

Interviewee: Ann Louise Flynn  
Interviewer: Alexandra Phillips  
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**Abstract:** Ann Louise Flynn was born in 1940 in Chelmsford, Massachusetts and moved to Worcester in 1983. She is currently the Assistant Vice President at Worcester's United Way and serves on the board of numerous voluntary organizations and community initiatives. In this interview, Ann talks about her experiences growing up as the youngest of seven children, emphasizing the importance of education, community service, and the Catholic religion in her family. She discusses the struggles of defining herself in the male-dominated field of math and physics, and speaks about her transition into counseling psychology. Ann shares stories of her work as a college administrator, and her successful legal battle against Boston College after she was unfairly removed from her post as Dean of Women. Working in the Counseling Center at the College of the Holy Cross beginning in 1973, Ann shares stories of her activist work in the college, including founding a program to address problems with eating disorders and inviting Gloria Steinem to give a controversial public lecture. She was awarded the 2006 YWCA Catherine Erskine Award for Community Service and speaks at length about her community involvement in the City of Worcester and the meaning that all of this work has in her life. Ann also touches upon her extensive experiences traveling abroad and the ways in which her family's health issues influenced her life.

**AP:** On this day, March 21, 2006 I need your permission to verbally record this oral history.

**AF:** You have my permission.

**AP:** Wonderful. Alright, so I'm just starting off with general questions about family and Worcester. What is your full and maiden name?

**AF:** Ann Louise Flynn.

**AP:** Ann Louise Flynn, a beautiful name. And when were you born?

**AF:** ... 1940.

**AP:** Okay, where were you born?

**AF:** Chelmsford, Mass.

**AP:** Oh, so you're not too far; you're a "Massachusettsite"!

**AF:** Right!

**AP:** Do you have any children?

**AF:** No.

**AP:** You don't have any children, okay. And have you ever been married?

**AF:** No.

**AP:** If you would like to, can you tell me a little bit about your parents or your upbringing?

**AF:** Yes, any particular questions?

**AP:** What your childhood life like? Did anything play a really strong role in your life? Did anyone have a really strong role in your life?

**AF:** Well, I am the youngest of seven, and my father was a junior high teacher and my mother formerly had been a nurse and a nursing instructor, but once married and having children, she didn't work. And my older siblings, I have five older brothers and one sister. And so being the youngest in a family of a lot of males it was a bit of rough and tumble.

**AP:** [Laughs] Yes, I would imagine so; that's quite a big family.

**AF:** But with, also with my parents both being in education, education was a very strong value in our family and being a public school teacher and with seven kids there wasn't a lot of money in our family.

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** And both my parents have the value that getting an education is very important and nobody can discriminate against you or take it away from you if you have it. So I would say that was an extraordinarily strong value and played—I would say that was a major influence in my life.

**AP:** It was a drive? Was it a drive for you?

**AF:** Yes, [inaudible] it was for all of us in the family.

**AP:** That is a wonderful view to have on life, too. It's something that's definitely lacking in the world today. Did religion play a role in your life?

**AF:** Yes, both parents were practicing Catholics.

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** And my oldest brother is a priest, a Dionysian Priest, and he is in Peru. He has been in Peru 45, 46 years doing missionary work.

**AP:** That's amazing.

**AF:** So religion was a very strong influence in our lives, and growing up in Chelmsford at the time it was historically and heavily Protestant community.

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** And going to public schools, and that time there was prayer in school. And whenever the Catholic kids would need to get up to say the pledge of allegiance and lead the class in the pledge of allegiance and reading of the Bible and saying of the Our Father, there was always the King James version of the Bible and the Protestant kids would be always be kind of snickering and giving it to the Catholic kids because the ending of the Our Father would be the Protestant ending of the Our Father, which was fine.

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** But there was notably a religious tension.

**AP:** Yes.

**AF:** And going to Saturday football games and afterwards Catholic kids would go up to confession, everybody went to confession on Saturday.

**AP:** Right after the football games? [Laughs]

**AF:** [Laughs] So the Protestants would always be, "I know where you're going," you know....

**AP:** Sort of a mockery there?

**AF:** Yeah, yeah. So both within the home and the community, religion was a notable influence.

**AP:** Where have you lived during your life?

**AF:** Well, I grew up in Chelmsford, went to college in Boston, so spent sometime living in Boston and commuting. Then went to grad school in St. Louis, was there for seven years, went back to Boston, for, I forget how many years, and then moved to Worcester.

**AP:** Now what made you choose to come to Worcester?

**AF:** I was doing—well, I was employed at [College of the ]Holy Cross and I was completing my doctorate at Boston University and had completed an internship and was looking for a

position, and a position opened up at Holy Cross. At the time I was living in Newton and commuting to Worcester but once I finished, pretty much finished course work...

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** Then I moved to Worcester.

**AP:** Alright and when about was that?

**AF:** I moved to Worcester in 1983—'81, '83, something like that. [Laughs]

**AP:** [Laughs] Somewhere between that time period.

**AF:** I started working at Holy Cross in 1973.

**AP:** So what were you doing at Holy Cross?

**AF:** Psychologist and the counseling center.

**AP:** Do you live in the city of Worcester now or...?

**AF:** Yes.

**AP:** Oh, you do. Where around in the city?

**AF:** Downtown Worcester, two blocks from Main Street.

**AP:** Two blocks from Main Street, so you're not too far from work.

**AF:** Not too far from work at all....

**AP:** Do you have any other family members that live in the area? Or...?

**AF:** Not in Worcester, no. I have some that live in the Boston area, some in Massachusetts, but not in Worcester.

**AP:** So in your opinion, what are some issues that Worcester is currently facing?

**AF:** I think the economic development issues needs to beat Boston with the high cost of housing. I think transportation whether its buses throughout the city, whether it's the airports, whether it's trains to Boston—transportation or highways being, getting overcrowded...

