

Interviewee: Louise W. Gleason
Interviewers: Max Ebacher and Jessica Roberts
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Abstract: Louise Wanda Gleason was born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts. In this interview, Louise discusses the path that led her to pursue a career in nursing in the face of very limited options for women in the paid labor market. She talks extensively about her experiences in parochial school, focusing particularly on her three years living, studying, and working at the St. Vincent Hospital School of Nursing. Louise describes her day-to-day work as a nurse at Worcester State Hospital, the Department of Mental Health, and later UMASS Medical. She emphasizes the ways in which nurses of her generation were pioneers in moving the field beyond bedside care, taking on roles in training, social work, and therapy, among others. She details the role of gender in her childhood home, and describes how being the only girl in her immediate family shaped her personality and relationships with others later in life. She also discusses the balance of career and family life in her own experience as a working mother. Louise emphasizes the importance of education in her life, describing her current involvement with the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (W.I.S.E.) program, and encourages others to take advantage of any opportunities they may be given.

ME: Hey, this is Max Ebacher.

JR: And Jess Roberts.

ME: And we're here at Assumption College on November 13, 2006 conducting an interview to be submitted to the Worcester Women's History Project. So, our first question is, may we have permission to record your oral history today for the use by the Worcester Women's Oral History Project?

LG: Absolutely.

ME: And now we'll go over a brief overview of what the project's aims are. The project is completing the citywide oral history of lives of women from Worcester aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester. The project is focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, politics and community involvement. Today, we're going to focus on our, your, experiences with work and education. Thank you for your help with this important project.

LG: You're welcome.

JR: Ok. What is your full and, if applicable, your maiden name or married name?

LG: Ok. Alright. Louise Wanda Gleason but, and my maiden name is ...

JR: What is your family background, nationality-wise?

LG: Oh, ok. Polish!

JR: Any relatives like direct from Poland, or . . . ?

LG: My father. My father was from Poland. He was Polish and he either lived in Poland or Belarus, it's not that clear. [Laughter]

JR: Um, when were you born?

LG: ... 1939.

JR: Where were you born? [Laughter]

LG: Right here in Worcester.

JR: In Worcester. Have you lived here your whole life?

LG: Absolutely. Yup.

JR: Do you have any children?

LG: I have two. Two boys, the ages of 40 and 42. One is a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the Army. He just retired. And the other is a programmer analyst for T.J. Maxx!
[Laughter]

JR: Are they both married?

LG: Yes.

JR: Do you have any grandchildren?

LG: Six girls, ages from 10 to going to be 19.

JR: And what's the name of your current husband?

LG: David Elwood Gleason.

JR: Alright, we're going to talk about growing up now. We talked about your parents, but did they have an influence on you education-wise? Like did they mold . . .

LG: I don't think so. I was very self-directed from a very early age. And I just know. . . The kindergarten I went to, the teacher was so awful and I just, I, she was just mean! [Laughter] Plain mean! Can you imagine that? So I said to my mother one day as we came out of church, I said. . . The convent was right there, I said, I pointed there, and I said, "I want to go to that school." And, you know, so anyway, I started in parochial school and I stayed with that my entire life.

JR: Pretty cool.

ME: So, shall we talk about college now?

JR: Sure.

ME: And did you attend college?

LG: Yes I did.

ME: And. . .

LG: Yup. Well, I went to St. Vincent Hospital School of Nursing, which is now no longer in existence. That goes along with the high school I went to, Ascension High School, which they tore down, and the grammar school, Sacred Heart, which they also tore that down. So, it was a three-year school, and I just stayed with the nuns. It was—I liked the structure of the nuns that they had, and at the time St. Vincent was one of the more prestigious nursing schools in the city.

JR: So you're in nursing? Or you were in nursing?

LG: Yes, I—yep, and then I went to Anna Maria College and I got a Bachelor's later on when I was in my forties and got my Master's when I was in my fifties, and, sort of staying with education because now I'm in W.I.S.E. [Worcester Institute for Senior Education] and still going to school.

JR: Mhmm. Alright. How did you get interested in nursing?

LG: You wanna know the truth?

