

Interviewee: Dolores Courtemanche

Interviewers: Gina Casadonte and Nicole Macioci

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Abstract:

Dolores Courtemanche, a current resident of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, was born in Southbridge in 1935, and spent 36 years working as a reporter in Worcester, MA for the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*. Dolores has lived a successful, rewarding, and interesting life, starting out with her years at Catholic boarding school, and continuing currently with her avid participation as the president of the Worcester Institute of Senior Education at Assumption College. Dolores is impressive with talk of her dedication and determination as one of the only women reporters for the Worcester Telegram and Gazette. She also provides a unique and interesting insight into the life of young woman in the 1950s and early 1960s, and reflects on how times have changed. In this interview, Dolores discusses, among other things, her life experiences, such as dating, traveling, and education, her years as a reporter, her journey back to becoming a practicing Catholic, prominent events in Worcester, and painful memories of her youth. She also offers advice to aspiring journalists, and women in general.

GC: Okay, so welcome.

DC: Thank you.

GC: Our first question for you is, where have you lived during your life?

DC: Well that's not too exciting. I was born in Southbridge...and then I moved to Worcester for 25 years. Then back to Sturbridge, which is the town adjacent to Southbridge.

GC: (*laughs*)

NM: What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

DC: Well, the more things change, the more they stay the same. When I first came to Worcester, there was, oh, a lot of excitement because they were starting with the Worcester Galleria. And there was so much enthusiasm for that, and that went great for quite a few years, and all of a sudden that went belly up, stores starting leaving, and it was very depressing, and it was a depressing era, just like it is right now. And then they started with the Worcester Discount Center...so there was all kinds of enthusiasm for that. And that opened and that went very well for a short time. And now that's gone. And so now we're about to start into a...a third development, which they're trying to make a little community out of, which doesn't seem to be

moving very fast, which I refuse to get too excited about, because I've been excited about the others. *(laughs)*

GC: *(laughs)*

DC: The Worcester DCU Center, and the Centrum were big, too....which seem to be having a little bit of better luck. The pharmacy downtown, UMASS Medical School....those are all big things...actually those are good, positive things. I don't know why we can't seem to get a grasp on downtown Worcester, but...other things seem to be going pretty well.....Oh, one of the things that I really find deplorable is the demise of the newspaper, but that's all over the country, so not just in Worcester.

GC: *(laughs)*

NM: And where did you attend school?

DC: I went to a Catholic boarding school for ten years, but I graduated from the high school in Southbridge, cause I transferred there...in my junior year...and then I took some classes at Clark, but I didn't graduate....but I think I have a doctor's degree in life learning.

All: *(laughter)*

GC: Were there any challenges in your educational experience?

DC: Well 10 years in Catholic boarding school was a real challenge.

All: *(laughter)*

DC: And somebody recently said, "How come you didn't become a nun?"

GC: *(laughs)*

DC: And I said because of 10 years in Catholic boarding school.

GC: *(laughs)*

DC: And I-that was a horrible, horrible, experience, and I only realized years later, that the reason I didn't go away to college was because I could not be *dragged* away from home after having been away all those years, and it was traumatic in some ways.

NM: After you finished the few classes that you took at Clark...what... did you get married, did you get a job? What happened after that?

DC: I got a job, but I was -- that was when I was going to Clark at the same time. And then the job got to be too demanding and I just didn't have the time and I had the job I wanted so...I just didn't bother. And like I say, I learned an awful lot on the job. It was a learning experience for 25 years. I was a reporter for the Worcester Telegram.

GC: Oh, that must have been interesting!

DC: It was better than working.

GC: (*laughs*)

DC: It was -- it was *very* interesting.

GC: Yeah. What kind of stories did you write about?

DC: It was like a liberal arts education, because I did feature stories that could range from medical stories at UMass, to interviewing all sorts of people...people from real life or... some celebrities that came in or out of Worcester or wrote books...and people you know, well known people in the Worcester area about what was going on. So it was never the same...so it was -- it wasn't boring....I realized I had another...I realized this just in the last four or five years...that I had another problem when I was younger, and it wasn't diagnosed back then, cause they didn't know about such things, but I think I had ADHD, which I think I still have. And David Halberstam the writer, I don't know if you know him. He was a Pulit-Pulitzer Prize winner, and he was, he was-he died about two years ago and I was reading his obit in the New York Times. He said- he was ADHD. And he said being in journalism is the best career for anybody with ADHD cause you're off, running, and doing something different all the time. And I thought -- I always knew I could never stand working in an office and doing something -- the same routine every day, would have made me crazy. And so I just sort of found these little places where I was comfortable, just...trial and experience

GC: Hmm, that's interesting.

