

**Interviewee:** Carolyn Howe

**Interviewers:** Melissa Boisvert and Maria Cerce

**Date:** October 20, 2008

**Place:** Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts

**Transcribers:** Melissa Boisvert and Maria Cerce

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**Abstract:**

Carolyn Howe, born November 19, 1949 in Upland, California, has been a Worcester resident since 1988 after accepting a position at the College of the Holy Cross. She is a professor of Sociology and a mother of one daughter, Molly Del Howe-Lembcke. Carolyn is the daughter of Delphine "Del" Howe and John "Jack" Wentworth Howe, both deceased. She is the fourth born out of five children, having two brothers and two sisters. She has lived in California, Mexico, Colorado, Iowa, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts. She was a full time activist in the 2 ½ Override Campaign in 1991. She was a member of the Worcester Women's History Project (founded in 1994) having served as chair of the program committee, clerk of the organization, and as its president the years before, during, and after the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First National Women's Rights Convention in 2000. She currently runs a Latin American Studies program at Holy Cross. In this interview she discusses experiencing different cultures growing up, her view of Worcester, her role in the Worcester Women's History Project, her work on the Oregon Federal Art Project, as well as how she co-wrote a play entitled, "Yours for Humanity-Abby" a one-woman performance portraying the life of Worcester's own Abby Kelley Foster (1811-1876).

**MB:** Is it okay that we record your oral history today?

**CH:** Yes.

**MB:** What is your full maiden name?

**CH:** Carolyn Howe.

**MB:** Okay, do you have any other names that you go by, perhaps a married name or anything?

**CH:** That is my maiden name, and that is still my name even after I got married. I have no middle name.

**MB:** Okay, when were you born?

**CH:** November 19, 1949.

**MB:** And where were you born?

**CH:** Upland, California.

**MB:** Far away.

**CH:** Yeah.

**MB:** Do you have children?

**CH:** I have one daughter, who is 24 years old.

**MB:** Do you want to tell us anything else about her, like her name or anything like that?

**CH:** Her name is Molly Del Howe-Lembcke, and right now she is living in West Natick and working in Boston, actually, yeah, in Boston, working for a lawyer, an immigration rights lawyer, and applying to law school.

**MC:** Great.

**MB:** What about your family background, anything about your culture or ethnicity that you can summarize for us?

**CH:** Well, that could be a long question. Does that flow into another question?

**MC:** Not really.

**MB:** Not yet, but it could!

**CH:** Okay, I'm basically WASP, white Anglo-Saxon protestant. They say my, one of my great great-great-great grandmothers is Sarah Boone, the sister of Daniel Boone, so it goes way back. But, when I was little I thought California, Southern California, my town, Ontario, was the essence of the United States, and when I was seven and a half we moved to Guadalajara, Mexico, where I lived until I was almost fourteen. We moved back to Denver, entering ninth grade, which is not a good time to move. And I've recently learned that, what, there is a name for people like me. We're called third culture kids, 'cause we experience one culture, which is my southern California town culture, went to Mexico and there is another culture. I am not part of either, fully, but there is you know... I very much loved Mexican culture and at one point wanted to become a Mexican citizen and I think of it as the, beginning of my commitment to political change, and I was nine years old. And then I moved back to the states to Denver, and once again I didn't really fit, because this was a third culture, and I had incorporated so much of Mexico that I didn't fit into the United States culture.

**MC:** So you learned another language.

**CH:** Yes. I learned Spanish.

**MC:** Can you still speak it?

**CH:** I have a conversational ability in Spanish and, if I go to Mexico, after about three days of circling the words I don't know in a newspaper, I begin to pick up vocabulary and I actually practice accents in the bathroom because you use different muscles to say the 'r' in English and the 'r' in Spanish. So, yeah.

**MB:** Would you say that you identify with Mexican culture more than American culture, although American culture, kind of, there's many?

**CH:** I feel like Mexican culture is an integral part of who I am and when I'm with Latin American people, I'm different, I talk differently. You know, I think I'm more lively and more expressive and it's just a whole different way of being. But, in fact I had come back to the United States at the time of the civil rights movement and both wanted to change the country. For a while I could not identify with this country at all, and part of that was the social scene that I was thrown into. I wanted to go back to Mexico, but at one point I came to the realization, somebody used the term that you have to fight within the belly of the whale. So, I became committed to learning about social struggles through history in this country, and I, that's what I identify with. I identify with a long history of women who have struggled for change, not just in this country but internationally, and I identify with labor history. That was one of the key things that got me thinking that there is a whole different United States that I can identify with and be proud of.