JR: Yes. [Laughter]

LG: Here's the truth. [Laughter] I got to be a senior in high school—and I don't know if you guys went through this—and it was like, "Ok, you gotta do something when you get out of high school." And of course back then, it was still limited for what women did. You either went to work in an office and you—or you went into nursing or you became a teacher. That was it. And so I didn't take any of those [courses]—actually, I took some of those because of the nuns are so liberal arts type of thing you manage to get all the

subjects you would need to get into nursing, even though I didn't realize it, but . . . So it came like, you know, five months before, six months before, and I was not going to go to work. Not this Principessa was not going to work. And so I applied to nursing school because I figured teaching was four years. I couldn't stretch that out, you know, to four years, so I took a three-year course. And it was a full three years. We didn't have any summers off or anything. You went to school and you worked continuously. And there would be days that you would work all day and then you'd have to go school or you would work all night and then you'd have a full class load during the day. So that was what—it was a very tight schedule for three—three years. And you stayed there, you didn't—you had a chance to go home, but not frequently.

JR: And how old were you when you did that?

LG: I was seventeen.

JR: Wow!

LG: It's an unbelievable experience because many of us, after our six months, this is the way healthcare was back then, six months after we started, that was your probationary period. Many of the kids in my class, they were put in charge of whole—whole floors at night, eleven to seven. That would never happen now, you know. Can you see like a little 18-year-old, you know, having total responsibility for very sick people? That's what was expected of you.

JR: Wow . . . That's very impressive! [Laughter]

LG: It is! [Laughter]

JR: How did you afford that, like—?

LG: Will you believe this? \$350 for three years!

JR: Oh wow!

LG: That included everything. And—but see where they got a lot of work out of us.

JR: Yeah.

LG: And they didn't pay us, of course. So, you know, we were—we were a lot of the nurses' salaries that they have to pay now. So that was it, 350. I had \$350 in the bank—I had 375 and that was it! [Laughter]

JR: [Laughter] So that's pretty cool, you just worked there and that was—what you did?

LG: That was it. Yeah that's all. We just stayed there and went to school and worked and you know. . . And sometimes they would split your day up so you'd work four hours in

the morning, go to school for another four hours, then go back in the afternoon and work until seven o'clock at night. Or, if you were lucky, [Laughter] otherwise you had that eleven to seven shift and had to show up for class. That was really tough. Talk about hallucinating in class; boy you really did!

JR & ME: [Laughter]

JR: How did your husband fit into this? How'd you meet him and when?

LG: Oh, not until later. I met him about five or six years after I had gotten out of nursing school. And just...it was not an auspicious thing. I got fixed up by one of our friends. However, you know, I had seen him at different times in my life but never met him. And it was—wouldn't that be funny, you know? Like I can even remember down—we used to go downtown on Wednesday nights, you know, all the kids, and I would like see him, and then I'd never see him again. And then, when I got out of nursing school, I had an apartment with some other nurses, and he showed up at one of the parties, but I never met him at the party. It was one of these things when he came—And then I went to work at Worcester State Hospital, I saw—he worked there when he was going to school. I saw him, like one time, and then I never saw him again. Isn't that weird?

JR: That's funny.

LG: It is! And then all of a sudden I got fixed up with him.

JR: [Laughter] Does he live in Worcester—Did he live in Worcester too?

LG: Yeah, yep, he did.

JR: Makes sense.

ME: Alright, so once you were married, how did having children affect your career?

LG: Oh, well, I continued to work. I worked all the time, 'cause I just had it in my mind that I went to school for something, you know, and that was, you know, I wasn't going to waste all that time and energy. So, when I had my first baby, I worked four days a week after. And then when I had my second one, I was—I had a really neat schedule so I would work like two to three days a week, depending on how, you know, how my own schedule worked out. That was pretty good. Then I always worked three to eleven. And then when they got a little bit bigger, there was a job that came up for a Nursing Supervisor, so I took that. And that was a full time, three to eleven. That was a great time to work 'cause you weren't home—there was all that craziness that goes on in the house at night. So that's what I worked.

JR: And where did you work again? I know you said it, but . . .