**AP:** Yup. [Laughs]

**AF:** I think those are issues. Some of what gets tied into that are siting issues for shelters with the variations in the economy, the haves and the have-nots, the employment, particularly

with immigrants, and the larger number of immigrants settled in the communities—English as the second language with respect to them. I think there are there are opportunities whether you're male or female, no matter what culture or race, again if you've had educational chances but I think those are the major ones.

**AP:** Major issues?

**AF:** That come to mind.

**AP:** I mean, being in Worcester and seeing Worcester, do you remember seeing like any historical changes, positive or negative? I mean, it's kind of a repetitive question. I mean, have you seen anything change positive or negative that has significantly changed in Worcester while you were here or commuting here?

**AF:** I think economically, you know, the biotech industry has grown dramatically. The colleges are beginning to have greater connectedness to each other, and I think that will help economically. I'm part of the Weed and Seed group, so the whole urban issues with respect to crime, drugs—that's a tough issue. And I don't think we've fully solved that. I think police chiefs over the years have had greater or lesser success in terms of neighborhood crime-watches, connectedness with neighborhoods to root out crime. And I think the current police chief Gary Gemme is better, if not the best one, we've had in quite a while. So I think crime and urban redevelopment have been major changes.

**AP:** Changes, yeah. Any historical events that you remember that made impact on you? Anything that happened in Worcester—any great changes, protests, something of that nature that you either participated in or witnessed that had a great impact on you?

**AF:** Well, when I was first started in Holy Cross they had just gone co-ed and I, I was co-chair with the student of the ten-year anniversary of Holy Cross and we invited Gloria Steinem as the keynote speaker.

**AP:** Ah! [Laughs] Oh my Gosh!

**AF:** And that created quite a bit of stress, of stress on one hand for the administration but they were very forceful and Father Brooks was very forceful—freedom of speech because Gloria Steinem was very supportive of women's rights and things like birth control and abortion.

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** It's a touchy issue for some people associated with the college but we had a blast, and it was a great evening and students were up all night talking about the presentation. It influenced conversations in many courses the next day.

**AP:** Now did you personally get to meet her or...?

**AF:** Yes, yes, yes. I picked her up at the airport.

**AP:** Oh my goodness! That is amazing. I'm kind of taken back by that because I do a lot of studying of Gloria Steinem right now and I mean, I mean—I'm going to elaborate on it a little bit. What type of person was she? On a personal one-on-one level many people see her, you know, take at a public level, political level, at a feminist level. I mean, was she any different on a one-on-one personal level?

**AF:** No, she was very sociable, very easy going, not stuffy or snobby. You know, there was a lot of give and take and laughter and it kind of felt, you know. Afterwards we—at the time Howard Johnson's was right down the hill from where Holy Cross was, and we put her up there—we brought her down there and hung out and had a drink and laughed and talked and chatted. She was just like your friend.

**AP:** Oh my goodness! That's amazing; that is absolutely amazing!

**AF:** That's just one historical event.

**AP:** I think that's a pretty significant historical event! What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been like generally? I mean, you elaborated a little on that earlier but I don't know if you want to...

**AF:** You know, I don't know when I—what's difficult what makes it difficult to answer that is, I guess I've always been—and I think some of this comes from upbringing—is if you are thoughtful and try to do things. I mean I've been discriminated against, but I can't say I've been discriminated against in Worcester. The—I mean, I can answer that discrimination maybe afterwards.

**AP:** [Laughs] Yeah, we'll get to that in a later section.

**AF:** I mean, I didn't have any trouble in terms of having issues. I don't recall any issues with respect to employment. I've been very active in the community. I was on Daybreak school events—in the early eighties I became president of the Daybreak board—and there were certainly women who suffered from domestic violence that services were provided and they were assisted, and I would say hospitals and police etc were supportive of the work that was done. And now that it's part of the YWCA's program, I think it's stronger and better than ever. When I was at Holy Cross, I supervised some interns from the rape crisis center and we had numerous programs to educate and teach women with respect to rape issues. I think rape in general not only here in Worcester but across the country is a difficult issue. If, if somebody brings charges of rape to prove it in the court is very difficult and, um, that's not isolated to Worcester. And if you have a judicial system on college campuses and bring rape charges there, which we have judicial system and participated and helped many students dealing with rape charges, again it's, it's always the difficulty of evidence...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...the he said she said that, and any of the biases [Phone rings] of drinking. I'm going to let that ring.... So you know it's, I can't say that it's limited to Worcester.

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** I've served on boards of commissions for the city, been on boards of various agencies, so I, I can't say that I've had negative experiences personally.

**AP:** Okay. Um and the program that you did...

**AF:** Daybreak?

**AP:** Yeah, Daybreak. That was specifically catered to women and domestic violence; that was their main, that was their mission.

**AF:** Yes.

**AP:** Going into education, where did you attend school when you were younger?

**AF:** Elementary and secondary school were public school systems in Chelmsford. College—or do you want me to just stick with...