**MB:** We are probably going to go back into that subject a little bit later. I want to ask you...

**MC:** So tell me about your parents. I mean they seem to be travelers, going from California to Mexico and then to Texas...

**CH:** Denver

**MC:** Oh, Denver, Colorado, right.

**CH:** And then they went to Ghana, for six years, when I was in college. Then they went to Turkey for two years but couldn't really learn the language, so they came back to Denver. And, my father always said he had wanderlust and he wanted to travel and thought about going into the foreign service. But, this was in the fifties and some liberal minister friends of their's said "Don't go into the foreign service. You don't know what you are getting into. Go to work for the United Church Board of World Ministries," which is a church organization of the congregational church that does not proselytize or evangelize. It sends doctors and social workers and teachers out to do good works and my parents weren't even all that religious but my mom -- they asked my mom something about her belief or faith in Jesus and she said "Well, mostly what I think is important about Jesus is the good he did for other people, you know his service to other people, and all the rest of it I don't really care about." And that was exactly the answer they wanted, so off we went to Mexico. My dad kind of dragged my mom and five kids and a dog.

**MC:** Wow, you were one of five kids? How was that like?

**CH:** I liked it and I still do. I just think a big family you kind of raise yourselves in some ways. I especially notice that having one child and all the attention she would demand of me to play with

her. There were the two big kids and the three little kids. I was the fourth of five, so I was part of the three little kids, so we just played together, and living in Mexico there wasn't television. There wasn't all of the gimmicky distractions, and so we made up games and made up puppet shows and just became very, very close and it's lasted to this day, even though my brother especially is very different than my sister and I. We had a great, great closeness.

**MC:** Have you ever married?

**CH:** Yes, I married Jerry Lembcke in 1976. We lived together for three years, that's why I have to think about the date. We separated a couple of years ago, largely because we just couldn't live together anymore, but we deeply care about each other and look out for each other and have meals together and have holidays together and count on each other. When I was in an accident, he's the one I wanted by my side, and so, yeah there is a lot of love there. But, we just can't live together.

**MB:** So we know you traveled a lot. How did you come to Worcester?

**CH:** Can I tell one story first about Mexico?

**MB:** Sure.

**CH:** ... that I want to make sure I get in because it's very important to how I think about who I am and what I did leading up to coming to Worcester. I lived in Mexico when I was nine years old. We lived in a two-story house with four bedrooms and a balcony and a nice little gated area, and you know, I had my nice little dog. Across the street there was a little adobe shack, adobe hut, where the watchmen lived with his family who was watching over the building of a new church. My mom used to point out how even though they were very, very poor, the mother would come out and sweep the ground and sweep the dirt floor and sweep the dirt in front of the house because she had pride in what she could and what she had, and that just really struck me. She also... I had fantasies about that life, but one time I was out on the balcony and I looked across the street and I saw a little boy looking up at me and he was about my age. And, I mark that moment as the seminal moment in my realizing that this is not fair. It should not be this way, and I don't deserve this privilege and he doesn't deserve that poverty. So, I didn't really realize it at the time but I kind of became a crusader for justice and never felt insulted or personally attacked when people attacked the United States when I lived in Mexico. I thought, they're not talking about me. I think that was very important.

**MC:** Do you think that if you hadn't lived in Mexico in those pivotal years that you might have turned out different?

**CH:** I've always wondered that. And, I remember meeting somebody once who was very politically conscious and active who was from near Ontario, California, and I thought, Whew! I might have turned out okay after all. But, it couldn't have possibly been the same.

**MB:** Okay, so carry us to where you came to Worcester because we are interested in how you transferred all this past life into work in Worcester.

**CH:** The Worcester part... I went to graduate school in Wisconsin and I needed... I was applying for a job and one of the jobs was at Holy Cross. So I applied to Holy Cross and got the job. And, I really didn't want to move to New England. I had lots of second thoughts about coming, but one of the things that really drew me was hearing that there was a bilingual school here that my daughter could go to, Chandler Magnet School.