LG: I—Worcester State Hospital. I did that for a long time and then I went to work at the Department of Mental Health. [It] had clinics in downtown Worcester for mental health and that was an expanded role for nursing because nurses, up until that point, never did therapy. They just were situated in the hospital and they pass pills and that was it, you know, and managed floors. But now this was an expanded role for nursing where they would be doing, you know, psychotherapy with patients, group therapy, and psychopharmacology therapy with them, so we had a lot of patients to deal with, a lot. The nurses had more patients than the docs and social workers and psychologists there because they were all with the state hospital patients and they were really the worst and the hardest ones to deal with, and so our caseloads would be 150. Not that you'd see them, you know, everyday. And you know, there'd always be a crisis because they were from that time where they were emptying out the state hospitals and they hadn't provided appropriate treatment and places for them to live so you were continuously doing not only therapy, but social work types of things for them, and trying to get them resituated when they'd get kicked out of their housing. It was—it was quite a challenge.

JR: Did you prefer that to nursing, or—?

LG: No! I loved that part of nursing. That is nursing. That is another area of nursing. We did the expanded role and it—we were like pioneers, you know, in developing this new role for nursing, which continues to this day. So, you know, when nurses didn't do therapy before, we certainly were the ones out there early on doing that and allowing nurses to go forward with that.

JR: How long did you work as a nurse?

LG: 39 years! [Laughter]

JR: Wow. [Laughter]

LG: I went back to—I went back to Worcester State Hospital for a short time and then I went to the University of Massachusetts and that's where I ended my career. That was—I—I got a Clinical Specialist certification through the American Nurses Association so, and my position was the in-patient unit and I pretty much, like, I—I did a lot of the day-to-day management and all the like—I oversaw the total care of all the patients on there to, you know, make sure... I had great nurses that were up there, but, you know, it's that I had to keep an eye on not only the nurses, but the docs, social workers, and whoever else was there! [Laughter] Make sure everybody was on track.

JR: Alright. What has this work meant to you?

LG: Money. [Laughter] Money. But I loved my work. Absolutely. It was so hard, it was so intense at some times, and sometimes physically, physically dangerous, but I absolutely loved it. I—the part I loved, once I went out to the community and got a taste of actually working in that one-to-one, with patients; I really loved it. And it was a position that you could grow professionally and personally and it gave you a lot of—like,

even though it was hard and some days, you know, you just, you know, you listen to the same problem over and over and over again, you know, and you know it's not going to get any better. But for some reason, it really...I felt as though it did a lot for me and maybe it was just that, you know, I could see that I was making a better—I was helping these people better than when I was in the hospital. And then I also loved my job at UMASS too. That was really a wonderful job. And, but what happened, it just, you know, there comes a time that you just say, "I don't want to do this anymore." And I did that one day.

JR: You just decided?

LG: I just decided! One day, you know, the person who was above me came in and said, "We have to do this one thing." I looked at it and I said, "I don't want to do this." [Laughter] I went home and I stayed home for three days and I called her up and I said, "Linda, I'm all done." [Laughter] And that was it! After, you know, 39 years.

JR: Yeah, I can see . . .

LG: Yep. I was—and it had nothing to do with what was going on in the unit or anything. It had more to do with the pol—well not really—it's partly politics, but partly, you know, I felt as though some of the things that people were asking me to do were—were not—were not going to help the patient more. They were just going to be another superfluous piece of paperwork. And I just could not see myself, again, training the staff to do this, 'cause they would've killed me! [Laughter] I said, "Oh, I don't want to deal with this!" And that was the end.

JR: So, part of your job included, like, training people?

LG: Yep, it was training and education and it was everything, everything, yep.

JR: Nurse, teacher, wow.

LG: Everything! When you're a nurse, you're everything. It isn't just that you do, you know, bedside nursing. It opens the door to so many different types of careers that I—for me, I would recommend that to anybody that's interested in—in education or a career that's going to be helping. We did social work, we did—now nurses can prescribe medication, they do therapy, they, you know, they run clinics on their own, and they do all these high level things that before they weren't able to do, but now with expanded roles and acceptance in, you know, higher education, they just, you know, they're right up there.

JR: And I know you said the hours worked with having children, too.