**AP:** Um...

**AF:** Or do you want me to go earlier?

**AP:** I know you obviously completed junior high and high school.

**AF:** Those were all public schools in Chelmsford.

**AP:** If you can name the schools that would be great.

**AF:** College, I went to Emmanuel College in Boston and got my bachelor's degree majoring in math and physics. And then I went to St. Louis University and got a Master's in physics, and then I stayed on and did the equivalent of an undergraduate major in psychology. Then at Boston University I did a Master's in education and counseling psych and then I did my doctorate at Boston University in psych, counseling psych.

**AP:** Now what was the jump from physics to psychology, if you don't mind me asking?

**AF:** No, that's where discrimination plays in some. When going through public high school I liked math and I liked sciences and everybody was equal and there was no issue of discrimination. Going to a women's college at the time when I was going to college, there were a few schools that I looked at, and this was in an era when there were many more all-women colleges,

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and it was also at a time when many fine liberal arts colleges were for males; they were either all women or all men...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and there were—so I was I could have gone to numerous colleges if I wanted to major in education or nursing but I didn't and I wanted liberal arts, and I wanted physics or math, so that pretty much geared you towards women's colleges in that era. I graduated from high school in 1958, so late '50s early '60s. So I went to Emmanuel largely in a sense discrimination plays in there too. As I mentioned earlier religion was important in our family. It was a notable dimension in town, and so ultimately I wanted to go to a Catholic college figuring if I was going to experience some kidding or discrimination because of religion I might as well find out about this religion...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and so I chose a women's college because of liberal arts, I chose a Catholic college because of earlier experiences of kidding, harassment about religion and...

**AP:** Yes

**AF:** ...and majored in physics and minored in math. And being in that environment, you were doing what you were capable of doing.

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** I graduated from there and worked that summer at MIT as a math analyst and had a fellowship to St. Louis for physics. And working at MIT was interesting, and I could have stayed but again there was almost a sense of "well, it's a little bit odd to have this woman in this system" at that era. So I went on to St. Louis and it turned out that I was the only woman in the grad school class of physics. I don't know, there was another woman and she was a nun from Minnesota and she was alright because she was a nun and she was going to be teaching in college. You know, then there were fifty eight men, myself, and this nun. And, and I was in situations where faculty would say, "Well, if there wasn't one person sitting in this room I would be able to tell you this joke." And, and dating some of the men there were times when it was a little bit like you go to these parties and it's, "You'd never guess what she's majoring in." And so after awhile you were beginning to feel like the clown or the odd one out.

**AP:** Well, being an intelligent, independent woman was a hindrance at the time.

**AF:** Yes, it was a hindrance at the time. And you were made to feel weird, and at that time it was something like a little less than one half of one percent of the physicists in the United



States were female. So, so there just wasn't a lot of companionship or support or, you know, it was always, "you're the weird one."

**AP:** Now did that push you, or did that kind of take its emotional toll on you, or did you feel almost empowered by that, like, "Hey, I'm going to show you?"

**AF:** No, I would say it took more of the emotional toll, and being in my second year in order to cut the cost of housing I applied for to become one of the RA's in the dorm, and of course I'd never, I didn't have any sex so no bad ground. And when I went to the interview they asked, well, you know, "Why do you think you're qualified for this position?" And I simply said, "Well, any job I've ever done I've always done my best and given it my all, so I probably have no qualifications other than the fact that I'll do the job and I'll do it well. So they, they hired me.

**AP:** Oh great!

**AF:** And that's really how I started to get connected into the social sciences, if you will, and I was an RA in a dorm, and they have these contests, you know, between floors and so forth...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and my floor won all the awards that year, and we had a blast.

**AP:** Yeah...

**AF:** And then ...

**AP:** And primarily you were an RA of all males....?

**AF:** All females.

**AP:** Oh, all females, ok.

**AF:** In women's dorms.

**AP:** Yup!

**AF:** And then the following year I became the Assistant Director of the residence hall, which was more administrative. And so I was studying part-time and working part-time, and then that year—was it that year—my mother became ill with ovarian cancer, so I was not finished my degree but I came home to take care of her and I was home for...

**AP:** About how old were you?

**AF:** I was about 24 then and came home, took care of her. And then she died in July, no she died, I'm sorry, in May; her birthday would have been in July but she died in May of that

year. And then I went back to St. Louis in August to finish my degree, and when I went back they offered me the position of full-time dorm Director. So I took the dorm director position, completed my masters thesis, and then it was at a crossroads. So, do I continue on in physics or make a change?

**AP:** Or go with social sciences...

**AF:** And I was having a good time doing the dorm work, and dating certainly was a lot easier then, weren't this weirdo, you know. I mean I could sort of downplay the physics and play up, well, I'm just resident hall director

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** And so I stayed on for another year as Residence Hall Director and then I thought, well if I'm going to be in this line then I need to get some courses. So I was able to do the equivalent of the undergraduate major in psych and somehow I had that—it was then the question of, "Now what do I do?" And [Laughs] so I had done all I was there to do, so I resigned the position.

**AP:** Oh...

**AF:** And Father George Drury from B.C. [Boston College] was out recruiting for a Director of Women's Housing for B.C. and he had come up to St. Louis and interviewed me. And I said, you know, "You don't want me," and he kept on saying, "e do want you."

**AP:** Awww...

**AF:** ...so finally I came back for an interview and I found things discriminatory at the time at B.C. The women still were only in education and nursing. The women lived off campus, a mile off campus, and paid more money than the men who lived in residence halls on campus. So I said, for sure you don't want me because there's no way I can support this, and Father Drury said, no, for sure we do want you and that's why we want you. And he was Vice President of Student Affairs at the time. The Director of the University has, was somebody who seemed to be happy with things the way they were, and the position I was being recruited for I would answer to that person. And I kept on saying, he doesn't support the position; I couldn't work for him.

