

Interviewee: Madeline Levine  
Interviewer: Christine McLaughlin and Shannon Murtagh  
Date of Interview: November 15, 2006  
Location: Assumption College; Worcester, Massachusetts  
Transcribers: Christine McLaughlin and Shannon Murtagh



Overseen by Dr. Brian K. Neice, Assumption College

**Abstract:** Madeline (Maddie) Levine was born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts, but has lived in Worcester with her husband and children for over fifty years. In this interview, Maddie discusses her childhood, her family life, and her education, and shares her thoughts on women in the workplace. The daughter of immigrants, Maddie describes her parents' experiences emigrating to the U.S. from Russia and the influence of Jewish culture on her life. Marrying young after finishing high school and junior college, she reflects upon her struggles to go back to college at the age of 45. She emphasizes the importance of her husband's support as she worked toward her Bachelor's degree at Clark University and went on to earn her Master's in Social Work from Boston University. She was a social worker at the Worcester Youth Guidance and the Jewish Home. Centrally involved in the establishment of the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (W.I.S.E.), Maddie gives a first-hand account of the program's emergence as an educational opportunity for retired Worcester citizens. She discusses the importance of family in her life and talks about both the challenges and triumphs that her children have experienced over the years. Maddie also touches upon her early experiences with music and the continuing importance it has in her life and the lives of her family.

---

**CM:** This is Christine McLaughlin--

**SM:** --and Shannon Murtagh--

**CM:** --and today's date is November 15, 2006. We're here at Assumption College with Maddie Levine, recording an interview for the Women's History Project of Worcester. And Maddie do we have your permission--

**ML:** Yes, yes you do.

**CM:** -- to record you. Thank you. So first we would like to start off just general questions. Asking what is your full maiden name and full married name?

**ML:** Want my full, my maiden name? My name is Madeline Selma ... , and my married name is Madeline Selma Levine.

**CM:** Alright. Is Selma a mother's maiden name or is that just a name--

**ML:** No, usually in our religion, you name after a person who has died. The name comes from—I think my name came from my mother's—yeah my mother's mother, and where the middle name came from, I don't know, but my first name came from her mother.

**CM:** So do you want to talk about your religion a little bit?

**ML:** Well, I'm Jewish, non-affiliated had a very unusual upbringing in that we were nonreligious but very steeped in our Jewish culture. And that's the way I've been except I've tried to bring my children up little bit differently. I sent them to religious school and, you know, so they had some background; some of it took, some of it didn't. I have one son who is Orthodox Jewish--

**CM:** Oh really?

**ML:** --and some, yeah, some of the other children are absolutely non-affiliated.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** So, so that's where we are.

**CM:** I feel like it's the same way in my family. So, let's see. Well, how about some more general questions. When and where were you born?

**ML:** I was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, ... 1926.

**SM:** What is your family background; can you tell us anything about your parents?

**ML:** Well, my mother, my mother's coming to this country—they were both born in Europe, in Russia, actually. My mother was born in that part of Russia that changed frequently between Poland and Russia--

**CM:** Oh right.

**ML:** --because it was on the border.

**SM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** She came when she was about, I believe she must have been about eighteen or nineteen years old. She left three sisters in Russia; her parents had died. They were trying to keep the family business going, which was a bakery; they were bakers.

**CM:** Oh wow.

**ML:** And she came and of course had no money. And what she did was, she got hired as a, well, I guess as a babysitter, a nanny to people who were going from Russia to the United States. But they went—instead of going the normal way, going—what was it—west and going across the nation, they went east and went on the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

**CM:** Oh wow.

**ML:** For months, and it was horrible, and ended up in Japan, where they had to burn all their clothes; they were lice-ridden and it was a horrible journey, but she said Japan was wonderful because it was so clean, everything was so clean. They cleaned themselves up and I know she got on a boat, and I know she went from Japan, some port in Japan, to Hawaii.

**CM:** Well that's nice!

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** How she got to New York, I don't know; the story ends there because I don't know. But she did end up in New York, finally brought her three sisters over. She went to work—she had relatives in New York--

**CM:** Uh huh.

**ML:** --who did help her, and met my father, several years later. He came to this country very early. He was very young, and he was sent here to avoid going into the Russian army.

**CM:** Ok.

**ML:** And his family was very, very assimilated. In fact, one of his—they lived in the big city; they lived in Kiev, which is capital of Ukraine.