LG: Yes. Yeah. That's it. You know you could do one day, you could do two days. If you had, right now, if you had your own, like these clinical specialists. You could have your own little clinic, you know, and open up and see patients. I have friends that are

working in clinics as their own clinicians. There are docs in there, but they are responsible for the meds, medications, so . . .

JR: Good field.

LG: It is a good field, I'll tell you.

ME: I guess nurses are a big, big part of the hospitable infrastructure.

LG: They are, aren't they? Since as they found out at UMASS. That strike didn't last very long there.

JR: I know you said growing up women were teachers, nurses and in the office. Did you know you wanted to be a nurse?

LG: No, no, no, no, no. No I didn't know I wanted to be a nurse. It was like ok there are these three things here, and I had already tried working in an office which I hated. And I just thought of it and back then it was stenography so you had to do shorthand and typewriter type of thing. My uncle had a company and he had me work there one summer. I came home and said, "Good God. I never want to go back to that again. That is not for me." They had these damn mimeograph papers so you had to put it on this roller thing. And there was all this ink that you had to put there. You were all covered with ink and the papers would come out all messy. If you wanted to make a correction you would have to erase four or five papers behind because you made a mistake and it went right through to all five papers.

JR: Can't say I blame you for not wanting to be in the office.

LG: And like I said, so then I looked over the terrain. And I said, you know that song? Did you ever see "Little Shop of Horrors" at all? Where he sings "Just be a Dentist?" Just be a nurse. [Laughter]

JR: That worked out for you though, so that's good. Alright, we will go back to growing up now. Did you have responsibilities in the house? I don't know if I asked you, but did you have siblings?

LG: Oh, I did. I had two brothers; they were older. One brother was a lot older than I. He was—this was my mother's second marriage because her first husband died, so he was about twenty years older than I. And my other brother was six, six or seven years older than me. Six years older than I am. They are both dead. One died just spontaneously from a heart attack and the other one... if you know any friends or if you smoke yourself, believe me. He died and it wasn't lung cancer, it was this slow growing cancer in his bladder and it was caused from cigarette smoking. So even though he had quit, because he was a really bad smoker, he had quit maybe twenty years before, that slow growing cancer killed him in the end. So you don't escape it, it is dangerous, dangerous stuff.

JR: Did being the only girl make your parents look on you differently?

LG: I was the queen! [Laughter] And I continued to be the queen when I got married. I had two boys, and so why would you want to be anything but the queen? [Laughter]

JR: So did you have any responsibilities, like housework or anything?

LG: Very little.

JR: Because you were the queen?

LG: Because I was the queen. And really housework was not on my mother's agenda. That was not one of her big things. I used to say to her, "Don't you think we should clean up around here? How come you are not interested?" She said, "It's going to be here long after I'm gone; I'm not going to worry about this." So we had a very nice life of not worrying about it. [Laughter] I was a very active child anyway because I was always into something. I took piano lessons the whole time I was in grammar school and probably two or three years into high school. I was always joining groups. You have church choirs you belong to and then we had a choral group that went around that just sang popular songs. I don't have a voice and I can't carry a tune, but I used to bury myself in the chorus. I went to the Girls' Club for a long time when I was young because it was right down the street from school.

JR: What did you do there?

LG: Oh we did wonderful things. They gave sewing lessons, knitting lessons. You could take tap dance there. And for 25 cents membership there you could go down. Then they had the big game room and you could go in there and hang out with your friends. They had cooking classes and it was just a great time. So I did learn a lot. And they had summer camp; I went there. I went there like three or four times. I got better at each time I went.

JR: Was it stay-away camp?

LG: Yeah, overnight, yeah.

JR: How long was it, a week?

LG: Well, I talked my parents into two weeks the first time, and I was only like maybe seven years old or eight years old. And I said, oh I got to go. And so my friend and I went. And of course by about the fourth day she is getting homesick and now I am getting homesick. We're planning our escape. [Laughter] We are planning our escape so we figure they have to take us to church. And so we are thinking we know the back roads. So if they take us to church we will just scoot out the side door and we'll run home. Well, they didn't bring us to our church; they brought us to another church. [Laughter]

JR: So the housework thing, has your attitude towards it as a child, did it follow your attitude as an adult?