NM: Do you, have a family? Like, are you married...?

DC: No.

NM: Do you have children?

DC: Nope.

NM: No? Never?

DC: Nope.

GC: (*laughs*) That's always good.

DC: And, well, it's not bad. There are days, where, you know, where, I said, you know... all along, you know when I was younger, maybe I should be married, or maybe, you know, this, this, this. And you make choices for whatever reasons. And someone I worked with once said, well you'll never have the joy of having children, but you'll never have the heartaches, either. And I see that, you know, through other people's lives. And...oh...oh, as far as being married...I think if I had gotten married younger, I'd have been married five times.

GC: (*laughs*)

DC: Because ADHD, I think I'd have been.....

GC: *(laughs)*

NM: Mmhhh. Do you consider yourself to be politically active? In either the local politics, or more....

GC: National

NM: ... national politics...or are you...either, or?

GC & NM: *(laughter)*

DC: I'm more interested in national politics than local.

GC: What did you think of the election?

DC: I loved it. I loved the outcome.

GC: Yeah

DC: I would have been really scared if it had been anything different.

GC: *(laughs)* Oh, do you-are you involved in any like volunteer community service or anything?

DC: Well, Worcester Institute for Senior Education.

NM: Oh.

DC: I'm president right now.

GC: Oh.

DC: And I...am a trustee at the Sturbridge Library. And I used to be on the board and volunteer for Hope Lodge, a cancer society....but they disbanded the board, so I still am sort of a booster of it, but I don't do anything too uh strenuous, because WISE is taking up all my time.

NM: Right.

GC: Oh.

DC: Oh, yes, excuse me, and I volunteer a lot at my church...

GC: Oh, ok.

DC: Choir and and a few other things.

GC: Mmhhh.

NM: What led you to join WISE?

DC: Before I retired, because I had no family, no children....I thought I really need something when I retire 'cause it's gonna be, you know...very very, quiet in my house. And so I had

friends that were coming to WISE, and I kept hearing the classes they were taking, and I kept saying, you're taking all the good classes! There won't be anything left when I go! And I was offered a buyout. I retired maybe three or four months earlier than I had planned, and the first thing I did when (*chuckling*) I was given the buyout, and I knew what time of day I'd be leaving, I called WISE and enrolled *immediately*. And that started the ball rolling.

GC: What kind of classes do they offer?

DC: Everything. Nothing that has hands on. If you can take it at the crafts center, or one of the senior centers, we don't deal with it.

GC: Right.

DC: We try to do just academic sort of classes. Right now I'm taking a class called "Einstein for Dummies...." and I (*chuckling*) know which one I am.

All: (*laughter*)

DC: And... they have a lot of literature classes. Quite a few religion classes, but not religion as I- you remember it from your...grade school years. Marc LePain, do you know him?

GC & NM: Yeah.

DC: Yeah, he has a big following. And...sometimes he teaches Russian Literature. Sarah Tipper, who is from Nichols College, she teach-she taught Kafka one year that I took. She's excellent. There are, we have several doctors...retired doctors, who are members, and they've arranged to have people come up and give lectures on medical...subjects. And they were responsible for us getting Craig Callo...no...Craig Mello.

NM: (*laughs*)

DC: The Nobel Prize Winner. He was here last year.

GC: Ooh, wow.

DC: Yeah.

NM: Cool. What did you say that, the woman professor from Nichols, what did she teach?

DC: Kafka. Franz Kafka.

NM: Oh, ok.

GC: Ooh, that's interesting.

NM: Ok. Now for the WISE Program, is it kind of like optional work, like do you have tests and things like that, or ..

DC: No. We've been there and done that...

NM: Yeah.

DC: most of us one way or another. This is for enrichment.

NM: Mhmm.

DC: So, we have no heavy lifting. Maybe reading is probably the only requirement, and you don't even have to do that. I mean, if you're real busy, just show up for the class and somebody else has read and you can reap the rewards of you know, what they've figured out. But no, most people do like to read, so that's no problem. No tests, no credits. But that's why it's enjoyable at this time in your life, yeah, who needs it?

NM: Mhmm, exactly. Yeah.

DC: I mean we've all had our careers and we're not about to go out and get a career with another credit, so...

GC: *(laughs)*

NM: Yeah. What role has religion played in your life?

