

Interviewee: Mrs. Barbara Haller
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Worcester Women's Oral History Project

Abstract: Barbara Haller was born in the suburbs of in Schenectady, NY in 1948 and currently lives in the Main South neighborhood of Worcester. She got involved with activism and the “hippie movement” at a young age, doing community organizing as an Americorps VISTA volunteer in Chicago during the height of Urban Renewal programs and helping to run a collective farm school for delinquent youth in Arkansas. Moving to Massachusetts in the mid-1970s, Barbara began commuting to Worcester to study engineering, first at the former Worcester Junior on Main Street and later at Worcester Polytechnic. Barbara bought a nightclub on Main Street in 1991 and became involved with the Beacon-Brightly neighborhood revitalization group as a local business owner. Connections through this effort led her into local politics. In 2001, she was elected to serve on the City Council. In this interview, Barbara discusses her struggles as a “black sheep” in her family, as a woman engineer, and as an activist-turned-politician. She discusses her unconventional entry into the political sphere and the challenges of finding her place on the Worcester City Council. She also touches upon her hopes for the Main South neighborhood and the City as a whole.

JL: The first question I’m going to ask you is where and when were you born?

BH: Okay, I was born in Schenectady, New York in 1948—tough when you’re in kindergarten, first grade learning how to do it.

JL: I’m sorry 19?

B: 48

JL: That’s when my dad was born actually, and so you weren’t—did you ever move to Worcester when you were younger or did you move here when...

BH: I actually physically moved to Worcester in 1994.

JL: Oh okay.

BH: I had been associated to Worcester prior to that but I didn’t live there.

JL: Oh alright, so when did you move to Massachusetts?

BH: I moved to Massachusetts in 1974 or 5.

JL: Okay, um could you tell me a little about your family or did you have any brothers or sisters growing up?

BH: I was the middle child of a large family, there were actually something I always have a little trouble with is how many siblings I have 'cause we had a number of child deaths in my family.

JL: Oh, I'm sorry.

BH: Because of a genetic disease called Cystic Fibrosis.

JL: Oh Okay

BH: So there were actually eight of us, although only six of us kind of made it to adulthood so—but I was in the middle of all that. And my father is an engineer, a mechanical engineer. First generation college educated for his family. Grew up in New York City. And my mother also grew up in New York City, ah...High School educated. They met on a blind date and wound up getting married. And my father got a job in Schenectady because Schenectady was a big center for the General Electric Company. So he got a job with the General Electric Company and so they moved out of New York into Schenectady and they started their family. And I have an older brother Jimmy who's an engineer—also a mechanical engineer—who's probably 62, maybe. I'm 58 so he's 62. And then I have older sister Patty who—she and I are about a year and a half apart. We fought constantly still don't really like each other that much, truth be known. And she was teaching—she studied Biology and taught for a while, and now is working with her husband and they do lobbying work in Washington DC for educational vouchers for religious schools—trying to get vouchers to send children to non-public schools.

JL: That's very good, that's nice

BH: And then myself, and then my brother Paul who died when he was a year and a half was the next one down. And then the next one after that was my brother Michael who is living in, near New Jersey, New York border and he is a nurse and presently working for BK industries—working on training and selling diabetic equipment. He's a diabetic himself. He's married and has a child, Alexa. After my brother Michael was my twin sister and brother, who my brother died when he was a month and a half. And I forgot my favorite of all, Ann Marie and she lives near Schenectady, in Albany and she works for the Criminal Justice department and her husband runs an industrial cleaning business. And my sister Winnie who died when she was nineteen was between Michael and my twins, and she actually lived with us for quite a while and we were very close. And so that's the family. My mother and father are still alive

JL: That's good

BH: Yup.

JL: Lucky.

BH: And I see them frequently. Went through a long period of estrangement from them, however. I was the black sheep of the family. We had a few black sheep, but I had the darkest fur in the family, so... There had been many years where it's been strange but in our adult years it's calmed down and we're back to being fairly close.

JL: You have very interesting jobs in your family. Each family member has something, not unusual, but very cool, I think. Everyone in my family is just, you know, original, teacher or something. So you didn't grow up in Worcester, but um...