LG: I don't know. Right now it is, I would say. I have regressed to that. But all the time I was working I was so obsessive about making sure everything gets done. You have to when you're working. You have to make sure things are taken care of at home before you go off to work because you don't want any telephone calls saying, "Where's this?" But we were lucky. For about eight or nine years my husband's mother lived with us because his father had died and she was getting kind of nervous living alone, so she came and lived with us. That really worked out well because she was there and she was a great cook. She took care of the kids and her baby boy, David. So that turned out ok.

JR: What did your husband do?

LG: He was a lineman for New England Power.

JR: What were his hours like?

LG: They were supposed to be day shifts. But there were times when big storms came up so he would be gone for maybe a week at a time if they had a lot of work. Or sometimes because he worked all over New England, there were long commute hours. He would go up to Lebanon, New Hampshire, and that's a trek. But we worked it out. It probably saved our marriage. We were working opposite times. [Laughter] He worked in the day time, I worked three to eleven.

ME: So how did your kids feel about your work?

LG: Do you know what? I asked them about that and they felt as though that made them a lot more self-sufficient and more independent in being able to take care of things. They didn't feel as though they were slighted; they just felt as though they were able to mature a lot quicker.

ME: So you taught them lessons even when you were working.

LG: I did. [Laughter] Well, I was there when they were little. I was there all the time during the daytime and I left at two thirty, three o'clock. And then when his mother was living with us that was an easy thing. There was always somebody in the house and Dave would be home by maybe five or six o'clock at night. So there was only like a three hour period where one parent wasn't there. Occasionally it would get a little tricky. Then when they got older and I worked during the daytime it was no problem at all. They were off doing their things and they were very active in sports.

JR: That worked out. You had a good balance with personal and professional.

LG: Oh yeah.

JR: How has work been a definition of success in your life?

LG: Well, I think it gave me a, it identified who I was as person as opposed to being a wife. I was Louise, the nurse. Because of your interactions with people and your reputation that you develop you were respected and so that does a lot for your own ego. And it's very important that you have a good ego. It also is a great paying job so I had tons of money. So that's important. [Laughter]

JR: So how would you define success in life I guess is a good question.

LG: Just being happy with yourself. And I can never stay in a situation where I am not happy with myself and what's going on around me. If I don't like what's going on around me, either I can change it, and if I'm not going to change it, I'm just going to walk away from it and find something and do something else. And I have done that, too, in my life and my career. Just always being able to have your mind clear that you feel ok about yourself. Because I can't feel good about my kids. I can't make them feel good; I can't make my husband feel good. If I take care of myself, then everybody else will get taken care of. And I actually don't need a lot of money. [Laughter] I really don't. I know, I have some friends; they're always angling how the best it is. It's like if I have money, it's fine. I have always have had enough money to do whatever I've wanted. I've never been like, "I got to get more of this."

JR: So money was just the perk?

LG: Yeah. It was there and it was good. [Laughter]

ME: You want to talk about the W.I.S.E program?

JR: Ok.

ME: How did you get into the W.I.S.E. program?

LG: My daughter-in-law's mother and father belonged and so that's how. She asked, she said why don't you try it and I came. It was just something that I did because I always figured that, well now I'm retired. I tried it before I retired. I couldn't do it. I couldn't arrange my travel on getting here on time. So once I retired I joined. My whole life I had been focused in on psychiatry and I said I wanted to learn other things now. And this was a good opportunity to do it. You could learn about history or you could learn about science or literature. And you didn't have to do the homework for it and you didn't have to write any papers and you didn't even have to read the book if you didn't want to. And it works out very well for me. You can take one course you can take five courses. Whatever fits into your schedule.

JR: What exactly is W.I.S.E?

LG: It's the Worcester Institute for Senior Education. They say seniors but what we tell people is if you think you are a senior you can come. So if you decided you were a senior, you could come to our class. There would be no problem; we would not throw you out. It started off over ten years ago. It was I think a group of social workers who decided that there has got to be more to retirement than just hanging around and talking to each other. So they fortunately got hooked up with Charlene, I can't remember her last name but she is part of Continuing Ed. [at Assumption College] It will come to me. And she was wanting to develop something along those lines. And that's how they got started and they've grown from maybe 50 or a hundred people. We have over 400, close to 450 members now, which is very good for this type of organization. Most organizations right now are losing members but we've gained about 75 new members.

