

Interviewee: Hannah Laipson

Interviewers: Danielle Buttafuoco and Andrea Gagnon

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Under the Supervision of: Prof. Paula Fitzpatrick, Assumption College



**Abstract:** Born in 1925 in Haverhill, Massachusetts, Hannah Ethel Karp Laipson has lived in Worcester since her marriage and currently resides with her husband, a former member of the Navy during World War II. Hannah graduated from Colby College in Maine with a major in English and a minor in History. Today, Hannah is as an active member of Common Cause Massachusetts and continues to stay involved with the WISE program at Assumption College, in which she previously served as the board President and course group leader. In this interview, Hannah discusses the immense role that education has played in her life as a former English college professor, as well as the impact her Jewish faith, certain historical events, various work experiences, and family have had on her. A mother of three children, a grandmother of four, and a great-grandmother of one, Hannah also holds strong family connections. She spoke extensively about her life experiences and credits her good health to staying active, both intellectually and socially.

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**DB:** What is your full maiden name, and if applicable, your married name?

**HL:** My full maiden name was Hannah Ethel- which I like to forget- Karp. K-A-R-P. And my married name is Hannah Karp Laipson and that's what I go by most of the time.

**DB:** When and where were you born?

**HL:** Haverhill, Mass.

**DB:** Could you spell that please?

**HL:** H-a-v-e-r-h-i-l-l. That's about 65 miles from here.

**DB:** Do you have children?

**HL:** Three. I have two daughters and a son.

**DB:** And do you have grandchildren?

**HL:** Four grandchildren. Three male, one female and there's a wide disparity in age. My oldest grandson is, I believe, 33 now, his brother is 30, his cousin is 20, and their cousin, Maya, is going to be 13 in May, so we have quite a range.

**DB:** And you said you have great-grandchildren?

**HL:** Right. The oldest grandson- he and his wife have a little boy who's now nine months old.

**DB:** What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with or what is your family background?

**HL:** Well, my parents, as I indicated on the questionnaire, both came from Russia. Now, of course, the area they came from is a separate state, Ukraine. My father came here when he was about 21, I think, and then he sent for my mother, to whom he was engaged when he left Russia. So, they came here in about 1921.

**DB:** Did they speak Russian?

**HL:** Not really. Let's see in our household it was a mixture of -- English was the main language, Yiddish was used occasionally, Russian was used -- I always get a kick out of this -- when my mother or father wanted to say something that they didn't want me to hear- they would say, "Speak in Russian so Hannah won't understand." And a number of years ago after my husband and I both retired, he joined an organization called the International Executive Service Corp., which consisted of people who ran businesses or were in professions who volunteered their services for other countries. And first he was sent to Latvia for two and a half weeks one year, and then a year or two later, we both went to Russia for three months.

**DB:** Oh wow.

**HL:** And the one sentence I knew in Russian was, "\_\_???", that means, "Speak Russian so Hannah doesn't understand". So that was my big acquaintance with Russian, however, I did learn about 30 words while we were there, and that was a wonderful experience. That's a different subject.

**DB:** Tell me about your parents.

**HL:** Well, my father came to this country and to earn a living, at first, he taught Hebrew classes to students of Jewish families who wanted their children to learn Hebrew to prepare for bar mitzvahs, for example. Then he applied to law school and he commuted to Boston every day and got a law degree and became a lawyer full time. My mother, who had also been a teacher in Russia, when she came here, she took the role of housewife, mother, and so forth. And then in later years she was approached at one or two times- one I remember in particular, by a professor who was on a summer vacation and he wanted to polish his Russian and a person that he met in Haverhill recommended my mother. So she tutored him in Russian over a period of time and I remember that experience when he would come to our house and she would teach him conversational Russian and so forth. So teaching runs in our family and it goes down to the next generations. My older daughter teaches math at a university in Atlanta. My second daughter is not a teacher per se, but deals in educational circles in her work, and my first son-in-law- my older son-in-law who unfortunately passed away in January, was president of two colleges, Hamilton College and Williams College and he was a college professor. My second son-in-law is

a professor of International Relations at Lehigh University. So you can see that education runs in the family. [Post interview Hannah adds that her two older grandsons are also academics. Jonathan is a paleontologist at Stanford University and Sam is a post-doctoral fellow also at Stanford.]