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** Well, I did take the job and I had a joint reporting to both the Director of Housing and the vice president of student affairs. And in that first year, we ending up having a demonstration for bringing women on campus and for....

**AP:** Go you... [Laughs]

**AF:** [Laughs] ...and for equal costs.

**AP:** Yup.

**AF:** So the women and many men had a sit in and we achieved that [Laughs], and so [Laughs]

**AP:** So you did achieve um...

**AF:** So that second year that I was there, that fall, women had residences on campus, and the charges were the same and men were given the opportunity to live off campus in these residences where the women had been....

**AP:** That is absolutely amazing...

**AF:** I had a fun time... [Laughs]

**AP:** Well, yeah, I mean it was fun, but now like looking back in retrospect I mean like...that's...

**AF:** Startled are you? [Laughs]

**AP:** [Laughs] I mean just like, um ... Wow...

**AF:** So we, we got that accomplished. Then the third year—yeah, we got that settled—the third year I was director of University Housing, and there were, there were numerous administrative struggles going that went on. They were going through financial strains—without getting into all the details there, it gets too long and complicated but—got through that year, and then the fourth year, we had, it was in that year we had some demonstrations. Mary Daly initially did not get tenure and it was that year, we had a demonstration for her. It was an era of demonstrations.... It was the sixties...

**AP:** Oh yeah!

**AF:** ...you know, it was a great time....

**AP:** [Laughs]

**AF:** And in the fourth year I was named Dean of Women—Arts and Sciences went co-ed, so I was named Dean of Women. At the time, I was also going to school at B.U. to get a Masters in counseling education and then I was let go that year...

**AP:** Uh huh.

**AF:** As was the Foreign Student Advisor. And then there was a faculty member, Kristen—I forget her last name, faculty member in English—that did not get tenured, so again the students demonstrated. And when—I think I had a good rapport with many students...

**AP:** Yes.

**AF:** ...and when they heard that I was being let go, I was feeling because of some positions I had took the third year, I was being fired because of what I stood for, but the way they presented it to me was, well, the first ones into a position—they were having cutbacks—and so the first ones into a position were being let go. Well, I was in my fourth year, but it was my first year as Dean of Women...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** So I thought this was bogus, and then students heard about it and the students had a sit-in the President's office and [Laughs] that went on for a few days, and they couldn't figure out how to get the students out of the President's office...

**AP:** [Laughs]

**AF:** ...they had to call me in on it to get the students out. And of course when I came over to the President's office, the TV cameras were rolling and, you know, and then there's this headline Dean of Women fired at Boston College and students in a sit-in, and that's when my father discovered that this has happened. I hadn't said anything to him, and he's watching the evening news, so he's seeing this, which was very upsetting to him. And I have a brother who's a lawyer, so he called my brother who's a lawyer and, "Oh, you have to help out Ann." And we ultimately got the students out of the President's office, I hired an attorney, and I sued B.C. And they can nickel or dime you to death with lawsuits in terms of every month usually you get thirty days to review the case, and you know they can change two words, and then the other side gets thirty days, and even if you get it back the next day, it's another thirty days.

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** And so when I left B.C. the legal case was going on and then I went into doctoral studies at B.U. I figured again if I'm staying in this field I'm going to need a doctorate sooner or later....

**AP:** So the case was still going on as you were ...

**AF:** Yes, my whole first year I was in my lawsuit with B.C., which, I mean, it's not a real easy thing you know. And the suit did finally get settled and I won the case, and you know they had improperly let me go... I wasn't suing to get the job back; I was, what my suit really was—they have the right to let me go, but if they were going to let me go then they had certain financial obligations that they owed me.

**AP:** Uh huh...

**AF:** And that's really what I sued them for, because in administration you work at [inaudible] so...

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** So, you know, there's no tenure or anything. So I then went to B.U., I was in B.U. full time and so finished up my studies and then ultimately ended up at Holy Cross.

**AP:** Umm, how did you pay for your education?

**AF:** In college I had a scholarship and I worked two or three jobs—usually, well one or two during the school year and one or two during the summer, so...

**AP:** So it was basically you paying for college?

**AF:** Yeah. My parents from a very early age said to all of us they were able to pay for my oldest two brothers, but no one else. And so from a very early age it was, we want you to go to college, you're going to go to college and you're going to have to work and get a scholarship and you're going to have to work to pay for it... So from age 18 on I paid for everything, so that's been it...

**AP:** Wonderful...and I mean I think we definitely covered how you chose your college. [Laughs]

**AF:** Yeah. [Laughs]

**AP:** Did you have any really large support networks or any one particular person throughout this time during college that mentored you or that really made an impact in your life?

**AF:** I mean, my parents certainly were supportive my, in college. I mean, I had many friends and some of the faculty were really very I'd say significant in my life and several other, and several of my friend's lives, I mean, they just really believed in you. And if you were going for a summer job you know they were always there to help kind of sort out what was, what jobs looked good...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** They were supportive of opportunities, writing you know recommendations, so I'd say you know it just was...

**AP:** It was just a good support network that you had?

**AF:** Yeah.

**AP:** Good.

**AF:** Yeah.

**AP:** I mean, upon finishing your formal education and, you know, kind of ending college where did you see yourself going? I mean were you like, “Oh dear, where do I go now?” Or were you really pointed in a specific direction?