**MC:** I've actually worked there in the bilingual classroom.

**CH:** Aah. And, I wanted her to have the bilingual experience that I'd had as a child. And the job was fairly open in terms of what I taught, so I landed in Worcester in 1988, and found it so different from Denver and the Pacific Northwest where I'd lived, and Wisconsin where I'd lived, and Mexico where I'd lived. I actually found it pretty alienating and, you know, they say New Englanders are cold and that's what I found. But, I found circles of really good friends in the community. I run a Latin American Studies program at Holy Cross, and parents of my daughter's friends who share a lot in common, other people. It seemed like we'd become friends and some people would move away, and I was looking for ways to get involved in the community. My first major involvement was becoming pretty much a full-time activist on the 2 ½ Override Campaign in 1991, which was a campaign to override a Massachusetts law that restricted cities from increasing taxes more than 2 ½ percent without a, basically, referendum vote to override that law. The part I worked for was for schools, to fund schools. There's also overrides for the police department, fire department, library, and I learned a lot about grass roots organizing. Another woman and I really did a lot of the grass roots organizing and a couple of men did a lot of working with the business community. But, I really immersed myself in the community through that effort. A lot of my motivation was to save bilingual education and the teachers who were committed to it. And then in 1994, I heard something about this group that was getting together to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First National Women's Rights Convention in the year 2000, which always seems so far away. So I think my first event was going to a little rally, I think it was announcing the Women's History Project, and it was at City Hall. There was a photo of maybe a dozen of us and some people dressed up in costume. And, I started going to meetings which were pretty small. Annette Rafferty was one of the people there, who is the founder, co-founder of Abby's house, and a lot of other people who became very important in the Worcester Women's History Project. We had this vision of having a room where we would sit around and read pieces of the proceedings of the First National Women's Rights Convention, which later we turned, looked back on and it became a joke. But, that's what we thought of, because it became a quarter of a million dollar project that funded an original play, under the guidance of Karen Board Moran who was an eight grade teacher and very active in the program. After several chairs, I became chair of the program committee, and was clerk of the organization for a while and then became president the year leading up to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First National Women's Rights Convention. So I was president that year and the year following. Leading up to that year, leading up to the October convention, I think for six months I took a leave from Holy Cross for the semester of that convention. I think for much of that summer and fall I was going from call waiting to call waiting, and call waiting, call waiting, meetings, meetings. It was a twenty-four/seven job, and at the same time my mother was dying in Denver. So, it was a rough, very intense, and very hard to coordinate so many different people with so many different ideas and so many different agendas, and great ideas that were impossible to fund. But, we pulled it off

and about 500 people came. So, during that time I worked with seven students at Holy Cross to create a seven-panel, I'm sorry, eight-panel exhibit of door size panels that were put on using, I think it was Quartz 5 computer program to create large digitalized information that went on each panel. Students did different aspects of the issue of women in 1850. So somebody focused on the Abolitionist Movement. Somebody focused on the Temperance Movement. Somebody focused on just cultural life. Somebody wanted to focus on children's stories, and I pretty much focused on the Women's Rights Convention.

**MB:** So, you said when you originally moved to New England you didn't want to come here and it sounds like you made a very nice home here for yourself. What changes about the city and the area have you noticed since you've lived here?

**CH:** I think, I think the 2 ½ Override Campaign and the Worcester Women's History Project helped me see a different side of Worcester, that there was a depth and a community that really cared. I'm very aware of the community around Abby's House and Women Together and the Piedmont neighborhood, and kind of pockets of people that are really putting a lot into making this as good a community as possible. My personal feeling is that it's a great community; say to raise children in or even to be an adult in if you're reasonably well off. It's a really tough place if your poor or below the median income. And, I really noticed that since my daughter went all through inner city schools, through high school. There's just no comparison. I could send her to the Worcester Art Museum Vacation School or the Craft Center camp and she had so many opportunities that most of Worcester, especially Worcester public school children don't have access to. And that motivated a lot of my work as well. So I think part of my awareness, the changes is recognizing that there is a large community of people in the upper middle class who really care and are really trying to make this a better community, and there's a lot of people really suffering in this community. And I think it also changed my view of the community when I learned about the tremendous history in abolitionism that came from this community. That my commitment to the Worcester Women's History Project, and to the convention, and to the play that we commissioned, and to all my work was that at the first National Women's Right's Convention that was held in Worcester was probably the only time when the rights of black women and white women were linked together. And there were propositions that called for the education of black women and things that were just unheard of in 1850 which was actually, it was illegal for northerners to harbor slaves and so forth. My heroine who I wish I had known about when I was your age and I had trouble struggling between commitment to the feminist movement and commitment to the Civil Rights movement, and I couldn't see how they meshed. And, Abby Kelley Foster, who is from Worcester, who is probably one of the, well, was one of the most important speakers and fundraisers and grass roots organizers of the abolitionist movement. She always linked the struggle for women's rights and racial equality, not just abolition but racial equality. She really believed in true equality of the races. To me, she is just a big inspiration.

**MB:** Let's see. What else would you change about the city? What do you think could realistically be done to improve it?