**DB:** That's actually how it is in my family.

**HL:** Really?

**DB:** Yeah. It's weird. So you grew up in Haverhill and did you live there your whole life?

**HL:** Well, I lived there right through high school. Then I went off to college. I went to Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

**AG:** Oh.

**HL:** You're familiar with Colby?

**AG:** Yes.

**HL:** Ok, and loved it there, and that was during the period of World War II. I had already met my future husband at that point, and our whole courtship was really through the mail, because he was in the service- he went in the Navy- he was out at UMass Amherst. And at the end of his freshman year he signed up for the Navy. In your generation, wars have been very different. World War II involved almost every family in the country. And of course they had a draft, and a lot of the students enlisted so that they could choose the part of the service that they wanted to be in. So my husband chose the Navy and he was-- part of it was education in this country --and then he was assigned to a ship and he was in the Pacific for a couple of years. Now where were we?

**DB:** We were talking about-

**HL:** Oh. Did I grow up in Haverhill? Ok.

**DB:** We can talk about college.

**HL:** Alright. At college, I majored in English at Colby and minored in History. I was always very interested in history and politics and after I graduated from college, that was when the servicemen were returning from the service. My husband and I got married when he got out of the service and we went back to UMass Amherst so that he could finish his last year and a half. And I worked out there. The first semester I got a job, a clerical job, at Amherst College, working for the head of the geology department. And then the second semester, I had met the head of the English department in Amherst at a social gathering and while talking, you know, I told him I was an English major and so forth, and he called me one day. Could I pitch in and substitute for somebody who had left unexpectedly just before the semester started? So here I was, a brand-new graduate, and I'm teaching sophomore survey of English literature. But what

was really funny about that experience was that several of my students were quite a bit older than I was. They were returning G.I.'s, from the service, and I still remember there was one fellow who used to sit in the back row who was a veteran. Every time his hand went up my heart sunk because he'd ask me these difficult questions and I was a new fledgling at a time. But I learned to cope with that, and admit when I wasn't sure of the answer, and I would bring it in, and... Anyways, that was a turning point for me because I had originally thought that I would like to work for a newspaper or a magazine and in fact the summer between my junior and senior years in college I worked for the Haverhill Gazette. I was the first female reporter they ever had and just as a lesson to you young ladies, when I went in to meet the editor, I told him I was very interested in working for a newspaper and making that my profession and could they give me a job while I was home for the summer and he was very nice but he said, "I'm sorry, they really didn't have any openings, and there was no way he could accommodate me." So I said to him, "You know, I'm so anxious, I'd even do it for nothing." The next morning at 7:30 I got a phone call, and he said, "We'll take you on. We'll even pay you a salary."

**DB:** Wow. That's wonderful.

**HL:** That was a wonderful experience, that summer. Everybody was terrific to me, and it was a great learning experience and they offered me a full-time job, but I was going back to college, so I recommended a friend that I thought they might be interested in, and I knew that I was getting married, I was already engaged, and that I would be moving to Worcester, probably, so I recommended a friend of mine who was going to Bates at the time, and when she graduated they hired her full-time, and she worked there for several years until she got married. But what happened was, when I taught that class, I enjoyed the experience so much that, do you know the term serendipity? Something happens unexpectedly and it changes things. I decided that I really enjoyed that. But, it didn't come to fruition until quite a number of years later because in the meantime I started having a family. However, teaching has been a part of my life in one way or another because even while my first child was one year old, I started teaching three times a week at Temple Emmanuel, which was where we belonged. So it meant I went Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, I think, just for a couple of hours. But I was teaching students at the junior high level, and that was really an experience [laughs]. And, anyhow, when my children got -- when my youngest, when my son was about eleven --are you familiar with the writings of Betty Friedan?