DC: Very big. Since I spent ten years in Catholic boarding school, when I left there, I had enough religion to last me a long time....a long time. But I -- so I really never went to church regularly at all....but I, I...never once not considered myself a Catholic. I was steeped in it. And I, used to be drawn to writing a lot of religious stories with religious men....different nuns that were doing whatever, and...a story on annulment once I remember that. I did a number of them. In fact, someone asked a friend of mine if I was a very religious person, because I did so many of them. So, I always had that interest. And I have a list, a bucket list, that I made years ago before the movie came out, of things I want to do before I die, and getting back to the church was one of them. And one of the priests that I had interviewed was the priest in my parish, who is one of the neatest priests I've ever met. And so, about five years later, and...actually, four years ago, I... got together with him, and I don't like sitting in an office and being very formal, so I said, "How about if we go out to dinner?" So we went out to dinner, had a few drinks, and I got some questions answered. And then serendipitously, I got a phone call two weeks later, asking me to freelance write for the Catholic Free Press. And so, it was like, all of a sudden, I was immersed in it. And, a couple...stories I suggested, the editor said, "Dolores, that's gone by the wayside many years ago," *(laughs)* so I thought, yeah, I really have to start going to church regularly, and really jump in there to find out what's going on, and I've been very active since.

NM: Good.

DC: I -- my-one of my heroes was St. Augustine, who used to pray and say, "Dear God, make me good, but not too soon." *(laughs)*

NM: Yeah, we just read him in the class for this.

DC: So, I used to say that, I used to say that jokingly, but then as it turned out, you know, I kept saying, you know, "it's not going to be too soon, *(laughs)* cause time's flying."

GC: How have health issues impacted your life?

DC: Hmm. Well...being a reporter in the 60's, it seemed like smoking went with the job...and I was a very heavy smoker, and I tried to quit a thousand times, and the thousandth time seems to have worked...

NM: *(laughs)*

DC: and I was smoke free for three months, and then discovered I had lung cancer.

GC: Oh, no.

NM: I'm sorry.

DC: But, it's not the worst thing that ever happened. It might have been a blessing. Anyway, I never even considered smoking again, and this was not when I was going -- I wasn't going to church at the time, and I never -- somebody said something about did you pray? And I said, "No." I said I hadn't prayed for all those years. It just didn't seem right that all of a sudden I was going to start praying for this. But, I never smoked again, and I used to say, if I smoked, I felt like I'd be spitting in God's face, cause he gave me another chance, and I wasn't gonna screw up. And then, just recently, last-well, I was having trouble with my knees and my hip and didn't pay too much attention to it, because I didn't really understand it, and finally, last February, I had a hip replacement and in July I had a knee replacement. So, things are much better.

NM: Good.

GC: That's good.

DC: Yeah. I get my life back, and I can do things.

NM: Hmhmm...What are your experiences in accessing quality affordable healthcare in...the Worcester area?

DC: Oh, I've been very lucky. I have a good health plan.

NM: Okay.

DC: I guess if I had children, it would have lengthened some of this. *(laughs)*

NM & GC: *(laughter)*

GC: No...you still have an interesting story to tell...Well, what major historical events in Worcester have occurred during your lifetime?

DC: There was in Worcester there was a woman there, Sarah Robinson, she was the first one, she's a good friend...what major? What? Changes in Worcester?

NM & DC: Historical events...

NM: in Worcester have occurred during your time living here, and did they personally impact you at all?

DC: You know, I can't think of any.

GC & NM: (*laughter*)

DC: I thi-the thing I do remember, I think it was a week before I retired, the fire that killed all those fireman. We had a big, big...memorial service, with fireman from all over the country. I think some from Europe. And President Clinton was here, and....that was very, very moving and touching....It did have some impact, I think it-once again, it made Worcester seem like a small community, and not a city.

GC: What happened with the fire?

DC: You don't remember that?

NM: We were probably *really* little.

GC: Yeah.

DC: Ah.

All: (*laughter*)

DC: Yes, you were probably really little when most of this happened. A couple retar...a retarded woman was living in a...an abandoned factory...down by...there was a diner, right where you go to get onto Grafton Street, around that area. Anyway, she was living with some guy...and...they had candles.

NM: Uh, oh.

DC: And that's how the fire started. And then, she was afraid, so they ran away...and the fire took and it was just was a *big blaze*, and we lost I think, seven firefighters.

GC & NM: Wow.

DC: Yeah. It was very, very tragic. And she, was it was pathetic, she was mentally retarded, she had a twin sister who had been adopted, she hadn't, and the twin sister lived in New Hampshire and had a very nice family, and they took this girl in, and she had to go to trial, and she -- they, you know -- she got off because of you, know, all these extenuating circumstances, and she's living in New Hampshire and has a little job, and doing very well.

NM: Aww that's good.

GC: Hmm.

NM: Now, through the generations, the lives of young women have changed. But when you were, you know, younger, did you, because you-well, you went to a boarding school, so-

DC: Mhmm. And two years in the public school.

NM: Right, so it was probably a little bit different, but how old were you when you were allowed to date, and where did you go on dates?