**CH:** I think it needs a whole new 'can do' attitude. In a little town in Iowa where my husband is from, if there are, if the pothole develops, it's fixed and it's fixed in an hour and it's done, and

they use cement roads so that they don't keep getting potholes. There has never been a time when the community has voted down a school bond issue; even though at least half the community are senior citizens who didn't even have kids in the schools before. So I think an attitude change is really important. I think it is hard to have people feel pride in their city when, you know, this part of the city where Assumption is, is so pleasant looking, and the streets are nice and the trees are nice. And, you drive down Chandler St. and there was a time when I had a lot of nausea and the bouncing of the streets and the absence of trees and so forth is not the fault of the people who live in that neighborhood but the decaying city that it is and that newcomers got stuck living in those decaying parts. And I also really think that the schools are a major factor that have to be changed, and you know, we need to teach kids about social change and social movements and that you can make a difference and people have made a difference and if you think you can't, think about slavery. Who would have ever thought that we would get rid of slavery? And, even after black men were given the right to vote, who would have ever thought that women would get the right to vote? It was such a controversy. It was like unheard of. So things that are unheard of today, we can't, we can't become defeatist about. So...

**MB:** I want to switch a little bit and talk about the education that you received. I know obviously you were traveling a lot so you attended a lot of schools. Can you tell us about some of those schools and some of the schooling you got?

**CH:** My experience in California was very... I was there through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and I lived a couple of blocks from school and my grandparents lived a block on either side of me. So, it was sort of an idyllic situation. I just remember educationally, you know, I learned to read very early and was fortunate to have a good kindergarten teacher who didn't punish me for writing letters, writing words instead of drawing when she gave us a drawing lesson. When we moved to Mexico I was supposed to enter 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and they had this idea that because of language they should send you back a year. So it wouldn't be so hard. So, I was going to be put into 2<sup>nd</sup> grade but the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders were writing cursive and that freaked me out and so they put me in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. In fact, I probably wrote better cursive than most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. I knew how to write cursive. But, my younger sister and I really went into shock about the changes and the newness and we were shy and didn't have a lot of self-confidence about making friends. Really outgoing people from the United States that came there really just blended right in and learned Spanish really quickly. And, a lot of the education was very rote and so after that first year we went to a bilingual school, where a half a day was in English with a U.S. curriculum, and half a day was in Spanish with a Mexican curriculum. So for instance in Spanish we would learn triple digit division and in English we were still learning, you know, six into thirty-six. It was very, very different. I don't think the classroom education was particularly meaningful, although I remember one of the poems I had to memorize in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I did so well that I was sent to the other 6<sup>th</sup> grade class to recite it. And, I was often so bored that I would bring a novel to read and, you know, the teacher really didn't care because she knew that, you know, I was [inaudible] far advanced [inaudible] other kids and she really had to dumb down the classroom. And in the Mexican...in the Spanish language classrooms, you had to sit straight with your arms crossed and I remember then our last year there we went back to the all Spanish school and I was in first year of secondary, which is equivalent to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, although age wise I was 8<sup>th</sup> grade age. And, I had a gang of friends, a bunch of American friends. We were always getting up and giving the teachers a hard time. So one time... So teachers would say "you, you, you, you, you, you, leave