**AG:** No.

**HL:** She was the feminist, she was the first great [modern] writer of feminism and she wrote a book that became immensely popular, and when I read it, I decided it was time for me to do something more. So that was when I enrolled at Assumption for my Master's degree, and from that point on, I was a teacher.

**DB:** So you got your Masters in English and Secondary Education?

**HL:** No, no. When you teach at a level beyond high school, you don't need certification in education. So, no, my concentration was in English, and over the years I took a number of advanced courses at Clark University, at UMass [University of Massachusetts Amherst.] I contemplated briefly going for my Ph. D in English when I finished my Masters because I just loved it and the only two schools that were within commuting distance at that time would have been UConn [University of Connecticut] or Brandeis and each one involved commuting at least an hour if not more and I still had a child at home and two daughters who were coming home off and on from their colleges. So I gave up that idea but I took extra courses all along.

**DB:** Was it difficult going to school and trying to fulfill all your household duties and life at home?

**HL:** Well, I was very fortunate in that my husband was very supportive. So if I had exams or things like that, he would take care of our son, you know, even though he had a very demanding business. But, he always supported me, never discouraged me in any way. And I must say that I did have experiences in my teaching at a community college where I heard stories where women did not get that cooperation at home and it was a real struggle to advance their education. And that always impressed me a lot. So the one period that was difficult was when I was finishing up and I was preparing for my orals. I really did some concentrated studying for about six weeks. But you know, I was going back and forth to home and doing other things as well.

**DB:** So, when did you move to Worcester?

**HL:** As soon as my husband finished his work at UMass Amherst and got his degree we moved back to Worcester and he had decided earlier that he was going back into his father's business which was the dairy business, my husband had grown up in that, and that was the beginning of his full-time work. So that was in about 1948, I believe.

**DB:** And do you live in the same place that you lived in Worcester before?

**HL:** We're very adventurous. We've lived in the same house. When we first moved to Worcester we moved into an apartment, and then when I got pregnant and was expecting my first child, we found the house that we live in today. And we still live there.

**DB:** What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

**HL:** In Worcester- well, lots of changes in [?]. For example, when I was a young married woman, if you went to downtown Worcester, there were at least six very nice retail stores for women's clothing. For example, or what we would call department stores. Today there are none. That was when the whole mall experience started to come in and the small stores went by the wayside. Now I think we're going back to wanting the other. Other changes in Worcester- well, Worcester I think is really a wonderful city in many respects. First of all, the large college population- all the- I think, what are there, ten colleges in Worcester? Something like that. The many cultural institutions- the Worcester Art Museum, the Antiquarian Society, the Audubon Society, the historical- there are many cultural places that people can go to and really enjoy

tremendously. So I think the city has a lot to offer. I think young people- I read recently in the newspaper that college students were complaining that when they go to the downtown area, there's really nothing to do. And I think- I don't know how true that is, but I think if it is true, I think the city should examine that carefully because there is a large, large college population. I don't know, do you tend to stay within your own college more or less for social activities, or do you mingle with other schools?

**AG:** Well, on the weekends we have a bus system that takes us into town, so we do have the opportunity to go in and there's tons of things to do. I haven't found a shortage of anything.

**HL:** Really? Well, when you say lots of things to do, like what?

**DB:** Well, there are restaurants, and the mall, and there's a shopping plaza, the movies. I've done a lot of that already and I've only been here a short time.

**HL:** And of course there's the Foothills Theatre, there's Hanover [Theater], of course all of these things are expensive today, but-

**AG:** Well with our student ID there's usually some type of discount.

**HL:** Oh, that's wonderful!

**AG:** And I've been to the Worcester Art Museum with a few of my classes, and there are tons of opportunities to get off campus, but then again there's a lot of activities on campus.