**CM:** Ok.

**ML:** And he—his sister, one of his sisters was a dentist. I mean they were very [cultured].

**SM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** And he was sent here to learn a trade and to avoid the army, and they had a relative here who took him in and he was a dental technician.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** And he made false teeth and that kind of thing.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** And he went into the army and became a citizen that way.

**CM:** The U.S. Army?

**ML:** Yes, U.S. Army. And when he came out, he had already been in training for a while and he was very in-depth at what he did. And he met up again—very fuzzy how it happened—but he met up with two other people and started a dental lab. And they were very successful, very successful, and he, he was not—my father was interesting, he was not a business man. He, he loved what he did; he did all the fine gold work and so forth in the lab. But he loved, mostly he was fun-loving; he loved a good time. He loved doing—he and my mother were direct opposites. My mother was more intellectual; she thought his pursuits *[laughter]* were ridiculous.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** He loved cars, he loved baseball, he loved all kinds of sports. He went to boxing matches, and wrestling matches, and my mother thought that was awful, awful, awful. And she on the other hand, went to school, she took us to every concert that ever came to Springfield. Because—she took us because our father wouldn't go *[laughter]*. I think that's why.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** And so she had all these intellectual pursuits, and he had none. I mean that wasn't anything that interested him. And how they ever stayed together *[laughter]*...I don't know how they ever stayed together. And they did, and they were a fairly happy couple, so I guess they each went their own way mostly.

**CM:** That's great.

**ML:** Yeah.

**CM:** Would you say, would you say that your childhood was a good one, or...?

**ML:** Oh, I think it was great, and I think, I always felt that, of course we all did—there were three children, I'm the middle child—we all felt that we were our father's favorite.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** And I don't know who was, but I really think it was me.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** He was a very generous man, generous with his time, and just, just a nice person to be with. My mother was more strict and, you know, she was the disciplinarian and mostly made us do all the things we didn't like to do, and he was just fun.

**SM:** Yeah.

**CM:** That's great. So then, when you were married, do you want to tell us something about your husband? Give us his name and how you met maybe?

**ML:** His name is Stanley and we knew each other in high school because he belonged to a high school fraternity and there was a chapter in Springfield. And Worcester and Springfield being you know, fairly close together--

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** The boys would have dances in different places, and so I knew him in high school but I thought he was so, so handsome.

**CM and SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** And I was a little bit younger, and so I never—I mean that would have been... He had a friend, and they were both so cute, and I thought I would never, ever date him. But after the war, all these young men came home, and I think they were looking for wives at that time. And you know we were at that age—in those days people got married very much earlier.

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** And so I went out with a friend of his from Worcester, who I really didn't care for, and he went back and said, "Stanley, I went out with Maddie and she's not my type, but I think she's your type."

**All:** *[laughter]*

**CM:** That's so funny.

**ML:** And so he did call, and we just started going together from then on and got married.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** Yeah, very soon after, probably a year. And in those days, I don't know—well I do sort of know how it is today, but in those days we saw each other weekends, that was about it. We went out on dates, so to speak. And I mean, when we got married—I've often told this to my husband—I'm standing at the altar and I'm saying to myself, "What am I doing here?"

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** What is this? I mean, we no more knew each other than the man on the moon.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** But you know, here it is like fifty-nine years later *[laughter]* and you know we're still together.

**CM:** Wow, so do you have any children or grandchildren--

**ML:** I have five children, and well I don't know, can I count my--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --my grandson's wife, do they count as grand--

**CM:** Oh, yeah.

**ML:** Yeah, so I will now have, I have five children, and I will now have eleven grandchildren.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** Yeah. My second grandson, second-oldest grandson is just getting married.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** So we're very excited--

**CM:** Wow. Can you tell us maybe, you said that you got married earlier than most people today usually do--

**ML:** Yes, I was twenty-one.

**CM:** So you probably had kids earlier?

**ML:** I had my--*[laughter]*--my first child at twenty-two.

**CM:** Oh really?

**ML:** And what did I know? *[laughter]* Oh it was, I don't know. Well except my grandchildren, my two grandsons are also getting married very young, but they're Orthodox Jews, and I think they tend to do that, get married early, young. But I know most of the people I know don't get married at twenty-one and twenty-two, I mean that sound's crazy these days. You haven't even done anything yet; you haven't lived at all.