BH: In Schenectady in the suburbs. I grew up in the suburbs, and I went to catholic school, catholic elementary school, and then catholic all girl high school. And it was when I was probably in my sophomore, junior year that I started realizing that there was a lot more to the world than I thought there had been. I had been in a really very shallow—maybe not shallow is the right word—very confined vision of the world and what opportunities were and how people thought. And so I went through a very, I would say, pretty strong rebellious stage where I rejected a lot of what society had to offer. And was angry, and still have some anger over it but anger over the seclusion I guess that I felt I had been subjected to without even really knowing it. So I really don't like the suburbs at all, and still to this day I don't like the suburbs. The unspoken conformity that goes on doesn't fit my personality style. So when it came time for me to go to college, where my siblings had all gone to catholic colleges, I didn't want to go to a catholic college, I wanted to go something different. So I convinced my parents, which was not easy, to go to State University of New York in Albany, which was just the town over, but it was a large state university and I was into wanting to...make a difference in the world and very much wanting to be involved in social work and social services, so studying sociology. I was there a year and a half and did terribly. My first semester I did fine my second semester I did terrible. I was in the brink of being thrown out and I convinced them to let me stay another semester to try to bring my grade point up so that when I got better I could kinda go back. Third semester was better, but not stellar by any means so I knew I wasn't going to stay there, so I applied to and was accepted as a VISTA volunteer—Volunteers In Service To America—which at the time, this was back in '67, it was in the middle of the whole hippie thing. I was very much a part of the whole hippie movement, and all that stuff. So I was sent to Chicago, Illinois, community organizing and was assigned to a store front church and we were doing outreach into neighborhoods not unlike neighborhoods that I would call Main South. Fair amount of poverty, very low voter turn out, you know, all those kinds of things that you associate with neighborhood blight was in that area—point of entry for people coming up from the south looking for factory jobs would come to that neighborhood. There was a high number of social service agencies in that area there was one of the more stable populations was an American Indian population. Indians coming off the reservation would also come to Chicago; there was a number of reservations around there. It was an elder population it was all kind of urban issues. It was at the time when government was solving the problems of urban blight by a program they call Model Cities, Urban renewal. In which they would come into neighborhoods like that and they would bring a vast amount of resources in hopes that it would change it around. The way it was implemented in Chicago, as well as other places turned it into urban removal rather than urban renewal. What happened is they

tarred down the blighted areas and they would build nice—and it would remove the poverty from the area, but it didn't really address the issue of poverty. So we were involved at getting information out to the neighborhoods about what was going on and how their voices might be heard. It was also during the time that the race riots happened and Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968 and there were riots in Chicago and so we were involved with some of the relief efforts. I mean they burnt huge parts of the city down. It's very dynamic time and a lot of opportunity to look at who you were, what you believed in where you wanted to go, and how you wanted to spend you're time, and who you wanted to hang out with. It was a very, um, I remember crying a lot during those years, but at the same time tremendous growth at the same time. Then Charlotte came, your professor, and after she was two, her father and I decided we didn't want to raise her in the city and we left Chicago. Well we had both been in VISTA together we left VISTA, had Charlotte, and then we bought a bookstore. We had a second hand bookstore in Chicago and it was the second largest second hand bookstore in Chicago. We bought it from a couple who had decided to give up the bookstore and bicycle around the country. So they sold it to us and took the money to bicycle around the country. They didn't get very far before they realized maybe they really didn't want to bicycle around the country. But none the less it was okay. And that was great, the bookstore was great, so we sold the bookstore and then left Chicago and moved to Arkansas and joined a farm school. It was a boarding school for kids. Their parents had been told that they had to get them out of town or they were going to jail. You get arrested for stealing a car, or doing drugs, or whatever it is, and the judge said, "If this kid stays here I'm telling you right now he's gonna wind up in jail, so do something." And so they would send their kids. So it was a boarding school, farm school. We had a working farm with dairy cows, meat cows, chickens, pigs, and horses. And it was small—12 students.

JL: So were you the owners?