**DB:** What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been, generally?

**HL:** Well, I have to stop and think about that. I think they're probably the same as women's experiences everywhere. Except that, when you live in a city like this you do have available to you things to open your horizons. So, let me just give you some examples. When I say education has been a very important part of my life, teaching at a community college was a really special experience. It was interesting, here I was at Assumption for four years, and the students were, I would say, 98 percent in those days were from parochial schools, and the classes reflected that quite a bit, and I've still been in touch with some of my Assumption students, believe it or not, and I enjoyed them tremendously and it taught me a lot as well. In fact, it was really funny, I think it was the fourth year that I was teaching here, it was, or it might have been in 1970, those were the years, the late '60s and early '70s, when the most popular writers, the novelists, were the American-Jewish writers. There was Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and a whole score of others. So I introduced to the English department, the possibility, what would they think of my giving a course in American-Jewish writers? And I had written my Master's thesis on that. So they said, "Sure; that sounds great, go ahead." Well, everybody in the department laughed -- about 140 students signed up for the class! So instead of my teaching two sessions, I had to teach three sessions, and it was a wonderful experience and I still remember and I quote it sometimes- here is this class of Catholic students, and we're talking about all these American-Jewish writers who were emerging from their very different experiences and we were

reading- Phillip Roth at that time was not my favorite writer but I felt I had to include him. We were doing a book, I don't know if you're at all familiar with his writing, are you at all?

**AG:** I don't think so.

**HL:** Ok. Well, one of his best-seller books at that time was *Goodbye Columbus*. And we were discussing that book and one of the students raised his hand, he was Italian, and he said to me, "What's so Jewish about Aunt Gladys? She sounds exactly like my aunt!" [laughs, AG & DB laugh]. So we had good interchange like that and it was very successful and worked out very well and in fact after I left, a few years later or within a couple of years later, they hired a Jewish faculty person and he picked up that same course and taught it again and in fact he and I talked about it several times. Then I went off to a community college [Quinsigamond Community College] which was a totally different experience. My students ranged from the age of 17 to 75. I could have all types of students in my classes, some of whom were so bright they could have been at any college in the country and some of whom had been working and felt there was more to life than just this and they were coming back to school for that and some who didn't have a clue. So you dealt with all those different experiences and it was a very wonderful, I really got a lot out of those twenty years, I must say. I met wonderful teachers there and the stress was on helping the students. A lot of our students transferred to four-year schools within Worcester, some to Assumption, Holy Cross, and so forth, and others went off to other four-year schools, and some went back into the work force in different capacities. But anyhow, so that was a tremendous variety in teaching. When I retired, I knew that I had to have some structure, but I still couldn't get away from education. And at that point the WISE [Worcester Institute for Senior Education] program was started and I was on the first Council. It was actually started by seven social workers who felt that in retirement they wanted to do something more stimulating than just going to out to lunch or playing cards. One of them had heard of a program through Elderhostel, which you may have heard of, and they contacted Elderhostel, and that was how WISE began. And also they worked through the consortium of colleges in Worcester. And the head of the consortium said to them, "You can't have a board with seven social workers. You have to get some other people involved in the first board so that you have more diversity." So that's when I was called by somebody, a dentist was brought in, somebody in another profession, some business people were, so for the next 13 years I taught an English course every year as a volunteer group leader and I served as curriculum chair and eventually became president of WISE for two years. But, I enjoyed the education part all the time and go as a student. Every year I sign up for courses, and my husband does too. So that's a wonderful way to keep your mind working, and not dwell on the fact that you're not quite as energetic as you may have been when you were 25. The other thing that I got involved in that was related to education in a way was that I became very active in Common Cause. Are you familiar with Common Cause as an organization? It's a citizen's organization, national. I became active in Common Cause Massachusetts. The office was in Boston. I served on the board there for the next twelve years. [Post interview she added that she served as chair for two and one-half years.] I'm still an honorary member of the board. But when I say it's related to education, it's an organization that does not support individual candidates for office. It observes government and the processes of

government. So in other words we're like a watchdog group, and when we see violations of what is intended constitutionally or in the state constitution, that's where we try to have a voice. Since Common Cause started up- it was the first one, I think of that type of organization -- there have been numerous others that have sprung and you'll read in the paper sometimes that Common Cause is housed in Washington nationally, but there are others there too and they focus on different aspects of government. So that's always been a great interest of mine.

