Its unequal fundraising, its unequal having the old boys gang up, and they treat you differently. You know they're much more critical (of a woman?) of a woman...it's true! It's absolutely true. So you have to team up and, by now I've done it so long, I'm sort of this fixture. We were doing a stand out and I said come on Konnie you need to do one standout, well there were three of us, there were her husband and Konnie and there's me, and so we were standing there in the morning, at 7 am in the morning, and the traffic started to pick up and I had this sign there and I'm trying to wave it "Good morning! Good morning!" and it sort of you, of course they couldn't hear me, but they started tooting and one woman stopped and rolled down her window, and she said "Madame Mayor, you're doing a great job!" and Konnie turned around she said, "Are you running or am I running?" But you know, she's got this big following out there, but you don't know it if you go to the polls but they do in the voting booth! But it's worth it. And she worked for example when she first came on the School Committee, there were something like 3 women principals, and the thing was, well you gave that job to a man because he had a family to support! That was, they said it! Well, it didn't matter whether he was the best one for the job; he had a family to support! Well she kind of single handedly not single handedly because you never do anything single handedly, there are always people around you, still she created a lot of public opinion single handedly that's probably fair to say, and there were three women and there were two, and three in all who got principalships because she insisted. She was a member of the School Committee for about six terms, and her doggedness of when there was vacancy saying you know how many women are principals in the however many, a hundred schools, or whatever it is, well. Whatever it is, anyway these women were tough, capable, wonderful principals, one of South High School, one Worcester Flagg Street School -- you know elementary school -- and one at Worcester Junior High School. And she was sort of like an army sergeant. So, she was almost a man. But she did a great job.

CS: You know it's funny that you just said that because I feel like a lot of times, to be successful in politics, a woman sort of has to be like a man. But then they get criticized for it. I think that's one of the real challenges facing women.

CD: Yeah, it's hard to be tough and not be, well, mannish or masculine, kind of, because it's a trait that for all these years women have not adopted because they felt that it wasn't feminine. It was hard to be tough and feminine at the same time.

CS: Can I ask one last question?

CD: Sure!

CS: What, I guess advice, although I guess you've been doing this through the talk, any advice you might want to give me, or just any young women looking to get involved in politics or activism like you've been involved in?

CD: I think that whatever you get involved in, you know you have to make choices, because you can't get involved with everything, and you know sometimes you make the wrong choice and then you say well okay this isn't for me, and then you need to back out and say thank you very much, but, that's the way you learn. You have to be involved, it's really the way, it's the way you learn. It's the way you benefit from other people's knowledge and other's people's, and I know there are some issue that I would support some issues. I wasn't really sure it was right you know, I can't think of a good example now to give you, but you know, other women and sometimes men would speak up and give reasons and say something and I would say well of course! You know, the opportunity to learn like that, you're not going to get if you don't get involved and there are some things I do very well and there are a lot of things I do really poorly and it took me a long time. I'll give you an example: I'm a very good starter of things, and you know, I recently started an alliance of parks enthusiasts, parks advocates whether it was a swimming pool or to retain a land or whatever it was. I started an alliance! And, these groups came together and they get so excited and they start running off widely and I sort of said, well, okay go ahead. Well they are so enthusiastic they do it, and you know, and this is not exactly the way I would go about it, but you know they just love to criticize the city manager and blah blah, but you know that's not going to get you anywhere, but they do it. But I started it, and I did go for a little while, but it's sort of a thing, and I sort of did a little, but then I said fine, good you're all together, that's what needed. And now I'm out of here, I'm too old for this. So I recognize, and there were times when I would start something and I felt that I had to complete the task and that there were certain things in it that I hated to do. I hate calling a bunch of people! That's one thing, I don't mind certain things, but mostly, that just wears me out. But I can be pretty accepting, kind of get an outline and call people to get involved, but then I don't...instead of feeling guilty about it I had this, finally had this recognition that I could do this, I guess I can get enthusiastic and I can know what maybe what will work, but after that it won't work, so it's okay to give up and let somebody else take over.

CS: So it's like to use the strengths you have.

CD: Yes, to use the strengths that you have. And to recognize the weaknesses that you have and say you know I'm really not good at that or I really don't like to do that, and there is always somebody who's good at something. I remember years ago going up to Worcester State Hospital with a little church group and they were trying an experiment up there having people come once a week to people who had no family, nobody ever visited them, so we came around, and it didn't work out terribly well because you'd make this relationship and then after a long time the person would recognize you, you know, and then you'd kind got a little better and then you went one day and the person was sick again and you would have to start all over again. And so I learned from that that there are those people at the state hospital who are well trained and who knew what they were doing, there were people for almost any kind of job that get satisfaction out of it, so it's okay to look for something that will give you satisfaction because you'll do a better job and it's okay to try something and if it's not you this, to not stick with it, and at my age now, its okay to say no. But I don't do that too often either [laughs]. But I do it. But I do it, its okay to say no. that was another thing I had to learn. They would call up and ask and I would say okay! So anyway. ...

CS: That is good advice that is something I never thought about, something will always be around to do, other things that...

CD: And then as you get older, you realize life is too short to waste your time, I don't mean waste your time, but spend your time at something that you could be doing something else and doing it better. It might not be a better job, but it might be scut work for that matter, you know, but still, you know you can be of value if you know how to organize. Or whatever your talent is you can make a difference. Well, those are life's lessons.

CS: Well it's been a real pleasure interviewing you.

CD: Oh, you're welcome!