**CM:** Right, you've just graduated college.

**ML:** Yeah, well that's this couple, my second grandson, he, they just graduated last year, last June. He, he's a very bright guy; he graduated from the Wharton School and UPenn--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** --because he took a dual major, Business and Engineering--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** --and now he's just finishing his Masters in Engineering--

**CM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** --and she's started Medical School. So she's, I mean she's, I think she's—even though she graduated I think she's only twenty-one--

**CM:** Yeah, that's young.

**ML:** --or twenty-two, and he's like twenty-four, twenty-three or twenty-four--

**CM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** --and they're getting married.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**CM:** Well hopefully it'll work out the same way yours did.

**ML:** Oh, I hope so. They're a very lovely couple.

**CM:** That's good.

**ML:** So yeah, they're nice.

**CM:** So education in your family seems pretty important?

**ML:** What's that?

**CM:** Education in your family?

**ML:** Very important.

**CM:** What about your education? What do you, do you want to talk about that?

**ML:** Well I went to, graduated from High School and went to a Junior College--

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** --and I got married, right away.

**CM & ML:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** So, when I was about, I must have been about 45, I decided to go back to school, and I went to Clark. And surprisingly enough, they accepted all my credits from Junior College, which I never thought they would do.

**CM:** Right, that doesn't happen very often.

**ML:** No, they took everything, and so in about three years—I went nights, and I loved Clark. We had a—I went with a friend of mine and we had a wonderful experience at Clark. It was just great. Well it probably took me more than—maybe not; let me think. No, it was before 45. It took about, it must have taken me about four years to get through the two years. I graduated, and then, with the same friend, said, “Now what are we going to do?”

**CM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** Because what do you do with a Bachelor's Degree? We took, you know, academic subjects and had a terrific time. So we decided, well, we were both in the field, we had been working, and we decided that we were going to get a Masters in Social Work.

**CM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** So we applied, got into BU--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** --School of Social Work, and went. It was the hardest two years of my whole life *[laughs]* but we did it, we did it--

**CM:** Well worth it?

**ML:** --and graduated when I was 50.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** And I thought I could never get a job, but people were looking for stable people, you know, I was in the community, I wasn't going to get married--

**CM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** --I wasn't going to have a baby!

**CM & SM:** *[laughs]*

**ML:** And I wasn't going to move away. So, I had my choice of jobs, and I worked at Worcester Youth Guidance for about seven years, and then went to the Jewish Home for about another eight years.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** And then I retired. *[laughter]*

**CM:** *[laughter]* And since, are you liking retirement? Are you enjoying it?

**ML:** Oh, I love retirement! *[laughter]* Oh, I love retirement, yeah. We're having a great time.

**CM:** And you have the W.I.S.E. Program--

**ML:** Oh that was--

**CM:** --which takes a lot of time I'm sure.

**ML:** What's that?

**CM:** It takes a lot of time?

**ML:** Oh, it takes up a lot of time. Well, there were seven of us, actually, my girlfriend and I were the two sort of beginning people, or who began the process going. Well, we retired, we said "Well what are we going to do now? We have nothing to do." And we got—we had heard of a program at Harvard, it was a learning in retirement program--

**CM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** --and they are very strict, you have to take, you have to write an essay *[laughter]* and tell them why you want to go. And we said, "We're not going to go back to Boston." I mean that was, you know, we wouldn't do that. And just about that time—well I guess we had had one meeting about, we got together with seven other social workers—well there were actually five of us, who were also retiring, and we said "Well let's see what we can think of to do." Well one of them had gone on an Elderhostel trip and met a man who was in the Harvard program--

**CM:** Mhmm.

**ML:** --and he came and spoke to us and we got very excited about trying to start a group here, and contacted all colleges and the consortium, and did all kinds of things. And to make a long story short, Charlene--oh why can't I think of her name, you know Charlene, she's the, she's now Dean of Continuing Ed.[at Assumption College]--

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** --Charlene Martin, had been to some conference somewhere and heard about learning in retirement, and was looking for a community group, and so when the consortium got together she said "Oh-ho! Here you are, a community group, and are looking for a home, and I've got the home, we're looking for the group." *[laughter]*

**CM:** Oh that's perfect!

**ML:** Yeah, we really got started, I would say, within six months after the idea was hatched.

**CM:** Wow

**ML:** And our first, we had a program, we got lists from a lot of different places, sent out a brochure, had some sort of—what did we have that first?—a first meeting anyway, to introduce people to the idea of W.I.S.E. [held] at the Maison, and we thought, Oh let's hope, you know, a hundred people come, maybe fifty people will come. Well, we caused a traffic jam on Salisbury Street--

**CM & SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --so many people were interested, we had no idea, and we started then. And now we're up to over 400 people--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** --and we offer sixty courses a year.