BH: It was jointly owned. It was a communal arrangement. We all bought shares into it and we all had our areas of expertise largely around teaching. I didn't have my Bachelor's degree at the time so...but I had always been good in math, so I did tutoring on math and did a lot of the day care with the kids. They learned to milk the cows in the am—did that for 1 ½ to 2 years, and then the farm kinda broke up. It didn't entirely break up, but it was a failure, failure to thrive. The school part worked out for the kids because the theory, which has a lot of validity, if you can get a kid that's on a track of being in trouble and remove him/her from that until they reach the age of 21. The statistics say if you don't have a jail record up until the time your 21 your not going to have a jail record. So break the cycle. Just remove from—let the hormones die down or let the influences change and you're gonna give them a better chance. I believe that part of the school was very successful. The intrapersonal relationships among the...I'd have to think about the 5 families—the intrapersonal—who does what, because we were trying to do it without a hierarchy. We'd have these meetings of who did what and that just became very tedious. So I was one of the first to leave, but it eventually did break up. We moved to a town nearby where the University of Arizona was located. I worked with someone who also left the farm and started a daycare. We ran a daycare center for a while. And then Dick, Charlotte's father, decided he wanted to go back to school and finish his—he had an

undergraduate in history he wanted to go back and get his law degree. So we—actually that's not true. He started his law degree but then decided to move to teaching for his Master's in teaching. So we moved to another town, Russellville, and he spent a couple of years getting his Master's in teaching. And that's when we moved to Massachusetts, when he finished his degree. That was probably, like I said, '74-'75. And Dick's family has property in Holland, Mass. Which is near Sturbridge, Mass, which is where Charlotte lives now. She lives in the family house.

JL: The one that she grew up in?

BH: So we moved up there because that house was available because Dick's aunt that had been living there had recently died, and the house was vacant. We kinda slipped into it. And it turns out Dick's grandmother was across the street, was failing and needed someone to take care of her, so I took on the role of caring for her—which I had another little one at the time, Jacob, Charlottes brother. And Dick did substitute teaching and eventually got into a teaching position. When the grandmother died I went to work in a nursing home in Southbridge. When Jacob went off to school full-time, I went to school. I went back to school full-time and the thing that was interesting for me at the time was that we were poor. And my decision to go back to school was based on a lot of things but one of the things I decided to go back for is because I wanted to bring money. I realized that if I wanted to get my kids educated and live a decent life we needed more money, and I needed to have a career. Now, also personally I wanted that for myself, as well, so I had wanted to go into nursing. I was still on this kinda... At the time there was a glut of nurses on the market, and I can remember thinking, "Why am I going to school, put myself through all this to get into a field with no jobs? That just doesn't make sense at all." So I researched where the jobs were, what was happening with jobs, and what I discovered was that there was jobs in engineering, in math and science, so I thought, "Oh, okay." My father was an engineer, my brother was an engineer, and it was then that I started thinking out that whole female thing out too, and why—I clearly had the ability, engineering ability prerequisite type of stuff, so why was I not thinking that way. So I called my father up and I said I'm going to back to school, "Oh that's great, blah blah blah" (moment of laughter), and I'm studying engineering and there was this silence at the other end of the phone and he said, "It will destroy your marriage," and I was like "Dad, I'm just going back to school." You know! But it was then I realized that the reason I hadn't been going into engineering prior to that was because there was this strong undercurrent of what as a female the role that I was supposed to play in society, it wasn't to have a career, it was to have a job, perhaps to contribute to the family or be available if I needed it, if my family fell apart for some reason, but in terms of having a career career, that wasn't the role that I was supposed to be playing. And that was—you just were a strong undercurrent and I looked at my sister Patricia who had great skill, talent, again mathematically, with science which she was good doing the teaching route, which she liked and it was a great thing. My feeling was if she had been male there would have been other options that she would have looked at. So I really, having gone through the whole hippie thing and the civil rights movement and understanding that the role that women played was in many ways pathetic, kinda, from a societal point of view, I was able to understand eternally that I was part of that. That those influences weren't