**AG:** Are you still involved in the WISE program-

**HL:** Oh yes-

**AG:** or are you still in classes?

**HL:** Oh, yeah, oh, I'm attending classes- I still serve on the board because when you're President of the organization, you're automatically on the board forever [laughs, AG and DB laugh].

**DB:** Oh that's nice.

**HL:** Which is nice because you serve as sort of a historical reference point. People who have come in, say in the past five years, don't know what we did 10 years ago. You know and often the same topics keep recurring. So- oh it's- and I still serve on the curriculum committee where we decide on the courses and call people to lead the courses for us. We have people from all the colleges in the city. And we draw on Assumption very heavily of course because our director, who is the liaison at Assumption -- and so it's a wonderful experience, it really is. I finally- about a year ago- I said it's time for my second retirement [AG and DB laugh]. So that's when I stopped teaching. But I'm still fully involved.

**DB:** What role has religion played in your life?

**HL:** It's always been important to me- my parents brought me up- well, I should mention my parents in two contexts here. One is they always brought me up to respect Judaism tremendously and have a very warm, loving feeling towards it. We belong to reform Judaism which is the liberal arm so we are not the extreme observant Jews that you would find in Orthodoxy or even in conservatism but rather we take a more liberal view in it accepting the idea that as times change, philosophies change, but the basic concepts do remain the same. It's important to me as a cultural, ethical moral compass, but that does not mean to say that I don't believe people can be ethical and moral with religion, ok? So my parents did influence me in that way but the other influence was since they came from Russia where Jews were not treated very well, often they were so impressed with the fact that they had the right and privilege to vote that I was brought up- and this was very important to me in joining Common Cause- I was brought up to think of the vote as sanctified [laughs, AG and DB laugh]. If I have to miss even a primary election, I feel tremendously guilty. And my mother into her 80s- my father died fairly young- but into her 80s she would get absentee ballots so she could vote. It was always there- the right to vote was extremely important to them and they always emphasized that.



**DB:** I don't mean to kind of jump backwards...

**HL:** Ok...

**DB:** What did you do for fun when you were growing up?

**HL:** Well I belonged to Girl Scouts, [DB and AG laugh] I was active in the youth group at my temple, which involved traveling to other cities sometimes for conferences and things like that. I was very active in my school activities and made wonderful friends, some of whom are still my lifetime friends. One woman that I speak to regularly and we email constantly grew up with me from the time I was probably three years old [laughs].

**AG:** Wow.

**DB:** That's nice.

**HL:** And so let me think- summers... we lived near the shore. Haverhill is about a half an hour from the seashore. So summers we spent a lot of time at the beach and I remember that very fondly. And -- but I participated in- we were very active in all the school activities. I served on the high school newspaper. In college I was editor of the college newspaper and those things had a great influence on me because you go around speaking to people throughout the institution. They get to know you, you get to know them. It gives you a lot of insight.

**AG:** Did you- do you want to do this? [directed toward DB]

**DB:** No... [inaudible]

**AG:** Ok. Well do you consider yourself politically active? I mean, you're involved with Common Cause, so I would assume yes.

**HL:** Yes I've- it's interesting- Common Cause because its basic principle is that, say when you're an officer, you do not come out in favor of any individual candidate.