**CM:** It was a hit!

**ML:** It was a hit!

**CM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** And people will say, you know, "What would I do with all this time--

**SM:** Right.

**ML:** --if I didn't have W.I.S.E.?"

**CM:** Right, I can imagine.

**ML:** So it's fun.

**CM & SM:** Yeah.

**CM:** Well, as far as education, since this is the Women's History Project, we wanted to ask you, as a woman did you face different challenges than your male colleagues or male classmates in school?

**ML:** Well, I'll tell you what we did, not so much as a woman, I don't think that was it. I think it was an age thing more than just being a woman, people—friends—people would say "Oh, aren't they cute? They're going to school." I mean in those days, that was a long time ago, now people go all the time. But it was so, they were so patronizing, so demeaning, and here we are working our little...butts off *[laughter]* and people are talking to us like, you know, we're silly girls.

**SM:** That's sad.

**ML:** And we were adults, you know, and I think that was more than, more than a female thing, it was more an age thing, you know, like: How dare you go back to school at your age?

**CM:** That's horrible.

**ML:** Yeah it was. It was terrible. We were very angry.

**CM:** I would be.

**ML:** I must say very angry. And people that we knew for, you know, for a long time *[laughter]* it wasn't strangers off the street that said, "Oh isn't that nice." And you know you could just strangle them.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**SM:** Yeah.

**ML:** I don't think, I'll tell you what the male/female thing is in work and that is, what we've found over the years, and I'm not even sure why... Most of the—at least in my day—most of the big, good administrative jobs in social work went to men, not women, and the field was mostly women.

**SM:** Yeah.

**ML:** So that tells you something about *[laughter]* the male/female thing.

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** You know, so it, there is—I don't know today, I may have been out fifteen years and that's a long time--

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** So I don't know how that is right now, and I haven't really kept up with the field at all, but that was always a bone of contention. All these women, and the few men who are social workers get the good jobs. But I shouldn't say the good jobs, but the well-paying jobs. Social workers, you know, are the bottom of the barrel. And maybe that too is because we're women, mostly women.

**CM:** Maybe.

**ML:** Yeah, when I started working, well all through my time at Youth Guidance, we started out—I remember starting with another woman social worker and a new PhD psychologist and

we were all getting the same pay and had the same caseload. But as time went on, he went up the ladder, and we sort of went much slower underneath.

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** So I mean, I think that, I think that's probably the way it was.

**CM:** I feel like today in my mother's business, that it's still sort of the same way, except women just, the women that do get there, that do reach the top, have worked so hard and it's so much of an effort, but--

**ML:** That's true.

**CM:** --things are changing slowly, but surely.

**ML:** Very slowly, I think very slowly. I mean despite the women's movement, you know, I was in the middle of the women's movement when it began. And we thought we were going to change the world, absolutely change the world. And look where we are, you know, naturally we are in a better place, I think.

**CM:** Definitely.

**ML:** But do you think--

**SM:** I think so--

**ML:** --you're probably more with it than I am.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** But I still feel that there are places women who don't dare tread *[laughter]*.

**CM:** Right.

**SM:** That's true. So you said that when you went back to school it was a lot of work and everything. How did that affect your home life and how your household responsibilities, how'd you deal with that?

**ML:** Well, that's a very good question. I never, never could have done it without a cooperative husband who did everything. I mean, he really did everything. At the time—I'm trying to think—I think, my two youngest children were either, you know, almost out of high school, or at that age where I didn't really have to worry about them much. And the course was grueling because we had four subjects every semester and every subject had a midterm paper and a final paper. So you were writing forever. I said, "Give me a test, I mean, give me an exam. I'd be happy to do that."

**CM & SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** It was just awful. So every weekend, I mean I was working on a paper or two *[laughter]*--

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** --and it was, it was grueling. But I must say, my girlfriend too has said, we both have agreed, that without a cooperative husband we couldn't have done it. And they both took over, and my husband to this day does a lot of household chores *[laughter]*.

**SM:** That's great.

**ML:** Yeah, he does all the washing, laundry, he does all the marketing. I mean everybody says, Oh they want him for a husband--

**SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --because he's so good at all this stuff. No cooking, no cooking.