**AF:** When I finished college, I wasn't too sure. I had, in my junior and senior year I was trying to figure out what to do and there was a brother of a close friend who was an astronomer.

**AP:** Mmhm...

**AF:** And since I liked physics and math he kept on talking to me about astronomy, and I gave astronomy really serious thought. And when I applied to St. Louis university what I didn't realize in terms of graduate school was, I didn't understand the refinements of specialization and St. Louis's program in physics was a bit more on the engineering side and I was looking for, I would have been better in a program that was heavier in mathematical physics and mathematical physics would have been closer to astronomy. So I had been thinking astronomy, physics, wasn't sure but didn't realize that I was in a program that wasn't quite the best fit. And when I went to MIT that was mathematical physics and that kind of gave me a taste for it. But I mean in my senior year of college I had applied to grad school, and I'll tell you one thing, that I was lacking probably advising in grad school, and if I better understood that the differences in grad school—

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** I might not have gone to St. Louis.

**AP:** So what was your first, you know, out of college, paying job?

**AF:** Well the MIT job could have continued but that was, turned out to be summer and then the resident hall job at St. Louis, the full-time residence hall, that was full-time employment...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and then, but I was also in school, and then going to B.C. and the title there was Assistant Dean of Students. So that perhaps was the first that was somewhat independent of schooling.

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** I mean, I was doing it independent of school.

**AP:** Now going into the workforce did you find any discrimination in interviews going out for jobs, being female?

**AF:** Well, the job at B.C. I was recruited specifically because of being female and they were going, they knew at some point in the not too distant future they expected to be going co-ed but they didn't know when and they needed the Director of Women's Housing, so it was more affirmative action than discrimination. In physics as I mentioned earlier, I ran into a lot of collegial discrimination...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and when I was at St. Louis, MIT ran a program for women in science that was again more of an affirmative action kind of program...

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...and I was the St. Louis University representative to that meeting or that conference, so those were times when there was recognition that women are not in a lot of those and society was changing.

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** And so again I think growing up in the family that I was in, that was largely male going, going to public school, there was just always the sense you could—gender was not a barrier. I wasn't raised with the thought that gender was a barrier.

**AP:** [says simultaneously] that gender was a barrier, right...

**AF:** And I encountered it really for the first time at St. Louis in physics...

**AP:** Yup.

**AF:** ...and became more aware of the conflicts of women in science and knowing there weren't many women in physics or in astronomy.

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** So internally I was experiencing it a lot in the field that I was in, but—and externally with classes, but when it came time for jobs it was jobs outside of the field...

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** ...which probably was no [inaudible]. Now had I gone for jobs with in physics—I mean, I didn't run into a problem at MIT .

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** But MIT is a different world anyhow.

**AP:** I mean we jump, the next question jumps to your current job. I'm actually interested if you could give a quick rundown of what you have done between—I mean, [Laughs] if [inaudible]...I mean, I mean you can go, you can elaborate on it, but work-wise and anything you encountered, what you've done, you know, give me your resume. [Laughs]

**AF:** [Laughs] That might be the easiest to just give you my resume. Well actually work-wise it isn't too complicated. I mean I, at B.C. I was assisting students for two years, then Director of University Housing then Dean of Women. At Holy Cross I was psychologist in the counseling center then Associate Director of Counseling, then Director of Counseling, and then—I was at Holy Cross for twenty seven years, so that's a large span of work—and left there and did after a couple of years of retirement, did some consulting with doing grant writing.

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** And then more recently coming up on two years here at the United Way as the Assistant Vice President.

**AP:** Alright, well I think we've narrowed work down. (Laughs)

**AF:** [Laughs]

**AP:** I mean, going into the family, you already mentioned that your brother had been in Peru, for...

**AF:** Just one brother...

**AP:** One brother, yes. So I mean, I can ask what kind of work do your brothers and sisters do?

**AF:** My oldest brother is a Dionysian Priest and he had built a production studio for creating audio tapes that get sent out throughout Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. So it's a communication production studio; well, a lot of it's religion and social service information. My brother, second brother, Joe, he has a background in accounting, CPA, and he's been Vice President for one of the what was the Big Eight accounting firms, that became the Big Six, that became the Big Four, that became the Big Three. And then he retired from there and he's Vice President for [inaudible] Capital Management—that's his retirement job. My oldest brother who's the Priest, he's in semi-retirement, but my brother Joe is in retirement. Pat was an engineer, an electrical engineer, worked for Arizona Power and Light, and is retired, and he is now a Deacon in the Catholic Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Jimmy, Jim was a civil engineer, and then also got a Masters in business and worked for the telephone company for



a number of years—he's passed away—and then he got into a lot of the antiquing and had a shop until...

**AP:** Until he died?

**AF:** Yeah... John is an attorney and teaches law, and just retired from the University of Utah Law School. His area was, um, it'll come to me...

**AP:** [Laughs]

**AF:** ...but it probably doesn't matter... Mary was born retarded and she worked in housekeeping, well, for a number of years at Tewksbury State Hospital. Prior to that she had worked in, doing work in a shoe factory and then got a job at Tewksbury State Hospital, and then she passed away. And then myself.

**AP:** I mean, growing up what like primarily what did housework involve? I mean, there were seven children, two parents who worked. I mean, I mean was there a lot of housework? Were the chores divided evenly?

**AF:** I would say chores were divided up. We all, we all did things, and whether it was sweeping down the cellar stairs, or washing the dishes or drying the dishes or taking the trash out, or mowing the lawn or...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...sweeping the sidewalks, or cleaning out the garage, or, you know, but everybody did something.