JR: How long have you been involved?

LG: Since I retired, so that's about eight or nine years now.

ME: Do you have any favorite courses that you like to take?

LG: I do. I love the women's courses. Betty Kocuras—I love to go to her courses. She gives you three books to read about these marvelous women that are just inspiring. I always love to take her course. I like to take Bob Walter's courses because he is so brilliant. He does a variety of things. He does a lot of music but then he does history and he does some of the more lofty literature things like Dante's *Paradise*. He is doing Faust now but he is just so interesting. And Marc LePain always does great courses in religion. But it is always good to try something different.

JR: What were your favorite classes growing up in school?

LG: Math. It's like a game isn't it? With the numbers in front of you and you can play with them. It's a puzzle and if you work at it you can solve the puzzle.

JR: What was your least favorite?

LG: Probably history. It was very boring; the nuns taught you very boring history. They weren't really into it that much.

JR: Were the nuns strict? I know you said you had a bad kindergarten teacher.

LG: She was not a nun. That was in a public school. She was awful, oh God. And the nuns I had, this is how it went. I had Sisters of Mercy, they were wonderful. They were just lovely, lovely women. Then I went to Sisters of Notre Dame. They got a little stricter. Then I had Sisters of Providence at Saint Vincent and they were not only strict, but a little balmy at times. And then, the nuns, we didn't have that much at Anna Maria. I don't think I had one nun for any of the classes that I took. So I couldn't judge by that.

JR: Want to talk about your grandchildren and education?

LG: Oh God, you got another couple of hours?

JR: [Laughter] Sure. Two hour tape right here.

LG: Well Johanna is the oldest and I did convince her to go into nursing. But she went to this summer program. They live in Virginia because her father was in the service. They've lived in Europe and they've been around, they've had a nice life. Places that they had to live there they had to put up with a lot, but at the same time they got to do and see a lot of things. And they've lived in a lot of places in the United States. So anyway, she was talking about being a doctor and then I said to her "What do you want to do that for?" I said, "They really don't take care of patients; they just go write the orders and talk to patients." I said, "If you want to take care of people you have to be a nurse. That's nursing." And so she thought about it, and she got this thing in the mail this summer and it was a camp associated with the University of Maryland. She went there for three weeks and it exposed you to, if you were choosing a career, it exposed you to what that career was like. And they went to Walter Reid Hospital for a certain amount of time and after that she just knew that that was what she was going to do. So I said to her one day, I got her in the kitchen in her house. She is a beautiful girl. She is over six feet tall, her sister is too. They're gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. I grabbed her hair, she's got long hair and I grabbed her. I said, "Now listen hear Johanna, don't you dare screw up because I will personally come down and pull each strand of your hair out one by one." "Yes Grandma!" [Laughter] And so Jocelyn is going to go, and so she is at this all-girl's school. And she likes it pretty much, and she is doing some type of an ROTC type of thing. And she did that all through high school too. She did very well in it. And Jocelyn, her thing is volleyball. And she just has no clue of what she of wants to do. And then there is Eva. And they're all gorgeous, absolutely. Oh my God, they're so gorgeous. Eva is a sophomore right now; she is very active. She plays in the band, she's a runner and she's a pole vaulter. You name, she's going to do it. They're going to march in the Trinity Bowl. I hope it is going to be on TV. She has already got her college picked out. She wants to go to William and Mary.

JR: Good college.

LG: Is it? I don't know why any of them don't go to the University of Virginia. It is so beautiful there. Have you ever been down there?

JR: Yes.

LG: Isn't it gorgeous?

JR: It is. I have friends that go there too and they love it.

LG: Oh my God. I can't believe it. None of them are choosing that. Well anyway. And then there's the other three. They're in high school. One is in high school which she hates. I talked to her yesterday; she says, "It's just Monday morning that I hate,

Grandma.” Well that’s the way it is in life. Everybody hates Monday morning. These three are extremely talented. Artistically they are unbelievable. Especially the middle one. The middle one is in seventh grade but between her writing and her creativity with art. Once she gets into a school where she can get a major focus on that, she’ll do very well. And then the youngest is very, is very active. She’s just on the move all the time. They take dancing, they take singing, they play some instruments. Whatever, you know. I’m always cutting things out of the paper and reading, little things, stories about them and people who have done great things in life, especially women.