the room! And Carolyn, if you keep acting this way, you're going to have to leave the next time!" because my father was an administrator at the school, so they were afraid they would get punished if I got punished. So, I learned some sneaky ways. And... one of my sneaky ways was we'd read a history lesson and we'd have to memorize it. It was a Spanish language class. And so when it was time to recite our lessons, I would throw my hand up in the air first, and since my dad was an administrator, they would call on me first, and I had memorized the first paragraph so I'd always get a good grade. And when I moved back to the United States I entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade so I basically ended up skipping 8<sup>th</sup> grade. And, we lived in a suburb of Aurora, or of Denver, called Aurora. And, the best thing I remember was taking algebra and just doing horrible, getting D's, and then for some reason I had no idea why something clicked. And, I suddenly started getting A's and he had me helping other kids. And that was the same time that John F. Kennedy was killed and I remember coming from gym class to my social studies class and it was on the over, you know, the speaker and we all just sat there stunned in silence. And when I got home I came into the house and I was just sobbing and saw my mom dusting and she said, "Carolyn, what's the matter?" and I said, "Now what's going to happen to the negroes?" which was the politically correct term at that time for African American people. And, I guess I really saw John F. Kennedy as a savior. And halfway through that year we moved into Denver, kind of at my prodding and my mom's prodding, at least that's the way I saw it at the time but it was also closer to my dad's work. I thought that if we were professing a belief in integration, that we needed to live in an integrated neighborhood, not in the suburbs. So we moved into an integrated neighborhood and I went to a 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> middle school and made white friends and made black friends and lost some white friends when they saw that I had black friends. It was a real taste of racism. I became very, very committed to becoming an anti-racist, which is a word I didn't know then but I know now and I know that's what was happening to me. So a year of high school, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, was mostly just miserable lonely, and if my one friend wasn't having, two friends weren't having lunch at my lunch hour it was, you know, horrible. And the two things I remember were loving French class and wanting to be a french foreign exchange student, and writing a paper in social studies on the Civil Rights Movement. And also choir, I loved choir. But, my brother dropped out of high school and in desperation my parents learned of a Quaker boarding school on a little farm in Iowa, West Branch, Iowa, near Iowa City, that they sent him to out of desperation. And he wanted to go. He just wanted to get out of that big high school of 2500 people, when in Mexico everyone was accepted. Nobody cared what you wore. I wore bobby socks and it wasn't till this one friend in 10<sup>th</sup> grade said "You know, you really should wear nylons." And after him being there one year, I went there for two years. So, I got a Quaker education. And the school cost 800 dollars a year, which at that time, even at that time was very affordable. And that went for tuition for teachers and the rest was our own work and donations from Iowa Quakers. And so, you know, we did our own laundry. I remember traipsing across fields to feed the steer. Another girl got to milk the cow and we did the mopping and we made the bread early in the morning and then there was lunch prep and lunch dishes. And during that time... I graduated in 1967. So during that time we had people coming through who would stop at the school, which was called Scattergood Friends School, and they were anti-war activists in the Vietnam War. So I got just a tremendous education from that. And, I loved my German class and I thought I would be a United Nations translator, and our senior trip was going to Washington and New York and meeting people in embassies. So that was just, you know, tremendous education. Not so much in a classroom. It was an ungraded school and I learned that without grades I didn't plan to learn anything about physics or chemistry, but tremendous education anyway.

**MC:** What about college?

**CH:** For college I went to University of Northern Colorado, in Greeley, Colorado. And I thought I wanted to be a preschool teacher so I took an elementary education major and psychology minor and hate the education major, talk about dumming down to students. And I loved my psychology class first one. The second one was more neural psychology the brain and I wasn't interested in that. I also had developed Grays disease, which is a thyroid disease, and had been treat—was being treated for that since high school and that was making it hard for me to function normally and I was in what I would now call, one of the first co-ed living situations run by campus ministry that was a year of constant sexual harassment, words I didn't have then. And I got very involved in the anti-war movement and finally to survive my own injury education major I took up a fine arts double major, and my whole life I had been doing art and my dad really encouraged me to do art. So my first job out of my undergraduate education was the bilingual teacher for migrant children in Greeley, Colorado in one of the schools. And my goal was to make these kids feel proud of who they were and to feel proud for speaking Spanish because they didn't. It got to the point where we wrote a story about onion pickers and we'd go outside and see their parents basically, literally, stooped over picking onions and they would talk about on Saturdays they had to pick onions and how much it burned their eyes, and by the middle of the year they were yelling at me in Spanish across the playground and asking if other kids could take my class. And a moment of pride was that at a school board meeting in a huge high school auditorium where the more militant Mexican Americans or Chicanos were demanding bilingual education, the personnel director saw me come in and at one point he stood up and he said, "we have a bilingual education program, we have a fine bilingual education program in town, one of our fine bilingual educators is here tonight and I look over at (end of side A).

(beginning of side B) so when the personnel director said that this fine bilingual educator, bilingual teacher was here, I felt compelled to stand up and my mom had always taught me, she always had these little sayings and one of them was, "never be afraid to stand up and be counted," meaning that even if you are the only one who stands up for what's right don't be afraid to be counted, even though you're the only one. So I stood up and said something about, "I'm a bilingual teacher but I'm angry and I only get to work with migrant children not the other children who need bilingual education. The other bilingual teacher teaches Spanish as a second language and doesn't even work with Chicano kids, and I said something about tokenism and the Latino community stood up and looked back at me and cheered. And the next day I was told there was no more money to maintain my position next year so I should look for another job. I wasn't fired on the spot, but it was a proud moment of being fired and my husband and I, who was then my boyfriend ended up being basically the only two Anglo people trusted by the Chicano activists in the community and that was great, that was really neat and we, so for a lot, before we went to Wisconsin after Greeley I followed my boyfriend, to-be-husband to Oregon to get his PhD in sociology and I started taking classes and ended up doing a masters thesis on the maquiladoras that border industry programs on the U.S. Mexican border and did some traveling and interviews and, and ended up getting another master's degree in sociology, but at a state university. The first one was an interdisciplinary degree on my American social change and for the master's thesis I wrote about the photo arts project of the works progress administration, during the 1930's in Portland, Oregon. So I interviewed all these artists who were, most of them

are dead now, about their experiences and wrote a thesis on that and visited a lot of places. All that was compensation for breaking my father's heart for becoming a sociologist instead of an artist. And I think a little too, the Portland State University is not, the undergraduate program is not particularly highly ranked but taking it very seriously and taking my master's thesis very seriously I was able to be the big fish in the little pond and get a University's recommendation and so forth which I think is what let me get into the University of Wisconsin which is the number one graduate training program in sociology in the country.