DC: Oh, heavens. I didn't date much when I was younger....but I'll say generally...the age was probably, 16ish...and movies were big. There was a movie in our town, which you would have to go to Worcester now. There was a theater there...and they used to have sock hops at the Y. That doesn't sound too...

GC & DC: (*laughter*)

DC: Mostly probably-and you know, just very simple things, that didn't cost much money, or *riding* around downtown seemed to be very popular.

NM: What was your favorite movie from back then?

DC: Hmm....a movie....that would be difficult....I suppose everything with....I guess back then Doris Day...was big....Paul Newman was big....I don't remember a specific movie, until I was in my twenties, really.

NM: What was considered fashionable when you were a young woman? Like in your teens, your early twenties?

DC: Teens, in the fifties, was Christian Dior, the new look, which had wide skirts that went down almost to the-you know, ankle length? Those were supposedly so great. And then a little bit later, was (____??). Oh, I loved those! And they made the edges of the skirts stick out, and it was just so swishy, and I -- you know, really didn't think it would -- ever be anything that I would like as well. But then when I -- they would project how fashions were gonna change in 30 years and we'd say, "Oh, my God, those look awful!" And now, of course, simple is better.

NM: Hmhmm.

GC: Mmm.

DC: And you adapt with the change, it's amazing.

GC: How were girls treated when you were in school? Was there like a double standard?

DC: (*laughs*)...Oh, God, yes, yes, yes, yes.

GC: (*laughs*)

DC: Boys played sports, girls were cheerleaders.

GC: Hmm.

DC:....Oh, girls had to play the game of not being too bright. You know, if you were very bright you scared the boys off. There were a few people that got away with it, but not too many...and

you pretended to be a little dumber than what you were....pretended to be more naïve than you were.

DC & GC: (*laughter*)

DC: And I'm sure there were a lot of things going on...that girls didn't share, I mean like if-I found out years later that one of my friend's was sexually active. God forbid she should *ever admit this to anybody*, when she was younger. Now, you know, they're on TV talking about it.

GC: Yeah, that's true.

NM: Now, my dad, he went to a Catholic school, it wasn't a boarding school, but it was a Catholic school, and he said the nuns would beat the kids. Did the nuns beat you girls at all?

DC: I went to a school in Marlborough. My mother pulled me out of there after a year... 'cause they were...I would...I couldn't even talk about this 'til I would say, 20 years ago. I was *much* older. A lot of time had passed. And I didn't realize it at the time, and I never told anybody cause it was so shameful...but I realized that in some way, I was sexually abused. And this nun, I don't know what I had done, whatever it was, was not, you know it just, doesn't matter. She had me pull down my panties, and she had a long stick, it was very thin, all I could think of was a lollipop stick, you know? And she was whacking me on my butt. You know, I don't think-not whacking me, but, you know, whatever...and, I don't even remember that it hurt at all. All I remember is awful shame, and never told anybody. And someone said, how come you never went home and told your mother these things, and it was like, why would I? The nuns were..."perfect." Nuns never did anything bad. So, obviously, I *must* have done something bad. And so, I carried this around for years and years, 'til, you know, all of a sudden people started talking openly about sexual abuse? And I was like, "Duh! That's what happened to me!"

GC & NM: Mhmm.

DC: So uh, that was my only the only thing I experienced, they were very mean too, uh very mean. (*laughs*) I remember that I had, well let's see how to start this...very mean, verbally abusive and just very mean. Then I switched schools, went to a school in Woonsocket and it was much better. It certainly wasn't perfect, but it was much better. They had some very strange ways of thinking, but...

GC & NM: Um hum.

DC: I sure you, we couldn't talk in the dormitories and that was to make reparation for the sins that were committed at night. As old as 13 or 14 I thought that that is so silly. 'Cause, everybody's sleeping at night. (*Clears throat*) Years later, I was only about 23 or 24, I was visiting a girlfriend who had gone to boarding school with me. She lived in Alaska. We were talking about some of these things and repeated that and then was like that's what they meant.

ALL: (*Laughter*)

NM: Did you, were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

DC: In high school?

NM: Mmhmm.

DC: Yeah. Glee Club. That was exciting. In boarding school, some kind of theater, I guess you would call it. That was about it. Nothing. No they really didn't have the things that are available now.

GC: What kind of education did your parents have?

DC: Both high school education. My father went to a junior college.

GC: And what did they do for a living?

DC: My mother was a telephone operator and my father was a realtor-business realtor.

NM: Did you have any siblings?

DC: No. I say I'm an only child but I had two sisters. Mainly because my mother had a brother who died and his wife had died five years before and he left two daughters. My mother was their guardian so they came to live with us when I was about 17 so I was raised as an only child, but then I got ... we're closer than cousins but we're not really sisters.