**CM:** That's probably best.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** But he does, and I think, you know, without having someone really there you can't do it, not with a bunch of kids; you just can't do it.

**SM:** Uh huh.

**ML:** And I did have a bunch of kids *[laughter]*.

**CM:** *[laughter]* Right, I know. So, in education and in work, in your family life, how would you define success in your life? What are some things that you feel--

**ML:** Oh gosh.

**CM:** --have been your biggest successes?

**ML:** Well, I think, first of all, bringing up—and I can't take credit for this, I mean I have to give a lot of the credit to my husband—that my kids are doing well, and they have a good relationship with us, and a good relationship with each other.

**SM:** That's great.

**ML:** --and I think that's, to me, I feel successful, that way, because they really, that doesn't always happen.

**CM:** No it doesn't.

**ML:** And it especially since my oldest son—there's thirteen years between my oldest and my youngest--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** So, and they are so close even today, and that part is so nice. And my daughter has had a lot of problems, physical and otherwise, and the boys are just so good to her, just so caring and supportive, and so that part has, it's been very gratifying.

**CM:** And all their friendship--

**ML:** I think that's a success [*laughter*].

**CM:** Definitely.

**ML:** And you know, they all seem to be doing what they want to do and that's nice too. I mean, they're having, the boys are having great success in their work, so—and that's another thing, I think, that's terrific. Lucky, lucky.

**CM:** So how many boys, how many girls?

**ML:** I have four boys and a girl.

**SM:** Oh my Gosh.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** But unfortunately she hasn't had a, she hasn't had a lucky life.

**CM:** Oh.

**ML:** That's been too bad, yeah. She's had three bouts of cancer and--

**CM:** Oh no.

**ML:** So she's really had a very hard time, but she's fine--

**CM:** That's amazing.

**ML:** Yeah, she's very, we keep our fingers crossed all the time, but she's fine and she just got over with the last one last [*laughter*] year, but this year she's doing fine.

**SM:** That's good.

**ML:** But we keep our fingers crossed. But as I say, the boys have been very supportive and helpful and so that's nice.

**SM:** That's great.

**ML:** Yeah, but they all are doing very well, the boys are doing very well.

**CM:** That's awesome.

**SM:** So you--

**ML:** Oh--

**SM:** Oh sorry.

**ML:** Oh go ahead--

**SM:** No it's ok.

**ML:** I was just going to say, you know, my oldest son, who, actually, he brought me up--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** He taught me everything I know.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** He went off to college, with all kinds of ideas, he was always a leader and a doer, and, well, I mean, I don't want to bore you with his story but--

**CM:** No, not at all.

**ML:** --he didn't graduate from college. He was in his third year of college—

**CM:** Oh no.

**ML:** Yes, and of course that was wonderful--

**CM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --and has done, you know, so many wonderful things with his life, that you know, you kind of say, "Well, was college necessary for him?" I don't know.

**CM:** Yes, it's hard.

**ML:** I don't know, I don't know. He's successful financially, he's successful in his family, he's just a, and he's just a lovely person, so he's a very interesting guy. He went off to, he joined the commune, at—what was the, what was the name? It was a big commune in Tennessee, oh called The Farm. I don't know if you've ever heard of The Farm.

**CM and SM:** No, I haven't.

**ML:** One of the biggest communes, and stayed there for about—that's after he left college—stayed there for about two or three years. Oh, but before then, while he was in college, he went to Europe with a group of friends--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** --ended up, I've never heard of anyone doing this--

**CM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --hitchhiking to India, from Turkey--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --I don't know--

**SM:** Oh goodness.

**ML:** I don't know how you do that, but he did, and he sat with guru, in the jungle, he said there were tigers roaming *[laughter]* around.

**CM:** *Wow.*

**ML:** This blind guru, who desperately wanted him to stay; he loved him. But he said no, *[laughter]* he couldn't, I said, "If you had, I'd come and get you and drag you home."

**CM and SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** And then, I mean, whatever he's done, he's done absolutely on his own, and in his own way, and he's just incredible.

**CM:** Wow, that's an amazing story

**ML:** --he is, he's amazing. And he has a music store, and he—but mostly deals in antique and vintage guitars. And so he sells to, you know, everybody all over; like the Rolling Stones buy guitars from him.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** What, what was my point of that? There was some point I was going to tell you about. Well, but again, he learned that trade all by himself. He learned, he's a master at repairs, which he does very well of now. But, you know, he's been a very interesting person, and very successful.