And so I moved to Madison which is just about the greatest place I can imagine to live. Except for the cold, really, really cold in the winter. I can remember 83 below zero wind chill factor one night when three of us went to see "New York, New York." We froze, getting out in that weather. It gets very, you know it gets hot during the summer; it's just a great place to live. The quality of life is amazing and I think that's part of what I use to compare Worcester with. There are bike paths everywhere; people use bikes. Cars are used to bikes on the road and suing bike paths. The schools are so good and so well funded that my nephew, who is now a resident as a doctor, was brilliant and they kept him in the public schools. And in two of the public high schools there were 52 national scholars, and he was one of them. In Worcester it's a *big* deal if there is one, and there is no reason why Worcester can't do the same.

**MC:** Do you think it is part of our culture, where we are from, the culture of our area that sort of chooses that?

**CH:** I think so. I think there was a can-do attitude there. There is a history of activism and fighting for people's rights like to ride bicycles and have good schools. But also Worcester is a declining industrial city that doesn't have jobs. And you know, so there are so many people struggling to get by on two or three jobs or working, they will be hired by a place like Walmart, and you can use this in the interview, and they'll be hired with just enough hours to keep them from getting the medical benefits or to keep them from getting overtime. And now the housekeepers at the colleges around here, [mixed or whatever...word confusion] that they get out their housekeeping job and they go to work at another job. The custodians work their custodian jobs, one of them I know, and then goes down to the court house to do custodian work. The previous custodian worked as a custodian and then went to work at Shacks, a men's store, and he would dress up in a suit and tie; where as at work he had to wear the gold uniform that shows that he is a blue collar worker and then on weekends he would work at the garage. And you know that's how people eek out a living and I think that there is part of me and other parts of the country correlate, there's still good schools and still things like bike paths and bus transportation, I mean New York City and even in Boston to some extent. In Boston there is public transportation, you don't need a car and other places you need a car. And around here without any jobs, it's hard to live here where people can afford it and then work 20 miles away. And in Madison and Denver where I lived, where I think of as home, and I've lived here 20 years, there's bus transportation that gets people places that runs more than once every hour.

**MB:** Then why stay here?

**CH:** Well, there is my job. I have a job. I have a house that I love and I have a big mortgage on it since I bought my husband's share of it, and with the decline in housing I can't afford to move. But also my daughter lives here and depending on where she goes to law school and what

happens with her and her boyfriend and what happens with kids and grandkids, I'm going to be here for, well I also want to be where there are 300 days of blue sky which is Denver, so I guess that's why.

**MC:** When did you meet your husband?

**CH:** We met in Greeley, Colorado and he was a graduate student and we met at a friend's party and he asked if anybody wanted to go to Mexico with him, he was thinking about travelling to Mexico and I said, "Oh yeah," and I raised my hand and then a woman name Carol raised her hand and said, "Well I want to go." And he figured out that I spoke Spanish, and so we began our courtship and our 2 ½ month trip to Mexico on \$250 dollars each.

**MC:** Wow. That's sounds like a really good story.

**CH:** Yeah, we slept in hammocks and in little garages with one little light bulb and mice and gnats getting into our back packs to eat our bowls and things like that.

**MC:** I guess what I am wondering is, if you ever felt like your gender or gender roles ever affected any of your decisions in life, because you are a very educated woman so it doesn't seem like it was an enforced choice on what you decided to do? So I guess my question is what sort of affected some of the decisions you made to go to school?