JR: Alright, want to wrap it up now?

ME: Yeah, I guess.

JR: Is there anything else you wanted to talk about?

LG: I probably will think of something when I leave. [Laughter] You know, as to what I do. In my spare time what I do, on my usual day, we work out at the gym in the morning for an hour or so. We just came back from Scotland. We did hiking; we hiked across Scotland. And a couple weeks ago we were up in North Conway. We hiked a couple of mountains there. We have these great friends; they’re into it a lot so we tag along with them because we would get lost in the woods. That works out good. I do rug hooking. It’s old-fashioned. Not like that yarn. It’s just wool. I don’t know if you got a chance to see my rug hanging up in the library. Well that’s the kind of rug hooking I do. Then I belong to the Worcester Women’s History Project. Whatever else comes along.

JR: How long have you been involved with the Worcester Women’s History Project?

LG: Just one year. It was a funny thing because there was another member here that got me involved in it because she was doing a presentation at the Worcester Art Museum. It was on women artists and so I wanted to go and hear her. But I couldn’t go unless I was a member. And it was a rigmorole of how to become a member because they only have membership drives in April and this was happening in March, and I wanted to see it. So anyway I got into it so. And then they send you a paper to sign up and I checked the blocks off of other things you can volunteer for, and one was like research. I checked off membership. And so another member from W.I.S.E. which belongs to the history project called me up and said, “We were wondering, you checked this off and maybe you wouldn’t mind doing research.” Which I did. I said, “Oh ok.” And it turned out, it was just me who was doing the research. [Laughing] It was nobody else. And then this graphic artist and me put the show on at the library. So this year I don’t know where I’m at with it. I’m sort of still hesitant; I haven’t done any of my interviews yet. But they’re an interesting group and they do some really great things. If you ever get a chance sometimes they put in the paper, they have women in print once a year now. They have fabulous, fabulous speakers come in who are authors. And they are just wonderful. It was very moving last year. And of course I have friends. I like to go to Foothills and I go to a lot of other shows. I really started to going to a lot of the theaters around, the small theaters. It’s a lot of fun.

JR: Sounds like a full life.

LG: It is, it is. And I still get to watch TV. [Laughter]

JR: Favorite shows?

LG: I'll tell you, let's see. Boston Legal, that's the only show that I will say that, I will suffer through the commercials to watch that. I will not watch anything else. I just think the rest is crap and once they start putting the commercials on, I just cannot stand it. I have to get out of there.

ME: What's the last play you saw at Foothills?

LG: I just saw this one. George M. Cohan. I just saw, he was fabulous. He did all the dancing, singing. He was a one-man show. It was a full house. An immediate standing ovation when he finished. You know, you see standing ovations, you know one person stands up and then another one. And you know, other people feel, "Well, we'll stand up." This one, the whole audience jumped up immediately. He was so good. I saw that Friday night and then Saturday we went down to the Good Speed. You ever go down to the Good Speed Theater down in Connecticut? It's a great place. It's right on the Connecticut River. And they put on Pirates of Penzance. I'll tell you, that was a wonderful production down there.

JR: Now do you still play the piano?

LG: No. [Laughter] I have a piano. I still can play. The last time, see how knobby my fingers got? They stuck between the black keys. When I went in there, I went to play something and I went to slide and it got stuck. I had to pull it out. That's a good excuse not to play, isn't it?

JR: Alright, this is our wrapping up question. But based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women today and the future generation?

LG: Take advantage of, you know, really look out, look to see where the advantages could be and really go after them. You know, and develop something within you that you can have stamina and perseverance to get through some things that could be really difficult. Make good relationships with people because sometimes you can do it alone, sometimes you can't. And I think education is a really big thing. And not just be slanted like I was slanted in just one area, you know, psychiatry. But to really broaden, you know, your education so you can talk on a lot of subjects and sound really smart. [Laughter] I just think that's just so wonderful.

JR: Alright well, thank you.

ME: Yes, thank you very much.

LG: You're welcome.