GC: That's nice.

DC: It is nice. So I'm very close to their kids and ..

NM: Good. What difficult transitions did you have to go through moving from being young like a child into adulthood? Like, you know like responsibilities change...

DC: I was very spoiled, very, as an only child, and an only grandchild, and so I really never had any responsibilities at all. And at one point, this was before I went to work at the newspaper, I was just dabbling here and there, little jobs, and my grandmother lived on a lake, so I spent a lot of time with her. And one day I was coming in from swimming or something and she told me that she was broke. And I said, "No, I have 20 or 30 dollars in my wallet." And she said, "No I am *really* broke." And she had spent everything. I mean she had been very, very generous with family all through the years and my grandfather should have left money in trust but back then I don't think they thought of it that way. Anyway, she not only, she had cashed in insurance policies, everything, to try to make it last and not have to say anything and this was serious. So I had no time to even think. I went down and got a job as a waitress because I knew I could make more money than in an office and I had to support my mother, grandmother. She had social security, but I, you know, made up for everything else. And I was very resentful because my father... oh that's another story. My mother and father were divorced and he, we didn't know where he was and so I thought you know, oh he had written to my grandmother and asked her for \$10,000.000 the year before and she had just sent it and I am thinking, you know, he should be taking some responsibility here. We didn't even know where he was. Well anyway, a long story short, we got through this- she, and then she sold the house and then I went to work at the newspaper and years later from learning how to do some investigating and stuff I found out my

father was in Houston, Texas and we visited him and we talked about this and I told him how I resented it, but I-and he started to apologize and I said, "No, no." I said looking back it's probably one of the better things that every happened to me 'cause I learned how to survive for myself and somebody else and took responsibility and I could never be as irresponsible as he had been during his life. So that was a long answer to a transition.

GC & NM: That's absolutely fine.

DC: But the transition, then there was a transition to the newspaper when I went to work there because I had been working as a waitress and, you know that was such a menial job back then. Then all of sudden I'm working for a newspaper and I'm a reporter. And it was like where did she come from, you know people that knew me, but I read constantly. I remember once working as a cashier in this restaurant and I was reading. It was a very, very slow winter night, and some state trooper walked in and said, "Reading a dirty book?" And those kinds of -- this made me crazy. And I just held up the book and it was the end of the conversation. The book happened to be the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.

GC: (*laughs*)

DC: You know I could have been reading *Hawaii* or something else like that, but anyway he just went and sat down. On his way out he stopped and apologized. And so, anyway, I read a lot. And so when I got the job it was because of my tests were, were very high. But I found it very interesting because that all of a sudden I was a different person in some people's eyes. You know, especially in a small town. All of a sudden I'm a reporter and people, you know, inviting me places or just, you know, they know me and it was, that was a little bizarre. But then I was at the paper so many years and that's more my, my persona now, so I don't even think about it.

NM: What advice would you give to aspiring journalists today?

DC: Probably don't go into it. (*laughs*) Certainly not print journalism. Journalism is just changing so much, so much. There are probably more opportunities, things that we're not even thinking of now. People of your age, I guess, are getting their news on the Internet.

NM: Hmm.

DC: And that's good and bad 'cause there's a lot of stuff, bad stuff out there that's you know, people don't have to, they don't have to have any qualifications, they can just print anything they want as we saw during the election. I would say, oh I would, first of all I would say don't study journalism. I've always said that because I never did and I learnt so much on the job. And I think what is most helpful is political science, English, you know basic, you know skills. If you can take an English class and write and you know a little bit about you know about science, I mean political science and history, you can, you know, pretty much learn on the job, the rest of everything else you know. I mean those are the stronger basis than fluffy journalism classes.

GC: Do you have like a favorite story that you covered or anything, a memorable story?

DC: Oh, yeah. Quite a few. One of them was, oh I interviewed Elie Wiesel.

NM: Oh, cool.

DC: I loved him. Absolutely loved him. And he wrote me a nice letter after, which made me love him even more. (*chuckles*) And then the next-another story that I did and was really, really wrenching was there was a couple that lived in Worcester and he was-and his name was Michael Klein and he worked at WPI. He was a physicist or something. Anyway, he and his wife were in the Holocaust. They were in camps and they were like 14 years old and the only reason they hadn't been killed was because they were bigger for their age and so they could get by, by working and being older. And the stories they had to tell were just incredible. And his-the mother, used to have to walk, they didn't know each other then, they met in this country in college. The mother used to have to walk with her mother to a factory and they'd be walking home, well back to their barracks in the evening and they'd go by houses with lights on and she'd say, "Is it possible these people don't know what we're going through?" 'Cause they were sitting for dinner, they could see people. And every morning her mother had to wake her up, it was about four to go to work and she didn't want to get up, naturally. I didn't want to get up this morning (*laughs*). And her mother used to say, "Please get up as soon..." you know, "when this is over I will never wake you up again." Because she knew her daughter would be killed if she didn't go to work. Well, that woman said to this day when her mother visited her she would never wake her up no matter what.