influencing other people they were influencing who I was and it was an important breakthrough for me. But I was intimidated by going back to school. I think for two reasons: one, because it had been so long. I was now 30 years old. I was an adult going back to school. And the other was that I had done so poorly when I had been to college. And I was like, “Well, you know, maybe I really don’t have the stuff, but you know...” Worcester Junior was a college in Worcester on Main Street, where the YMCA is. It was a private college, 2-year school. Open enrollment—they took anybody. If you could pay you could go. So it was non-threatening, and it was a technical school, so I said “Ok, I’ll go there, they’ll take me, you know...” And I went there. I took out loans and whatnot, and I wound up graduating top engineering student, so it was a good match. The chemistry and the timing all worked really well. And I was hired by Mass Electric town National Grid; do you have somebody at Mass Electric?

JL: Um, my Mary Kay adopted director actually used to work there, Carol Tellier

BH: Do you know where she worked?

JL: No, I don’t

BH: On Southbridge St. or did she work in Westborough?

JL: I think it was Westborough.

BH: Do you know what she does?

JL: No she doesn’t work there anymore. It was like 10 years ago, or more.

BH: I may have known ‘cause her I worked in Westborough for a while. I was hired into their Southbridge office as the first technically trained female of the company. And when I interviewed with them, I asked what the highest position a women held in the company, and I was told that highest position was the CEO of the company, and I was like “Oh my God, Joan Buck is the Chief Engineer, no not engineer, Chairmen of the Board,” so I though, “Oh this is cool!” I should have asked what the second highest position a women had (laughter) ‘cause it was one of these things...but nevertheless, they were at the time—it was an affirmative action hire absolutely, no question about it. They needed, wanted women in the engineering function, and because I was well-credentialed with my grades and I had done some work-study, so they hired me and I went to work. It was a pretty amazing experience looking back on it. It was like truly amazing experience. It was not—I loved the job in many ways, but it was, you know, I don’t know you’re young, attractive its like, things happen, and you’re like, I don’t know, sometimes it takes years to look back and say, “What the heck was that all about?” But I wound up leaving that job after a year and a half because my boss was a pig. He was—and it wasn’t—I didn’t experience sexual harassment from him. He was horrible to everybody. He was just a very mean, awful person...brought out the worst in people in many ways. But while I was there I was subjected to sexual harassment. I had—I can remember walking into a sub station, and this wasn’t directed at me, I mean I’m sure it was somewhat directed at

me, but it was just the way life was. Walk into the sub station and you know there was girly posters all over the thing and there were piping in orgasms over the PA system and whatnot, and you kinda walk in there, you know (laughter). It's like, "Ok, well here I go!" But I had the ability to just kinda put that stuff aside and just kinda go through it. I was attempted rape twice while I was on the job. So it's—it made me stronger in a sense, but in another way it also made me kinda sad, I guess. So after a year and a half I decided to go back, I said, "I either I gotta get out of here"—but mainly because of my boss—"So I either have to find another job, or go back to school and get my full degree." And I had enjoyed school a lot and I could see that if I had a full engineering degree that would open up other doors for me. So I applied and was accepted into Worcester Poly Tech and I transferred into Worcester Poly Tech. And Worcester Poly Tech hated Worcester Junior, considered it a poor excuse for educational institution, and with some reason. And some cases I believe it was classism, but in other cases I think it had to do with Worcester Junior had open door policy. So if you could pay, they would take you, so they took people that were not qualified to study. There was a lot of cheating that went on there in order for people to get on. It was also during the Iran upheaval where there were the Shavaran was being up thrown and so there were people that were sending their kids out of Iran—get them out of the country—and they were sending them anywhere they could, and so educational facilities were one of the places where you could send them. And so people didn't really know how to speak English and they were in class and they really wanted to pass because if they didn't pass they would get sent back home. So there was just a lot of craziness going on, but the reality was that the WPI professors were teaching there as second jobs with books they had used at WPI. So if you wanted to learn, the information was all there, and I wanted to learn. I believe I got an excellent education, but there were people sitting next to me that had hardly any education at all, so I can understand why WPI's mistrust, I guess, of the degree. But, anyway, I was accepted and I wound up graduating with distinction from WPI, so, you know, it worked. But I was computing—it was very difficult for me, it was very stressful, but I did it and they have a—at WPI—they modified it somewhat, but they had a requirement that you had to take this final exam and if you didn't pass it you didn't graduate, it didn't matter what you had gotten all through your other courses. And you went into a classroom and they give you two questions and you got to pick which one you wanted to work on and then you left and you had three days to come back with it, and present it and defend it and if you didn't do it you didn't graduate, so it was really stressful. I can remember I picked my question, I was in total panic mode. I went and saw my guidance professor for that after the first day and he said, "You're not going to make it, Barbara. You're just not going to make it. You haven't gotten far enough to make it." And it was like, I said, "Oh my god, you know, I have to make it!" And at some point you either sink or swim, you know. Okay and I said I'm going to swim and so wound up doing very well on it, but um... And then I went back. I graduated in January, it was an off cycle, so I graduated in January and I didn't understand the hiring schedule that companies were geared up to hiring graduates in June and that it was a very different approach if you were graduating in January. And because I was commuting, I would go in, do my classes, and then go back home, all that stuff. I wasn't part of the campus, the knowledge that was floating around campus, so I kinda missed the boat on that. I did go for quite a few job interviews. It turned out to be during a time where there was a glut of engineers so you kinda had to follow your dreams