**CM:** Keeps you on your toes?

**ML:** What?

**CM:** Did he keep you on your toes?

**ML:** Oh, keeps me on my toes; yes he did keep me on my toes; yes he most certainly did. He did things that nobody else's kid did.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** *[laughter]* And I had to keep defending him--

**CM:** Oh that's funny.

**ML:** In fact, he was the one in our household, if you didn't play the guitar, I mean you may as well move out. I mean you had to play the guitar, because my older son is bossy, because he said so, and he said he ruled the kids more than I did. So, he said you have to play the guitar; everyone played the guitar. And what happened was my youngest son seemed to have this gigantic talent--

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** --and from the time he was seven played the guitar, and I never saw him after that. Once they taught him how to play the guitar, that was it; he never surfaced again--

**CM and SM:** Wow.

**ML:** --and, it was an interesting household, very interesting.

**CM:** Sounds like a lot of fun though.

**SM:** Yeah, a lot of fun

**ML:** We did have fun.

**SM:** Now you have a big family, did you come from a big family? Do you have a lot of brothers and sisters?

**ML:** No, I had an older sister and a younger brother. But I also had a cousin who lived with us every summer because they lived in New York. His mother was a widow, and she worked, and

so while he was out of school, he came to live with us. So he is almost like a brother, another brother. That was nice.

**CM:** You're the middle child?

**ML:** Yup.

**CM:** Which one's older, your brother or your sister?

**ML:** My sister.

**CM:** Sister?

**ML:** Yeah, my sister. And my brother, of course, being the baby, he really thought he was the favorite *[laughter]*--

**CM and SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --and a boy. But they're both gone, I lost both of them.

**CM:** Were your sister and--

**ML:** We were all five years apart—

**CM:** Were you closer with your sister--

**ML:** What's that?

**CM:** Where you closer with your sister or closer with your brother?

**ML:** Well, I was closest with my sister when we were growing up. No my brother was like, you know, the little pest.

**CM and SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** But, as we got older, I became much closer with my brother, and we all remained fairly close.

**CM:** Yeah?

**ML:** Yeah, I mean, we lived, my brother lived in the Providence area; I lived in Worcester; my sister lived in the Springfield, so you know--

**CM:** Oh that's not bad.

**ML:** Yeah, and the kids were close, and my sister and I used to go away together every summer.

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

**ML:** Yeah, we went to the Cape every summer.

**SM:** Yeah, that's fun.

**ML:** And so, we took a house together, and we always said that the kids never fought, but my sister and I [*laughter*] used to have this one huge blow-out, where everybody would run out.

**All:** [*laughter*]

**ML:** Oh it was bad. But, we had—those were very very memorable good times. We had good times.

**CM:** Your, your strong family background kind of plays into your family now?

**ML:** Oh, I think so, yeah. Family's very important, very important. I hear, you know, families being torn apart by one thing or another--

**CM:** Right.

**ML:** --and I always say if that ever happens, I think I'd be devastated because that's very important to us, both of us.

**SM:** That's great.

**CM:** And to switch subjects entirely, we wanted to maybe talk about political views, and see—would you consider yourself active politically?

**ML:** Let's see, I don't know how to define that, we're--

**CM:** I mean, do you--

**ML:** We've been very active politically, when I was at Clark, we went to a march in Washington.

**CM:** Oh really?

**ML:** Yes, we did, and--

**CM:** What was that for?

**ML:** At that time it was against the Vietnam War.

**CM:** Oh yeah?

**ML:** It was after Kent State. I don't know if you remember that, where kids got killed?

**CM:** I think I do.

**ML:** And we went into Cambodia, and there was a big rally in Washington, and we went to that. And we've always gone to political gatherings, we're very much on then liberal side of things, I would say. We've been life-long Democrats--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** And you know, I think what happens is, when you're younger, you're much more politically inclined because you have more energy.

**SM:** Yeah.

**CM:** Yeah, I think you're right.

**ML:** And when you get older you say, "Gee wiz, I've done all these things, I've gone to all these meetings, and I've done all this stuff, and things haven't changed that much. And you do get kind of discouraged, and you're older, and you know... But we vote, and we try to write letters to people *[laughter]* and do things like that. But not, you know, really political, the way we used to be.

**CM:** Right, you still have a voice.

**ML:** What's that?

**CM:** You still have a voice--

**ML:** --We try to, but you know, it gets quieter *[laughter]* all the time. It isn't as loud and flamboyant as it used to be.