NM: Oh.

DC: And, when they ended, oh he went through a whole pile of things, but he ended up at a camp and he was very, very sick and it was just before the end and he said as the troops were moving in, American troops, he said the man that ran the camp gave this talk and said when this is all over I'd like you to remember there was one Jew that tried to help you. And he couldn't remember the guy's name, he said, his first name. He said his last name was Schindler. This was before *Schindler's List* came out and, so when *Schindler's List* came out, you know, obviously I had a strong interest in that.

GC: That's cool.

DC: Those are two that just pop out, but there were lots of them.

GC: Yeah.

NM: How do you define success in your life and how's your definition of success changed over time?

DC: Well if I define success right now, it would be because it's changed a lot. When I was young it would be money and fame, glamour, or whatever (*laughs*) and now money is nice but I've met so many people who have money that are so...shallow or so poor, I mean it doesn't buy happiness. I mean they are not happy with themselves or whatever. Some are, you know, it doesn't exclude being happy if you have money, but it's not the necessary component. I think being happy in your own skin and what you have done and what you are doing is much more important, and doing something that you find fulfilling.

GC: Do you feel you have, like a legacy?

DC: Well I don't know who I'm going to leave it to (*laughs*). I guess, I realize this occasionally that I have touched people's lives in some way. And that maybe has a ripple effect that I'll never know about. One of them was when I found out I had lung cancer, I was coming back from the bank, I had just cashed a check and my mind was in a million different places, and I must have dropped my wallet and didn't even notice it, and, it was right in front the T&G, and so I went upstairs. Some woman found it and came in, went into the lobby of the Telegram and said I just found this. So they called me and I came down and the woman said, you know, she said she had found it and I said, "Oh, thank you." I said, "I am just," you know, I said, "I just found out that I have cancer and I'm not thinking right," and anyway I said, "Can I give you a reward?" And she said, "No, but my husband just died if you could give a donation in his name to the Tele-Gazette Santa at Christmastime." So I did, and I don't remember if I- if she gave me his name or she told me what to write, so she'd know that I had given something, which I did, and fast forward like 10 or 15 years, I called Clark University one day to set up an appointment with someone and the women that answered the phone said, "Oh, I don't know if you remember me, but I found your wallet years ago." And...

GC: Oh, wow!

DC: and I said, "Oh," I said, "I do." And so she said, she said, "I always thought that doing that brought me luck," because she-her husband had died and she want- and she played had played the piano but she couldn't afford to buy a piano to get back to it and she kept going into Steiner's and checking out the pianos, and she said, the day after this happened or that afternoon when she was downtown, I don't know, it was like immediately, she went into Steiner's again and the guy said come here. He said I have a piano for you. And it was something that had been, I don't know returned or what, and it was a beautiful piano and he literally gave it to her.

GC: Wow!

NM: Wow!

DC: So she said I always thought of you and thought it was, you were probably responsible. (*laughs*) So, I mean-and that was just a little coincidence, but I am sure there are ripple effects to...

NM: Right. And I think like you really don't know the impact you have on people but like...

DC: Yes.

NM: every day you can touch someone and not even realize it.

DC: Yes, and we had a lot of readers-I'd get (*laughs*)-do we have time for another story?

GC & NM: Go ahead, go for it.

DC: I had interviewed a woman, it was, I interviewed her anonymously and it was over the phone, which we didn't do too often and now it's almost never done. But it was about putting a

parent into a nursing home and feeling, how the guilt you know will get to you. Well this woman was off the wall. I mean she was visiting her mother like three times a day and she was like bringing food to her and it was like guilt when she was home and it was just, I mean it was, it had took over her whole life. So I said, "Well how does your husband deal with this?" And she said, "Well actually he never had a mother so he thinks it's wonderful."