**AG:** Right.

**HL:** And I remember when I was President, I've always supported Harriet Chandler who comes from this district. She is a senator in the [state] legislature. She used to say to me "I know I can't invite you to my support groups because you're not supposed to publicly endorse me." But I would stay politically active in the sense that our friends, my husband, and I, we're very informed. We make sure to read- in the course of a week we read the Worcester Telegram, the Boston Globe, and the New York Times. We subscribe to the New Yorker and Time Magazine. Otherwise, I feel to tell people "get out and vote" has little or no meaning because if you're uninformed, you're not a good voter.

**AG:** Right.

**HL:** Every night we listen to The Lehrer Report because we feel you get a balanced view there. We express our opinions. We do support people that we think are good candidates. And- but as far as running for office or anything like that I never had any desire to do that [AG laughs], but I really did respect the function of an organization like Common Cause. By the way, if you didn't know about Common Cause, they really welcome college students and we used to have- in the Boston office- we used to have a lot of volunteers.

**AG:** Mhm, nice [laughs].

**DB:** How has- how have health issues impacted your life?

**HL:** I should say "knock on wood" only I can't find any! [Laughs, AG and DB laugh]

**AG:** We can pretend this is wood. [Points to notebook]

**HL:** We've been relatively fortunate. Look, as you can see from my birth date, I'm in my eighties. I've had arthritis for many years, but that has not stopped me from doing anything, but it has meant taking medications and doing exercises. I'm firmly convinced that being active is extremely important, of course some people are not fortunate enough to be able to be active. But if a person is able, even pushing, that's very beneficial. And being part of a community, getting out among people, is extremely important so... as I say, health, indirectly, it has affected my life. My father died when he was only fifty... which was a terrific blow. And, but other than that, my husband and I, we've had the normal aches and pains that people have when they get older, but we've remained active.

**AG:** Yes.

**DB:** What memories do you have of significant historical events that took place when you were growing up?

**HL:** Well it's interesting how certain things become... indelible in your mind. For example, I remember that the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated, I was visiting my mother at City Hospital in Worcester and we started hearing the things on the radio and so forth. The other one, when I was in college, Franklin Delano Roosevelt died, in 1945, and we revered him. He was a very... I don't know what word to use. He had a lot of not only charisma, but gravitas. People thought- they either hated him or they thought he was a second god. And the day that- we looked up to him a lot- the day that he died, I remember the student body, we were just so stricken. And I remember that my roommate and I- we didn't know what to do with ourselves so we went to visit- we were nervy- we dropped in on our economics professor [DB laughs]. A- who's this young bachelor, he was probably thinking "What is this?!" [Laughs, AG and DB laugh] But we had to talk to somebody, you know, and he was very helpful. And, but everybody was stricken. I would say those two events were the most sharp in my memory. And of course, there was also December 7, 1941. Our phone rang at home. I answered the phone and one of my best friends was on the phone and she spoke to my father. I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was, I had

never heard of Pearl Harbor. And she said “Oh it just came over the radio that the United States was attacked.” And of course everybody was just demolished when they heard that. Yeah...

**DB:** Was it difficult having your husband in the military?

**HL:** Well, at first he was my boyfriend, then he was my fiancé... [Laughs, AG and DB laugh] Well when I was in college it was really an interesting society because as a freshmen, college was normal. There were men and women, there were fraternities and sororities or non-fraternities and –sororities, but social events. Then by the spring of that year, freshmen year, a good portion of the men left the campus. They went into varying aspects of the military service. That was when my husband signed up at UMass Amherst. So the whole life at college changed considerably. It was- I'd say- eighty five percent female after that and the few men that were on the campus were people who had been exempted either for health reasons or because they were- had a situation of importance to their families where the family could not get along without them. So the number of men was very small. Then when I was a senior- by the time I was a senior- the men who left the first year started to return. And quite a few of our classmates had been caught in the Battle of the Bulge, and, you know which afflicted them with frozen feet and all kinds of ailments. So they got earlier discharges, some of those fellows, so they started to return to the campus, but obviously more serious and more mature and a lot of the fellows who had started with us transferred to other schools for various reasons, either to be closer to family or their interests had changed considerably while they were in the service. And... now what was the original question? [Laughs, AG and DB laugh]