at some point. I had left Mass Electric to go back to school and they had given me a leave of absence, which meant if I wanted to come back after I got out they would take me back. So I wound up going back to Mass Electric and that's when I went to Westborough. I was there for 10 years or something and then my boss retired a new boss came in whom I didn't respect and wound up for applying for and receiving a job for Southbridge. So I came to Southbridge around '88—not Southbridge, Southbridge Street in Worcester. Around that same time Charlotte's dad, myself, and Dick's cousin, Robin, became aware of a night club that became for sale in Worcester. So the three of us bought the night club—called it Gillreins. And it was already a music club, but we made it all the more so, and so it was a live music club on Main Street. It specialized in blues, jazz, rock, but blues was kinda the main thing. So we had music seven days a week. I didn't run it, Dick didn't run it, his cousin was the operator person, and we were part of the financial backers. And that was great. It was right on Main Street actually right down the street from where Worcester Junior had been, which was no longer, but it was a similar neighborhood so that was good. When we started doing that—it was around 1990—the city of Worcester under the city manager Jeff Molfert, who is no longer the city manager, decided they wanted to go after federal funds for urban blight and the blighted areas they wanted to work on was the area of Main Street where I had this night club. And so they hired Jill Digilas, who is now the commissioner of health and code, to put together a business group that would help with the revitalization of the Main Street area. Because they had learned some things from Model Cities that urban removal was not the way to go, and so to protect against that they were going to have a grassroots organization that would meet with the City as these money to determine the right use of the money and to monitor the result of it. So the city manager put together this group called the City Managers Advisory on Beacon-Brightly and I was recruited to join it as a business owner on Main Street. And because it was right up my alley—because I had gone through an earlier version of all this and because I was a business owner—I realized the neighborhood was the biggest deterrent to my business being successful. These people didn't want to come down to the neighborhood because it was too scary. So I joined and formed a lot of friendships and allegiances with people up and down the street. Including the City Councilor that represented the area, which was Janice Nado at the time. Janice Nado was the first City Councilor that represented that district. Prior to, again I'm not sure of the year, probably '74-'75 all the City Councilors were elected at-large which meant that everybody voted for all the city councilors and you could live anywhere in the city and run for City Council. The result that most if not all of the City Councilors came from the West side of the city, which was wealthy and had the highest number, kind of industrial leaders—The Norton's and the Gordon's. Worcester had a lot of very big industrial—we were an industrial leader up through the 60s and 70s. So that the neighborhoods on the other side of town were being neglected. There was a charter reform movement to introduce District Councilors, which says now, six of the Councilors are elected citywide, but five of them are elected for specific geography, what you call district numbers. They divided the city into five pieces and each of those geographies gets their own Councilor and then in an addition there are six Councilors that get elected citywide. And Janice Nado had fought for that and won and ran for election and won the position of District for City Councilor and was reelected many times. And I got to know her because of my involvement in the neighborhood and was a strong supporter. She got