**CM:** Right. Do you—I know you and your husband are part of the W.I.S.E program—do you do any volunteer work or any other community work?

**ML:** I used to; I'm not doing any other volunteer work, but my husband does. We used to do a lot of volunteer work. We used to work for Jewish Family Service and he was a mentor to a very severely disabled child for years, and we did a lot of work with them. He still does Rachel's Table; he delivers the food. He does that once a week. I serve on the board of the W.I.S.E. Program and also the board of my condo, so I feel that's my volunteer work for the year.

**CM:** Right, that's a lot.

**ML:** *[laughter]* It is a lot, but that's mostly what I do; I don't do much else.

**CM:** And, to talk about health a bit, how have health issues impacted you're life?

**ML:** Oh, quite a lot. I think my daughter's health issues have been overwhelming at times, but we have managed to live through it somehow. ...

**CM:** You're parents at all?

**ML:** My parents?

**CM:** Any health issues?

**ML:** Oh yeah, my parents, my father died at about age—I think he was probably 52—of a heart attack. My mother lived, on the other hand, to age 92 and died of congestive heart failure. But that was a fine death, believe me. It was boom and that was it. And she was fine until the day she died. In fact, the day she died, she was getting dressed up to go to a party, so she was a very strong lady, very strong. But it's interesting, my grandchildren all have both grandparents living, I mean both sides.

**CM:** Oh wow

**ML:** All of them, I can't believe it, all of them, and I think that's amazing.

**CM:** Yeah, I don't have any.

**ML:** I know; I never had any.

**SM:** I did for awhile.

**ML:** You did? You don't have any now?

**SM:** Well, I have two left now.

**ML:** Both sides of—my older son, both his wife's parents are living. My next son, his wife's parents are living. My third son, the same. And my fourth son isn't married; he's been living with a girl for a long time, but they're not married, so I can't count that her parents are living. Like, I can't believe it; I mean it's really amazing.

**SM:** That's great though.

**ML:** I know.

**SM:** It's a great relationship.

**ML:** Yeah, and we decided that 80 is not old today. I mean, it just isn't old. Look at all the people in W.I.S.E, the well-elderly, I mean, I think it's amazing. We have people *[laughter]* much older than I am. We have one woman, I know she's in her 90's. And in one of our courses,

we have to do a presentation and a paper, and we have to give (the presentation) in class. She did a lovely paper. I mean, I just can't believe it. I think things are changing for older people.

**CM:** Why do you think that is?

**ML:** Well, I think better medical care, better awareness of what keeps you healthy, you know eating correctly, exercising. Not that I do any of this--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** But I think, generally, that's what keeps people living longer. I think our medications are better, and you know, we are definitely living a better life. I mean, I don't know what the statistics are, I don't know whether, you know, poor people are living longer or not, but in a certain class, I think people are living longer and healthier; I wouldn't care to live and be sick, but living healthier.

**CM:** So for you, in education—at Clark, at BU, and now in the W.I.S.E. program—what do you find yourself drawn to the most? I know you worked as a social worker, but what are your favorite things to study, or have been [your favorite things to study]?

**ML:** Now? Now my favorite things are music, art. I love, well we're taking this course with a philosopher, and that's a wonderful course. I like to read; I love books. I don't belong to the book club at W.I.S.E., because *[laughter]* I haven't got time, but I do a lot of reading. But the courses, I think music, art, philosophy; I'm not so crazy about the science and history. Somehow that doesn't do it for me, but there are a lot of people who do love it. But that's mostly what I do.

**CM:** What about growing up?

**ML:** Growing up, well music was big in our family. My mother, she loved music. We were, as I said, dragged to concerts, and well, it was a way to get new clothes, nice dresses, because we had to get dressed, in those days you didn't go to a concert in jeans. I mean, you had to dress, so we had nice clothes and we went to every concert that was ever presented in the city of Springfield. And I saw a lot of wonderful artists. And you know it's too bad; I don't know if young people have that interest in classical music today. I think it's because it's not in the schools anymore. My reason for going to high school—I hate to tell you this—my reason was we had a fabulous music director. She did an oratorio every year, and it was part of the school day, you had chorus as part of the school day, like a period, was chorus. And she was a very influential woman, and we had soloists from the Metropolitan Opera. I mean, you wouldn't know who these people are, but if I mentioned these names, people would know. Like Eleanor Stevens—some of these names I can't even remember, but they would sing with the high school orchestra and chorus. I mean, it was amazing. And that was why I went to school at all; that was the highlight of my day. It was just wonderful; it was just wonderful. So that's always—I think my mother's influence and school's—my love of music has been one of my favorite things to do.