**HL:** I've lost track.

**AG:** No, you're- you're doing great. It was how...

**DB:** Oh I said was it difficult having a significant other in the military-

**HL:** Oh ok-

**DB:** But it's not a big deal- [Laughs]

**HL:** Yes, that w- well what would happen that's also what affected us on campus. A number of the women were either engaged and a few had become married in the course of their being at college and there were some tragedies that did happen and it hit very close. So of course being involved with somebody who was in the service and then he had a very fortunate career in the navy. First they sent him to Officers Training which was at a college, Colgate University. Then he was- so he took regular liberal arts courses while he was there. Then he was sent to Columbia for midshipman school. When he graduated from there, he became an Ensign, that's the lowest naval officer. And then he was assigned to a ship which had been hit in the Pacific and it took seven months for the ship to come back to port. So he spent seven months in San Francisco, which wasn't too terrible. And then he finally got on his ship and they were a troop transport, so they were ferrying troops back and forth across the Pacific for the next two years. But during that period the war more or less ended, so it wasn't as though he was in heavy battle or anything like

that. But it was a tremendous relief when the armistice was declared and fellows started returning home. Yeah...

**AG and DB:** Yeah.

**HL:** It was quite a dramatic time to be you know a college-age student... as you can well imagine.

**AG:** Yeah I can [laughs, DB and HL laugh].

**HL:** You know, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars were totally different from World War II because they were all unpopular wars. There were a lot of objections to those wars, whereas World War II wasn't a beloved war, but everybody felt we were attacked, it was necessary, and every family was affected in one way or another. It was not just that a certain population was affected and all the others were leading their normal lives, that was not true at all. So it was a different kind of experience.

**DB:** Are there any major historical events in Worcester that have occurred during your time here that you find [inaudible]?

**HL:** Historical events in Worcester? Well changes in the political structure of the city. They went to a city manager instead of a powerful mayor. And since then there have been groups who have wanted to go back [laughs] but it became a more professional kind of governing. Women became much more active I think in various roles: business, profession, government. All sorts of, say, the Worcester Foundation for Biological Science... they made some important discoveries during the period that we lived here. Science changed a lot of things. So... Worcester has had a lot of critical developments take place. You know, people who live here tend to disparage the city. And I think that's true in every community, you know, some young people can't wait to get out of their home town and then they'll go to another place that might be just the same or similar but it's a new start. But I've always felt that, if you really looked around, Worcester had a lot to offer. By the way, where do you two come from?

**DB:** Well I'm from Ellington CT. It's about fifteen minutes from Hartford... little town.

**HL:** Ok... where in CT?

**DB:** Ellington.

**HL:** Oh ok because we used to spend a lot of time- my sister-in-law lived for many years in... [laughs, DB and AG laugh] Now it's going to escape me. Just outside of Hartford.

**DB:** Oh really?

**HL:** Whatever. We used to go down there a lot. Yeah. [Points to AG]

**AG:** I'm from Peabody, MA-

**HL:** Oh ok-

**AG:** So I do know where Haverhill is.

**HL:** Ok, right [laughs, AG and DB laugh]. [Inaudible].

**AG:** I was like “I know how to spell that” [laughs].

**HL:** Well it’s funny, when I, when you asked to spell Haverhill, Haverhillites call it Haverhill (ph).

**AG:** Yeah.

**HL:** Somebody else would say Haverhill.

**AG:** Yeah, yeah.

**HL:** The same thing happens with Worcester. If you- when somebody calls and you say “Worcester” (ph) they think it’s W-O-O-S-T-E-R or there’s somebody- oh a medical service we use a- a medication service. Whenever they call back to identify... “Oh you come from Worcester?”