**CH:** I thought that it was a very important factor. I was a big tomboy at a time when girls were supposed to wear dresses all the time. I was an unapologetic tomboy, I really thought that moving back to the states, I tried to fit in and I just didn't, but I had dreamed about what I wanted to be when I grew up. And I think about those now when I look at the want ads, I think that is what I wanted to do when I grew up and when I was an artist I had fantasies about being an artist and marrying an architect who could support me. It never occurred to me that I could be the architect. It really had never occurred to me. And yet I designed the remodeling plans for the house we bought, like an architect would. And I designed other things, so I could have been an architect. I'm not sure that's what I would have wanted to be, but I also think I really mostly wanted to be a social worker. And I have a friend when I was 10 who was an older woman who had been a social worker and I'd go over to her house, this was in Mexico, I'd go over, she lived around the corner a block or two away and I'd go make cookies with her and I interviewed her once about being a social worker and she brought me an Easter lily once when I had scarlet fever on Easter. I remember, I remember, my mom would deny this if she, well she has denied this, that she said, "well to be a social worker, you have to take a lot of math and I don't think you'd like that. And you have to go to graduate school, and I don't think you'd want to go to school that much." So the fact that I had attention deficit disorder basically means I'm smart enough, I'm very creative, I just have to take time to get things done and math isn't my thing. I could have gotten done, I scored well on the GREs for math, very well, but I was being guided into schoolteacher, secretary, or stewardess and I don't know if my mom was guiding me that way or if culture or teachers or what, but I wrote a story in fifth grade about a little girl who lived down a maple strip from Vermont and I thought why can't I do that? But, being a social worker is something I always wanted to do, and being an artist and being a singer. I wanted to be Holly Near (first string baize?), Holly Near and sing, but now I want to be part of a feminist rock and

roll band that, had a name for it, something like banana puzzle and maniacs or something like that.

(Break of dialogue)

I'm not sure that I answered your question.

**MC:** No, that's good that we are talking about all these things. Um, just a question, did you have to do a lot of the housework at home?

**CH:** When my husband and boyfriend first started eating together. One thing I liked about him was he came into my kitchen which was piled high with dishes and he did my dishes. And he always did the dishes and the first time, the third time we had dinner, I said, "Well if we are going to have dinner together then I think you should make the dinner part of the time. Well he said, "I don't know how to cook." I said, "You can make peanut butter sandwiches, I don't care I just want to not have to cook once every other night." So that was a kind of struggle that evolved and we ended up with a division of labor that I think could have been more, more even in some ways, but, but you know I think in some ways it was a pretty good role model of how to do it. And my daughter grew up and I asked her once, "Who do you think does the dishes in your friend Chrissie's house?"

"Their dad."

"Who do you think does the dinner?"

"Well, the mom plans it, but they both cook it."

"And who do you think reads the story at night?"

"Well, the dad."

"And who do you think sings you a song and tucks you in?"

"Well the mom."

So she kind of had a sense of Mom sweeps the floor, Dad picks up the pile, the piles, and different things that were her vision of the division of labor. So I think, based on that, it was pretty good. Although like most women, little things like the baby or little girl needs her fingernail clipped or cleaned or don't forget her homework or did you make her lunch, things like that would be my thinking, I'd have to think of that. And that's the thing about co-parenting and sharing housework, that it's the little things that women end up doing and men don't.

**MC:** Do you feel like you can balance work with home life and all your responsibilities at home?

**CH:** Well

**MC:** [joking] Yes?

**CH:** No. ([MC chuckles]) I remember being relieved when women who already had tenure said, "I can't do either of them well. I can't teach well and I can't parent well. I can't be a good parent and I can't be a good teacher, it's just no way." And I, most of the time that I was mostly involved in the community, I took a leave from Holy Cross, where I was on a sabbatical. Or my daughter was in high school or she didn't really care. I was the interim director of the after

school program for Latino Education Institute one semester which was an overload for me and it meant another class that I wasn't being taught, I wasn't being paid for and you know, she was out with her boyfriend so she didn't care. But, it was *extremely* hard in being a college teacher I thought oh 3 hours a week and I can have all this time with my kid and to paint and to be home and it's 24-7. In fact one time she said, I was wondering, I was talking about whether to take on a Latino student for an independent study and she said, "No, you won't!" I think she was ten and she said, "Because then you won't have time with me. You'll always be grading his papers and stuff" and I began to realize every extra student in a class means that is how many hours a week of my time, reading their papers and meeting with them and so forth, and so I finally said to my students, "From 6-9 is her time, and I'm going to bed at 11, and so you're going to get papers back late." And just, I thought that is one of those things that is very hard about being a woman and working and also trying to be involved in the community is, you have to let something go, and the male pressure to be like the men in the job market, make it hard to be the mom you want to be. And I think working at a Catholic institution that was all male, it took awhile for them to adjust to the fact that maybe some women have to leave at 5:30 to pick up their kids at daycare. That happened while I was there. So we can't have meetings that go that long, and then some men having to leave to pick up their kids at daycare and things started to change. So, it's a kind of thing I see as problems and also as changing.