GC: (*laughs*)

DC: So, it was like, okay. And she was in counseling. That's how I had gotten her name, through this counselor. So anyway, years later again I'm at a wake with my girlfriend. And so my girlfriend ran into this women who she knows and they got talking and this women had shuffled her mother back and forth from Rhode Island to Worcester, Worcester to be close, but the women wasn't happy so then she went back to Rhode Island, and then she wasn't happy so they brought her back to Worcester. It was a whole disaster. So when my friend was talking to this woman she said, "How's your mother?" And she said, "Oh she's uh she's settled down," she said, "Of course she's back from Providence now." She had been back for years or whatever, and I, something clicked, and I said, "Excuse me, but were you ever interviewed by anyone from the Telegram and Gazette involving the nursing home?" She said, "Dolores?" and I said, "Yes." So I said, "How did you ever come to terms with this?" She said oh I don't visit her anywhere as near as much as I used to, but the funny part of it is her husband thinks she is a terrible person because she doesn't

All: laugh

GC: How do you feel about the choices you have made in your life and do you have any regrets?

DC: I wouldn't say I have any big regrets, but I have often wished as I could have had several lives to make several decisions. I mean my decision, I've had a good life, I've traveled an awful lot we didn't even get into that but I've had a very good life. I might have like, if I had another one, I might want to get married and have children. If I had another life I never would have thought this when I was younger, but I might have enjoyed a job in research of some sort. Because I found I enjoyed researching stories, which always amazed me 'cause I never would have thought, you know, my talents were in that direction. So I don't regret what I have done I just wish I had several other lives to live and try a bunch of different things. Which when I was growing up, or when I was starting out you didn't have that option and today you do. You could have two or three different careers as which is what they are telling people they should do, because no one is going to have a job for forty years like they used to. But you know you move on and you have that option and now the boomers are going back to work in other careers [you are] seeing that more and more. You know they retire at fifty-five and have, you know, fifteen/twenty more years to give. So that's another, there are so many more options for people today.

NM: You mentioned traveling, where have you been and do you have like a favorite place that you have been and what did you do there?

DC: Well, uh when I was, my cousins, the ones that were my sisters, uh when Fran graduated from college, there was a fantastic trip that I ended up going on with them, it was put on by the Catholic colleges and we went to Greece for four weeks about a thousand dollars give or take

GC: Wow, (laughs)

DC: You just that would be a ten fifteen thousand dollar trip today. So we did the major six or seven major countries in Europe Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, you know those. And that was a sense that that was one of the first big ones then I went to Ven-South America to visit a friend, who was in Venezuela. And that, there is a funny story with that, then there's I went to didn't do great traveling until later on. I went to England two or three times while I was working and then I've been to Alaska. The year I retired I went up to Alaska 'cause I have friends who are living there because of me 'cause I raved about it so much. They were at the newspaper and they went up to Alaska and they've been there for about forty years now.

NM: Oh wow

DC: And uh, so uh Alaska. Then I went out to Russia. Russia was a fantastic trip. Took that through WISE here as Assumption.

GC: Hmm.

DC: **I went to France with Assumption, went to the Galapagos Islands and that was with the Assumption group. And one thing I have learned through WISE, -- you asked what I studied -- I've studied the people because, as much as I've learned from the classes, having people that are fifteen, twenty years older than I am, who are doing all kinds of things, was really, really educational. Now on the trip to the Galapagos we were on a yacht, an overnight trip for two or three days to visit different islands, and one of the women for WISE celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday on the boat.**

NM & GC: Aw oh

DC: You know, incredible people, we have people who in there nineties there here. So uh that was one of them and where else, Italy several times, two trips to Italy with WISE. And Greek Greece and the Islands, I went on a cruise with friends and never again.

GC: Laughs

DC: Well because I don't feel it was like going to Greece. You know your bobbing around the ocean talking from Cleveland, Ohio or New Jersey and your eating nice American meals uh I, my idea of going to Greece was being in a Greek hotel, going up and down the streets, having Greek food and uh seeing the people

GC: Yeah

DC: This, no, this is not my style so I have to go to Greece again.

GC: Alrighty.....Based on your life experience what advice would you give to women today and future generations? (*Laughs*)

DC: Just there was so much emphasis on security. You now having a secure job, a secure you know pay, which in some ways is necessary today because kids, I feel badly the kids that get out of college, you need to get medical insurance almost immediately so you don't have any gap time.

GC: um hm

DC: But I guess I'd say, and it's becoming almost cliché, go with your passion. No matter what it is, no matter how far flung it is, even if it doesn't pay well and you can afford to do something like that go with it, for you know I mean don't give your life to it, but it I've learned that whatever you do is a great experience for you know something later on in life and they do come together. The more you can experience and learn uh things do come together. And when you graduate from college, you know very little it's sort of like how much more you learn about driving once you got your license, you know how much more you it's sort of like this is just, it's very true, it just preparing you for life and gives you some tools to be maybe appreciate and experience other things. So I would say do take every experience you can and just go with it and don't take no for answers just keep, it's just I really, really do wish I was younger today in some ways not in all, but uh there is just so much out there for..women.

GC: hum

NM: This is actually a question that we didn't ask earlier, but I think we should, what cultures or ethnicity is, are in your family background like?