**DB:** Yeah, yeah.

**HL:** And I don’t bother to correct [laughs, AG and DB laugh].

**AG:** I know.

**DB:** Yeah I called it Wor-chester when I first was touring and everyone laughed at me.

**HL:** Well Hartford went through a lot of the same things Worcester has with the downtown sort of deteriorating and things like that. You know the mall downtown here, at first, you know it was very lively, and there were a lot of things going on, a lot of things have closed there. So they’re waiting for that city square that doesn’t seem to take off. Anything else I can help you with?

**AG:** Um...

**DB:** Maybe...

**AG:** Want to just do the conclusion? Or do you have another question? [Directed toward DB]

**DB:** Where? [Directed toward AG]

**AG:** It’s just the last one. Just about... [Directed toward DB]

**DB:** [Reading to herself inaudibly] Oh so, now that we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include?

**HL:** What should you be sure to bring to what?

**AG:** To include about... [inaudible]

**DB:** ... a story of the history of women... that has been recorded... anything we haven't gone over?

**HL:** Well, in terms of women, one thing my parents did inculcate in me [inaudible] – I was an only child, so I never had sibling rivalry or anything like that. But one thing they always made me feel was that I could do anything. And I have had friends over the years, here in Worcester, who have expressed to me that they felt great resentment in their families. Years ago, people my age, say boys were encouraged to go to college, girls were given the idea- “well girls really don't have to go to college, you'll get married,” as though they're mutually exclusive. I never, ever had that feeling. I also had a lot of friends all through school who were quite ambitious and vigorous. So that served as role models and made me feel that way too, that you know you can do whatever you want to do, within reason, that is [laughs, AG and DB laugh]. And you have to prepare yourself for it. But then also, just as my first experience in teaching that class, college class out at UMass, suddenly gave me an insight into something I enjoyed tremendously, never expecting to. These things happen in life all the time, you know. Everything can't be planned in advance. Sometimes you stumble onto something and it becomes extremely important to you. So those are my pearls of wisdom [laughs, AG and DB laugh].

**AG:** Thank you.

**DB:** Thank you. I was actually going to ask you, do you have any- after living out here- life story this far. Do you have any advice for someone [inaudible] with that?

**HL:** Well, I think just what I just said, you know, to welcome new opportunities and to be prepared that something may excite you that you won't even expect. I'll just give you an example from WISE. The members of WISE have all different types of educations but they are educated from the perspective of life experience. Many have graduate degrees, many are professionals, business owners, executives, all kinds of things. Some are people who just lived at home and raised their children... tremendous diversity. But, when you look at the courses, so often, somebody will say to me, knowing that I'm on the curriculum committee, say “you know, this time, I didn't find anything that interested me.” So I've coined a new reply to that, and that is “Take something that doesn't interest you, you might be really surprised at what you'll find.” For example, I took one course at UMass Medical. I'm not scientifically inclined. I struggled with my science courses, I did ok, but I had to really work hard. I was always more on the humanities. I took this course, I thought “Gee, that might be interesting,” which consisted of five research professors from UMass Medical. In each case, parts of their lectures were over my head. There was a different one each week. They showed visuals and so forth. They were so skilled and so intelligent, I came out of each session just loving it. Now, it was completely out of my sphere, but it was an opening and I would encourage anybody else who felt the way I did to go do the same type of thing. So anyhow that's my advice to you.

**AG and DB:** Thank you [laugh, HL laughs].

**HL:** Well it's been lovely meeting both of you.

**DB:** You too.

**AG:** It was very nice to meet you too.

**HL:** And if you have any questions or in your catching up, you have to fill in any blanks, feel free to give me a buzz.

**AG and DB:** Ok.

**HL:** And, you've got my email so... you can reach me that way.

**AG:** Great.

**DB:** Thank you!

**AG:** Thank you very much!

**HL:** And good luck on... [End tape]