**AP:** Everyone played their part...

**AF:** Yeah.

**AP:** Now after—this is an interesting question—after everything that we've spoken about, about what you've done and accomplished when you were young, what was your dream job? Like what did you want to be when you grew up?

**AF:** At first, the first job that really came to mind, I was in junior high and I did a science project on the Aurora Borealis, or the Northern Lights...

**AP:** Yup.

**AF:** ...and I guess that's what got me going about the sky and the stars, so that's what prompted me initially to think in terms of science. And then in high school there was a friend of the family who was a math analyst, a woman who was a math analyst at, well it's now Bedford Air Force Base. It was, it was a research -- there used to be a research center there. And so I, I just thought she must be neat you know and have a great life, so I would say

people looked upon her as a fond life. She traveled, you know, there was just sort of glamour around her...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and she was a math analyst, so that got me thinking you know. So I ...

**AP:** So from a very early age that's what you were....

**AF:** Yeah, science and math.

**AP:** Great. Now first, before I ask this question, I would love to congratulate you for the 2006 YWCA Catherine Erskine Award for Community Service—[Laughs] I'm putting you in an awkward position—for Community Service. And I know that you can go on and on, but what have you been involved in volunteer work?

**AF:** [Laughs] Yeah, I guess I've been a few places.

**AP:** [Laughs]

**AF:** You want to know what volunteer groups?

**AP:** Yeah, I mean.....

**AF:** Here in Worcester?

**AP:** In Worcester—I mean, if you've done anything outside if you just want to stay current, I mean....

**AF:** Yeah, because I've done volunteer work all my life, and everybody in our family always did so.

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** So me, going back to elementary school...

**AP:** Yeah, no if you want to just do recent volunteer work...

**AF:** Right. Well, as I mentioned earlier, when I first came to Worcester I got involved with Daybreak and I was on their board and President of their board and Treasurer of their board, and involved with the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association and crime watch activity with that. I became a member of the Worcester Community Housing Resources board, and I was Vice President then President of the board, worked with people in the Piedmont and Elm Park neighborhoods to create downtown neighborhood parks. I am currently on the Weed and Seed board and the University Partnership board; there are some grants that we wrote, myself and some neighborhood people, to create a little park up the street. I don't know,

when I retired from Holy Cross I got a grant to go to Kenya for a month and studied Participatory Rural Appraisals and strategies, which is basically a grassroots kind of approach to community development...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and utilized some of those principals back here. And that's kind of it...

**AP:** (Laughs)

**AF:** I mean there are numerous things with respect to Holy Cross....

**AP:** I thought, if I'm not mistaking, you are a member of Women's Initiative, correct?

**AF:** Yes.

**AP:** Yes.

**AF:** Yup, I mean there's, yes, there will be other things that will come to mind. When I was at Holy Cross we started the, a prevention program and that reminded me of nutrition exercise and eating disorders...

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...they need educative program and the peer education program to attempt to inform student's culture and community about eating disorders...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and the importance of exercise and healthy living, and that program is still going on.

**AP:** Good, now doing things for other people—what kind of impact has that had on your personal life?

**AF:** It's kind of my life I guess.

**AP:** It's kind of your life, so I mean, obviously it's something you're very passionate about and...

**AF:** Yeah, I mean, I think values that were instilled in us growing up, you need to kind of be respectful and responsible taking care of yourself, family, and community. And so community was always part of, I mean somebody has to take care of it, and it's everybody's job to take care of it.

**AP:** Exactly.

**AF:** So caring for your community is just an element and you need to make it part of your life, period. It isn't complicated.

**AP:** Moving on to a slightly different topic—health. Has health impacted any of your, this is all optional, has health impacted your life at all in any major ways? With yourself or, you know, I know you mentioned your mother and your sister....

**AF:** No. I think, I mean, I've been fortunate to date to have good health, but I also try to eat reasonably well and exercise, so taking care of myself.

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** I mean, yeah, my mother had cancer, my sister was borderline retarded, my brother Jude who passed away, he died of AIDS. Some of the whole issue of AIDS is, you know, something that he paid attention to in terms of community...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** ...and the prevalence of it. And he had been married and had four kids and, but I was active in helping to bring them up, and so I'd say that certainly had an impact.

**AP:** On your life?

**AF:** Yeah, I mean, and I'm very close to his kids. And it certainly wasn't easy for his wife, both when she learned that he had AIDS and, and when he passed away. So that made him, you know, they didn't have much, so helping to bring up the kids was certainly a major event health-wise. And they're all terrific kids, and they're [inaudible]

**AP:** Well they come—they sound like they come from a terrific line of people... So in your, in your experiences of you know working in Worcester and whatnot, and what's your view on assessing the quality of affordable health care, and has that ever been an issue for you?

**AF:** It's not been an issue personally because of working in places where I had healthcare coverage.

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** And certainly paid into—I paid my share of the health care.

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** And I'm certainly aware that it's an issue for a sizable segment of society, and it's becoming more of an issue, and I would hope the State would get to universal healthcare coverage. You know it's, something has to be done with healthcare. I mean it's just crazy and I certainly don't know the solution by any means, but I don't know if that answers your question

**AP:** No, no we just need a basic view on you know, what your thoughts are. What activities—you mentioned that you exercise—what activities do you participate in to remain active?