DC: That's not exciting either French Canadian.

NM: Oh ok

DC: You, what oh your I did a story, several stories for the paper on different ethnic groups in Worcester and someone else did a few of the ethnic groups too and I did the French Canadians and I did not really admire them very much and Claire Quintal, I don't know if you know her, she was at Assumption, she started the French Institute. She uh if you, I was talking to her about it and I said, "You know I've done, I think the Jews and the Greeks and the who else, but they were all into get education for their kids, working for their kids to get you know, become professionals or whatever and the French Canadians would pull their kids out of school at sixteen to go work in the mills" and you know I just didn't find them very admirable at all. And she put this into perspective and said, "Well the Italians, the Jews uh came and Greeks came over from Europe and when they got here this was it." I mean they were not going to be able to ya know their kids had to make it because they weren't going to going back home next year because you know they just couldn't afford it. So they had to settle down and make up their mind what was important, where the French Canadians would come over the border very easily and uh their idea was to make a lot of money and go back and buy the farm you know and or help out with the parents' farm or something. Well that didn't happen they ended up staying here and meanwhile they didn't make a lot of headway with kids you know becoming professionals they were much,

much later than the other ethnic groups. But it was understandable 'cause it was so easy to go back to Canada.

GC: Right

NM: Hum....one more question and then we're done with this interview, I remember my one of my teachers in high school saying how when she got out of, I'm not sure whether it was high school or college, she said basically as a woman she had a few options she could be

NM & DC: A teacher or a nurse

NM: Exactly

DC: Or a flight attendant

NM: Right (*laughs*) or in your case a journalist...

DC: Uh no.

NM: but was rare

DC: Oh yeah, when I started at the newspaper there was one token woman in the city room. Everyone else was in women's news, we did club news, weddings, engagements, that sort of thing and that was in -- I went there in sixty-four. By the end of the sixties, might have been early seventies, the New York Times took the Times to court because of, you know they wanted equality for the women and in, all of a sudden it caught on, you know everyone could see it was a time change and I think I got a raise of sixty dollars in one week.

GC & NM: Wow.

DC: Because they were trying to bring us up to, we weren't getting paid what the men were getting paid and then all of a sudden they disbanded the society page, which I was one of the editors of and so they disbanded that and we started writing features and the features got a little more sophisticated as time went on. But we did features. I think I did a feature on every doctor, female doctor that had a specialty. The first surgeon, the first ophthalmologist, the first you know gynecologist you know at UMASS.

GC: Wow.

DC: Then all of a sudden we realized that we were making headway when we didn't have to do those stories. I remember having to go out with a photographer and taking photos of doorbells, it would have two different names on it like uh Mary Jones and Bob Smith, they were *living together* and were *not married*. I mean this was like a big phenomenon

GC: Laughs

DC: And, uh, the things evolve and change and now I look back at those and it's like the dark ages, but you adapt to them so well.

GC: Hum....Thank you very much for your time.

DC: You're welcome.

NM: Yeah, we asked you pretty much...

****After the interview concluded there was one more story that Dolores shared with Nicole and Gina**

DC: This is really not terribly interesting for history, but I just, you know small world stories where you run into someone. We had an editor who used to say you couldn't come back from an assignment out of town until you had a Worcester connection. There was always a Worcester connection, but this one here it was, just it blew my mind. I went to Venezuela to visit a girl, a woman I had gone to boarding school with and she was teaching there and I was there over the holidays and we went to Caracas for New Years Eve and met this couple and so this couple, the woman was from Toledo, Ohio and I said "oh I have a friend in Toledo" and I said I'm sorry I'm from a small town I expect everyone to know who I know and so she said well tell me who it is, it will make you feel better so I said Bob Lemontio, he was the priest that I had become very, very friendly with on that trip to Europe with National Catholic college group.

GC: Um hm.

DC: So she said, "He taught me CCD."

GC: Oh wow

DC: So anyway fast forward for another few years and I went to Florida to visit my one of my sister's cousins and she and her husband was talking about what a small world it was and I interrupted and said, talk about small world and I told him about this Venezuela story so when I finally finished my story he said well they had met this couple who the wife went to the same nursing school as my cousin, which was a very, very small school and as he is talking about it I said, and they were from Rhode Island, that is and I said excuse me what's their name, what's his name and he said Raymond Lamero and I said you know the girl I was visiting in Venezuela and he said yeah and I said that's her brother.

GC: Oh wow

DC: So it was like a double whammy (laughs)

NM: That's kind of cool actually

DC: Anyways...

NM: Small world.

DC: And it gets smaller and smaller

NM: It does

ALL: (*Laugh*)