sick during her campaign of 2001, and started to step down and asked me to take her place. So that's how I got into politics, I was not a politician. I had had some previous political experience when I was living in Holland—I was on the School Committee and Board of Health. Charlotte's father and I split up in 1994, and that's when I moved to Worcester. So I stepped in and was the underdog in the election, but won. I had a resounding victory, strong—very, very strong victory. The city is divided up into wards and precincts but without going into that there were 10 different voting places in the district and I won two-thirds to one-third in every one of those places. So it was just a very strong... So I got on the Council but I didn't have the experience of the Council. I hadn't been to a Council meeting. I didn't know how the City government was organized—that's not the role I had played. And one of the writers for *Worcester Magazine*, Martha Axton, wrote, "It's going to be interesting to see if Barbara can make the transition from activist to politician." And I remember just being outraged at that, you know what are you talking about? Having the seat just gives us one more tool in trying to get done what we want to get done, but not either/or...its continual of tools. But I did find that she was right. It was—being a politician was very different from being an activist. And learning all the protocols and the seniorities and who to get what done and who you have to mention and how thin skinned people are—it still makes my head spin. I've gotten much better at it but it really made my head spin. Early on, I was identified as an outsider on the Council. Pretty much everybody on the council is Worcester-born and bred, raised, and male and white...with connections. Their families know each other and there's this whole thing, and I was an outsider coming in not from Worcester, having very little experience with Worcester other than this little geography that I had been working around at the night club, and not raising my kids in Worcester. I had gone to Worcester Junior and Worcester Poly Tech but as a commuter. So I didn't have a lot of those connections and got beat up pretty quick and I would say I continue to be on the out with the general Council. There's 11 members of the council, there's eight that are kind of continue to be the "gang of eight" that will band together to get what they want done, and then there's the three outsiders. And the three outsiders, interestingly enough, are the two women and the one Hispanic, and all the rest are white male. So again, is it over? I would say it's not over. I would say they're at the point that I was at back in the 6's when I was looking at the women's movement as something that happens to women, but not me. And not having gone through that internalization of understanding this—it is very local, these things are very local. So but of the three, I am the most accepted. Juan Gomez is the Hispanic. Other Councilors will say, "I hate him." It's not like, "I really have trouble with his philosophy; I don't approve of his point of view," which I can say about a lot of things about Juan, but I respect him. But this is personal; they hate him. Konnie Lukes, they hate Konnie Lukes, the Mayor hates Konnie Lukes. It's a visceral experience as opposed to a professional difference. And that's politics; I see that on the state reps and all that other stuff, so it's been an interesting experience for me. I've tried to use my role as City Councilor to make government more accessible to neighborhoods. My focus has been on neighborhoods. My focus has been, if we are going to be a great city, or if we're gonna continue to be a good city, depending on how people feel about it, we have to—our neighborhoods are a huge part of that asset. And we have a lot of poverty and we have a lot of immigrant people who don't understand the culture who don't understand how to make their way in Worcester. We have a lot of people who want to start their own