**AF:** I have a Nordictrack at home that I use...

**AP:** (Laughs)

**AF:** It's the ski machine, so you get pretty good exercise from that. And I walked a lot, growing up. I used to—junior high, high school, I belonged to the swim team...

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...and played tennis on the tennis team...

**AP:** All women or co-ed?

**AF:** No, it was co-ed. There were both women and co-ed. Once I was into college and was carrying numerous jobs, I never really had the time...

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** ...to continue into sports, but I would say, you know, just eating healthy and being fairly active...

**AP:** Now did, food, nutrition, and you know remaining active, was that something that was instilled in you when you were younger?

**AF:** I think, yes, but probably given that my mother was a nurse, the food, you know, it wasn't junk food...

**AP:** In the house, right?

**AF:** I mean, probably in that era we didn't have junk food, but you know there wasn't a lot of soft drinks in the refrigerator...

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...or candy. It was milk, water, and, you know, so I think it was always and there was a lot of home-cooked foods.

**AP:** Yup. Now growing up how did you feel personally about your body as a young woman, like growing up?

**AF:** I don't recall feeling self-conscious about it, you know, I don't. And I think probably again because we had such a concentration on study, school and work that sort of sense of sexuality and there, also wasn't an era like so much today like with media. I mean there certainly was dating and learning about your body and menstruation.

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** But there wasn't, there wasn't, the thing that strikes me when I see my nieces growing up...

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...and now they're married and their children and the Barbie doll kind of emphasis, I didn't have that and I would say fortunately so...

**AP:** Yes, and I would completely agree with you... That's not really a question, I'm just going to make up myself. Media—how do you feel that media has affected, I mean men and women, but how do you really think that's pushed especially younger generations?

**AF:** I think the media has done tremendous damage to helping us help people, and I think media has great opportunity for good or evil...

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...and it's a real balancing act. And I certainly believe in freedom of speech, but I also believe in responsibility. And when we were at, when I was at Holy Cross we had, I forget the name of the women, she was actually at B.U. a year or two behind me, who did a lot on the image of women in the media.

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** And she had done a lot of videoing how ads have sexualized women and have really challenged a lot of ads in terms of playing on either pornography or sensuality...

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** ...to sell product, and I think there's an awful lot of it, and there's still a lot of it. And today's era it's—in some sense we've been through a certain amount of sexuality—today it's the violence, and I don't think that's doing us any great favors with the video game violence; it's just so excessive and so I think media plays a big role.

**AP:** And, I completely agree. I'm actually taking a class on that right now...

**AF:** Yeah.

**AP:** Now, now we get into the kind of fun questions. How old were you when you were allowed to date? Being in a very, you know, a Catholic home and...

**AF:** I would say, I mean we had school dances that I remember my father driving me to, and I don't know I can't remember I was probably eleven, twelve, thirteen. I remember my first boyfriend—probably fifteen, sixteen—and he was sixteen, seventeen, probably my junior prom, and he was a freshman at U. Lowell. And, yeah.

**AP:** And now having so many older brothers, now was there a protection—was there like a, you know, “Don't mess with my sister?”

**AF:** Not so much because my brother John was the one who was next older to me, and he was four years older. So I was, he was graduating from high school when I was entering high school...

**AP:** So you guys are all very close in age?

**AF:** Well, most of my brothers and my older sister, they were all a year or two or three years or two years, and then there was four years difference between John and myself. So there, we're the biggest span, so they were out of the house on their way....

**AP:** Right. Um...

**AF:** ...and there's eleven years difference between my oldest brother and myself...

**AP:** Not too bad. [Laughs] Um, what was considered fashionable when you were younger, you know, during...?

**AF:** Oh god, what was that, what immediately comes to mind, that song about the poodle in the window...

**AP:** Poodle skirt?

**AF:** Yeah, I mean with sort of the pink skirt with poodles on it. I mean, I remember that, and Elvis Presley was the rage in high school.....

**AP:** You actually nailed my next question....

**AF:** (Laughs)

**AP:** Yeah, I mean, favorite musical groups that you had or you were into?

**AF:** Elvis certainly was the big, big rage.

**AP:** He was the thing!

**AF:** You ain't nothing but a hound dog!

**AP:** [Laughs] Did you go to any clubs that you know were fashionable at the time, or kind of hangouts?

**AF:** Not in high school. I mean it was more—Chelmsford at the time the population was probably eight thousand, and it was more of a—today it's suburbia, but then it was more like a town. And so the hangouts were all you know like the hamburger place that you went...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** In college there were a couple of clubs that were near Fort Devens that we used to go to, to meet the guys in the army. I don't remember the names of them, but I remember there was a lot of pot being smoked, and there we went to see The Who; I remember, they were the rage....

**AP:** All the rage.... Um anything else you want to reflect on from childhood or...

**AF:** Nothing that....

**AP:** Jumps out...?

**AF:** Jumps out.

**AP:** When you're not home where do you find yourself? Also if you're not here, I mean, do you have any retreats where, you know, you can feel yourself where you can regroup, recollect?

**AF:** Well, a lot of times I'm on the move. I mean spend time with family—nieces, nephews, brothers. Since I'm part of a few organizations here in the city...

**AP:** A few...

**AF:** I'm at meetings or I take vacations...

**AP:** Yeah. Now, when you take vacations, do you travel, or....?

**AF:** Usually, yeah.

**AP:** Any particular spot that you enjoy traveling to or you love to travel abroad or...?

**AF:** I go different places abroad, like this last September I went to Peru to visit my brother.

**AP:** Mhmm...



**AF:** This summer I'm going to go to Lebanon with somebody who works here who is interested in starting International United Way. We're going to go to Lebanon. Last summer I went to Italy. Been to Egypt, been to Thailand, Australia, Galapagos, Africa, different places...