**MC:** How have health issues affected your life?

**CH:** My siblings always said and my dad always said that, "at least you were the one who got the good teeth." So, I basically have a history of immune adrenaline stress disorders from the time I was little through thyroid disease and a whole bunch of other things. In fact during the time of the First National Rights Women's, First National Women's Rights Convention my mom died in July, three months later was the convention. I was still going from call waiting to call waiting, in some ways I didn't have time to breathe. The day she, I forgot the day after she died, I wanted to see her body. I went up to the mountains to a cabin that we have been going to for all these years, and for the first time I developed vertigo. I don't know if you know what that is but it's not even dizziness, the room spins and it spins this way, it's like one of those horrible rides at the carnival. And you know eventually got to the point that I'd throw up. And one time I went to put up my exhibit at my daughter's high school and I got into the library and I started to open up the crate to put it up and I just had to lie down. And I asked my daughter to bring me a basket in case I vomited and here are these students walking around getting things off the shelves, and she and her boyfriend put up the exhibit for me. And then I was so wiped out that I had to get help walking out to the car. So I was worried about getting up on that stage at Mechanics Hall the first night and the world start spinning on me. And fortunately I went to a chiropractic specialist who does a lot of alternative stuff and a therapist to—not what I wanted, I wanted the deep tissue massage guy, but she was the one who understood energy flows and I didn't have vertigo for a week. And when it was over, I began to grieve my mom and my chiropractor alternative person said, "I can help you get through this weekend, but I can't help you until you get the stress of this conference over and start grieving your mom." So, but I kind of have a long history of health issues, which isn't helped by working full time and being in the community and having a daughter who is away from home.

**MC:** But it just attests to you and your strength. Everything that you have done, I think it's great. How about with health care, did you experience any trouble finding quality, affordable health care?

**CH:** Since I've been in Worcester, (pause). Fallon was affordable. I eventually found a doctor that, I had a great doctor; she left to teach. I eventually found another one who I loved and then she left and it took me awhile to get around to finding what I want, what I need and, but being at Holy Cross having an income, having two choices of health care, which are good as long as I live around here, it's okay. Again I think, what if you didn't have money. And my daughter was in AmeriCorps Vista, she volunteered her first year out of college and had the minimalist program and she had some problems and didn't have money to buy prescriptions, it didn't cover prescriptions and one test they had to do with a problem that a lot of women get, because it came back normal she had to pay for it, which is a lot of money. If it would have come back abnormal she wouldn't have had to pay. And I think that is what most of these people in this state are having to deal with. So when I complain about you know the red tape bureaucracy at UMass Memorial Medical Center I think about all the other people and I think Michael Moore's movie, "Sicko," just captures the health care situation in this country perfectly. [leaning into the recorder] Keep that on the tape, too. [Laughter]

**MC:** Is there anything else that you wish to say? Anything that we haven't touched upon?

**CH:** Well, when I was involved in the Worcester Women's History Project, most heavily for two years as president and for the years leading up to that and somewhat after that, I was *so* busy but I thought that in some ways that those were the most satisfying years of my life. My daughter was young enough that she just wanted to be with me, and my, actually in the 2½ override she was young enough to want to be with me also, so she'd come with me to things and, I'm sorry I mixed that up, it was the 2 ½ override she came with me and we started having child care while we did programs and we transferred that to some of the women's history project but I got involved with some many people in the community through the Worcester Women's History Project that, I had a more than one or two people tell me I should run for school board because I was you know well known, I had done a lot. I was a public figure. I had also maintained a commitment to the schools and testified before the school committee and taken my exhibit to the schools and was speaking in the schools about Abby Kelly Foster and the first national women's rights committee. I coauthored a play ["Yours for Humanity-Abby] with Karen Board Moran who was the eighth grade teacher who was so active in the project and that play has been performed by Lynne McKenney-Lydrick. I don't know how many hundreds of times now, in schools and senior centers and libraries and all over the place and I think of that as one of my lasting legacies. My exhibit hangs in Abby's House and I'd like to have it more mobile but I can't make that happen, can't take that on, but I think that's what I wanted to do through my work with the Women's History Project was to let children know there is a history, this isn't a dump, this [Worcester] used to be the center of activity for the whole Northeast region. It was a place people came to do all the things that needed to be done. They came for religious reasons, for temperance reasons, for abolitionists' reason, for women's rights reasons, it was the center, it was the hub of activity and liveliness and, you know, hold on to that. That's what I would like kids to get out of it. That and, you know, an oral history project and what we are continuing to do now.

**MB:** Ok, well thank you!