businesses that don't quite know how to do it. So just to make government accessible, because my experience has been because of our form of government that the government itself is pretty professional. The politicians are very political—by that I mean who you know, how you're connected makes a big difference. But the government itself, the City Manager, and all of his department are very professional. And so, if I can link people to what they need to gain access to, to make things go forward, then that's the role that I've been trying to play. And I also feel that if we listen to our neighborhoods that we'll know where to put our priorities in a large measure. So if you meet with neighborhoods and they talk about issues about public safety—there's a drug house down the street, or there's a gang of kids hanging around—then we know we need to bring public resources to that. If they are talking about they can't walk down their sidewalks because they are in such bad shape, then we'll know that we need to put resources into our sidewalks. So more than a top down, I'm more of bottom up person, and see where we can meet in the middle, knowing that there's resources that can help. So I ran and won second term around, which was two years ago. I ran unopposed and I didn't run an election because I was unopposed. I was busy. I was, and still always am, going to meetings. So I see people and don't need to run an election. And it was a huge mistake for two reasons. One mistake was we have lousy voter turnout in the city—16% and in my district less than 10%—and you can't run a democracy when nobody shows up. And it makes the whole process weak and susceptible to abuse because the power of democracy is a voting booth, is that everybody votes. And so the cream is supposed to rise to the top in some way, but when you have a small number of people voting, anybody can win. If they organize well enough, anyone can win. And also District Four has the lowest voter turn out for a lot of reasons, and so that puts us again at a lower level in the political structure because people are deciding whether to put resources—where are they going to put their time and energy. They're going to put their time in where they are going to get re-elected. It would be great for the District to improve the voter turnout. People aren't going to come out and vote unless you pull them out to vote. There's that 16% that are going to vote regardless because they've always voted, their parents have voted, its just part of what they are. And then there's going to be those people that want to vote but they are just busy and they don't know, and then there's the people that don't ever vote. I have people come up to me and say, "I've never voted," and they are proud that they never vote. So my feeling is that you gotta pull the voters out to vote and by not running a campaign your not doing that, you're not energizing them in any way shape or form, so that was a huge mistake. Politically for myself it was a huge mistake because three weeks into the end of the campaign I had a challenger that came on board to do a write-in campaign, which wasn't a serious challenge because write-ins are very hard to win. But nevertheless, all of a sudden I had a challenger. I had no campaign structure in place so it was a poor move on my part and I said I would never do that again. I would always run a campaign. Who I do have—the same person who ran the write-in is running as a regular person on the ballot. So I have an opponent and we are running a big campaign and we are getting a lot of good support.

JL: What neighborhood do you live in now?

BH: Main South. My district covers Elm Park all the way—Do you know Worcester at all? Where do you live?

JL: I live in Hudson, but I do live in Worcester, but I don't really know..

BH: Okay to you know where Elm Park is—Park Avenue to Holy Cross, that's about it. 37,000 people per district, five districts. We have 175,000 in the city. It's trued up after the national census. District Five is the smallest physical geography of the five districts, because its equal population. What they've done over time—and when I say “they,” it's largely the state reps with the local politicians—the trend has been to squish the poor districts more and more into one district, and so they tend to be the districts with multi-family housing. They call it high density when you have more people living in a smaller area, so as you do that, as you carve out the neighborhoods it becomes the smallest geography to deal with. So we have more problems than any other district, in my district. We have the highest immigration, highest mobility people moving around, lowest education, highest number of social services, number of single house holds, highest crime levels, worst streets and sidewalks, lowest income. The median income for a family of four is \$45,000—my district is \$18,000. Large Hispanic population, but increasingly Southeast Asian, African, Albanian, and Eastern European are all common. In many ways we have the most challenges. The greatest challenges are in District Four but you have them in your district, as well. These are issues we need to solve and District Four is showing you the way, showing you what these issues are so we can come up with solutions, and it's the most exciting because it's the one with the most change. The others are the suburban, and I started out by saying that suburbia doesn't excite me because each day is the same. In District Four we're building new buildings and opening new stores so I guess it's more vibrant, is the word. It's a double-edge sword. My feeling is that our cities are a huge part of city living and we have to live together in an urban environment and if we don't we're kind of dooming ourselves to more pain and suffering. The city of Worcester is small enough and not corrupt. We don't have a corrupt government, which is huge. You can't say the same thing in Springfield, in Providence, and I dare say it in Boston, but you can say it in Worcester, I'm convinced of it. We can solve a lot of these problems. We have to stay at the table. We've got to leave our egos somewhat at the door and just kept battering our way at that, and I am seeing that. I feel like I've played a small role at that and because I'm female and because of my experience in American society. I feel like we have come a long way like even though there is still this—the Council problems that still goes on, but you have to prove yourself even though you shouldn't have to prove yourself. We've have made progress as females but I would say now we have to make progress with our non-English speaking diversity. But we fail dismally in terms of integrating people, in terms of traditional people in board rooms. And there's huge barriers to that, and discrimination and prejudice are two of the huge barriers.

JL: Well thank you very much. That was awesome, thank you.

BH: You are very welcome

JL: Good luck with the re-election!