**AP:** Yes, I would say so...

**AF:** Ecuador, El Salvador...

**AP:** Well, I mean, getting into that, how do you feel that traveling and going to these places viewing people's culture, religion, ethnicity, has that changed you in any way?

**AF:** No, I mean, I think yes. Yes in the sense that travel is educational...

**AP:** Right...

**AF:** Yes, in that a lot of the places are developing countries, and it certainly contributes to my appreciating that we in the U.S., even the poorest in the U.S., while the struggle is tremendous here.

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...to see people in Africa who walk twelve hours a day to get water...

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** To see the what's called 'the invasion' in Peru where overnight ten thousand people can appear out of the mountains and create cardboard houses and live in one room—no electricity, no plumbing.....

**AP:** Now out of everything and all of the accomplishments you've made, how would you define success in your life?

**AF:** That's, well, just being a good and decent human being, caring for others. Paying attention to family. Those are...

**AP:** Most of the things that are instilled, that you carried throughout life....

**AF:** Yeah.

**AP:** Do you have any regrets in life?

**AF:** No, I wouldn't say that. I mean, I think, I think a turning point—one turning point—was, was when I mentioned not knowing enough on selecting grad school....

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** I would say with boyfriends there were a few “will you marry me” situations and I was, I think, very engrossed in career and, and there were times that I wished I had married but that was more of a sense of aloneness... And I think out of that I created much more of a connectedness to multiple family members and doing things in the community, and you know out of that I would say I came through a sense of loneliness and feel very fulfilled and very spirited.

**AP:** Wonderful!

**AF:** So, no I don't have regrets.

**AP:** Good. Um, what would you give for advice for future generations of women?

**AF:** That's even tougher!

**AP:** Yeah.

**AF:** Be all that you can be. And I do think education does make a difference. Love is hard to define but I think it's found through knowledge of self and connectedness to others. Going gently through the world will help you discover an awful lot and rather than slamming doors...

**AP:** Exactly...

**AF:** ...and raging at things...

**AP:** Yup. Um, now that we're working to help for stories of the pasts of women than have been recorded in the past, what do you believe we should be insured, like you know what we should include? If this would to be done again what would you feel should be included...?

**AF:** Not clear.

**AP:** If I were, I mean, if we were to continue this—I mean, we're continuing the oral histories down the line, what would you, if you were on the board of making questions, what would you feel should be included, that's something you would want to include that should be asked?

**AF:** I would, I would interview a few men. Because, I mean, I fully believe in equity.

**AP:** Mhmm...

**AF:** ...and I think the equity for those women have been working towards for a long time has altered men's lives tremendously, and women of say of your generation -- my experience was at Holy Cross that there came a period probably from the eighties on that women, young women were not aware of a sense of discrimination...

**AP:** Right.

**AF:** ...and so that's hard to teach, it's like, oh that's somebody else's problem. But I don't think we're fully there yet, so...

**AP:** No.

**AF:** I think women don't, I think women are much older now before they encounter discrimination, but I, this, I don't know, because women have changed the lives of men I would interview men. I think in the future there will be even further changes given all the changes in biotechnology and what's happening with older women becoming pregnant, with adoption. I think family life is changing traumatically. Religion is a major dimension in society, and we probably wouldn't be in Iraq if religion wasn't part of it so fundamentalist religion no matter whether its fundamental Christian religion or fundamental Judaism or fundamental Islamic fundamentalism versus modern versus liberal in no matter what religion has certainly impacted female development. I mean these are things right off the cuff that just come to mind...

**AP:** Right, now talking to you, you're a very humble person, you're very humble. This might be a difficult question for you to answer. Do you feel you have a legacy?

**AF:** No! I think we're all just little pebbles on the beach, and there's a whole lot of pebbles that make up the beach and you know, no. That's kind of what the Erskine Award is like. Family might certainly recognize that it's an honor, but there's a whole lot of people out there doing a lot of [inaudible], and I, and I am being honored I think in a way because there's many people that I've joined with. I haven't done things singularly; there's been many members of the activities...

**AP:** Exactly.

**AF:** ...that have brought about some changes. So, no, I think we're just the sand on the beach...

**AP:** Well, from what I, from what I hear, you are quite a phenomenal women.

**AF:** Well thank you.

**AP:** Um...

**AF:** But don't get carried away! [Laughs]

**AP:** [Laughs] No. I mean, being a young woman still in college and speaking with someone who has experienced life I just, I really, you know, it's, it's a role model figure, you know. I hear what you've been through, I hear what you've experienced, and you have overcome a lot of diversity in your life....

**AF:** I know.

**AP:** To me personally it is inspiring to hear coming from another woman.....

**AF:** Thank you!

**AP:** So, and you know, lastly, is there anything else that you would like to share that you would like other people to know... any big thought....?

**AF:** Just put one foot in front of the other and keep going! [Laughs]

**AP:** A wonderful motto to have, and thank you so much for...

**AF:** You're welcome!

**AP:** This was an absolute pleasure.

**AF:** I did have some fun....

**AP:** No-no, this was, this was great. I was looking forward to it, but I mean, I'm going to admit I was a little nervous, and I was just like, you know, these can be kind of dry questions. Going through you really told, you made a story out of it.

**AF:** [Laughs]

**AP:** You definitely made a story out of it; it's not an interview...