**CM:** You sang?

**ML:** Well I sang, *[laughter]* if you could call it singing. No, I didn't have a wonderful voice, but I could carry a tune and I always wanted to be a singer, which I never could. And I also took piano lessons forever, and never could really be a piano player either. So, I had zip talent, no talent whatsoever, but--

**CM:** --but you had a passion for it--

**ML:** Yeah, I do, and I think that's where my kids learned to like music too, because music is always in our house. I mean, I don't care whether its show tunes or symphonies, or whatever, it's always going, the record player—now they're not record players anymore, but in those days, [the record player] was always going. Yeah, so it was a real influence in my life.

**CM:** Do you find that keeping music in the house keeps the tension in the house low, and it keeps everyone in a better mood?

**ML:** *[laughter]* I wouldn't say that. No, I don't think so; I don't know. No, I never looked at it that way to tell you the truth.

**CM:** I just thought of that, they say that if you wake up in the morning and you listen to music that's really calm and mellow and picturesque that you know, you'll have a better day.

**ML:** That could be. Better than some of the rock music I've heard, or the rap music, which I don't understand at all.

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** But, no, I didn't know that. But it was always music. And then of course my kids, you know, got into music, all of them, so that was always going on. And they had bands, and there were bands in the basement, always, always practicing, somebody was always practicing. My second son, as a matter of fact, was in a band. He went to Clark. It's called the Prairie Oysters.

**CM and SM:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** *[laughter]* Yes, and they were a country band and they tried real hard. They thought they were going to be one of these garage bands that was going to make it. And that the leader who wrote a lot of the songs is really talented guy—funny, very funny. And they practiced every day in my cellar, every single day. And then of course they all went on their way, got older, and all that, had to get jobs and so-forth. And just about two or three years ago, decided to get back together because they're all in Worcester.

**CM:** Oh Wow

**SM:** That's great!

**ML:** It's just so funny. They're old guys; *[laughter]* they're really funny. Anyway--

**CM:** So they still play together now?

**ML:** Oh, they play, and they play out, they have dates to play out. You probably don't know the Blue Plate in Holden, the little tiny dive; they play there. They play at a lot of different places, they play at--

**CM:** Do you go to see them?

**ML:** Oh sure, I go. Wherever my kids play, I go. That's why we're so busy. My younger son is a professional musician; we go everywhere that he plays. I mean, we don't miss a trick. If it's, you know, within reason, we go.

**CM:** He's the one that was the guitar player at seven?

**ML:** Yes, he was with Mary Chapin Carpenter. Do you know her?

**CM:** Oh wow, wow.

**ML:** Yeah, yeah for about five years, but now he's too busy [*laughter*] to play with her anymore. But she's not as popular as she used to be--

**CM:** No, she's not.

**ML:** But he hated being on the road. He didn't like it; it's a hard life.

**CM:** Yeah, you're away from your family--

**ML:** Yeah, he really didn't like it, so—but he's busy. Mostly he does records with other people and does a lot of different things. He's a very talented guy; [*laughter*] we don't know where that came from either.

**CM:** So, going back to your love for music and high school in, well, your growing years, did you play any sports when you were younger? Or was that--

**ML:** No, I rode my bike a lot. [*laughter*] Oh yeah, we lived on our bikes, but we had a great—in Springfield there is a fabulous park, called Forest Park. I don't know if people go there anymore but that was our place to be. It was close, and the park itself is 10 square miles.

**CM:** Wow.

**ML:** So, you know, there are bike trails, and we used to—there was always something going on at the park. In the winter we would go skating; yeah, there is a huge pond. Winters are different, in those days, when I was really young. It's a very large pond, and they would have big trucks on the ice, clearing the snow. Now I think of Elm Park and the little skating place, and they very rarely skate because it's very rarely frozen. So we were in the park all the time, but I didn't really played sports. I never was a tennis player or any of that; I don't know why, but I never was.

**CM:** Did you have any pets growing up?

**ML:** Pets? We had a dog once. *[laughter]* I never liked him very much--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --and he didn't last too long. His name was Butch, I remember that. But in my house, we have every kind of pet you could think of, and I hated *[laughter]* every one of them; I'm not a pet person. Yeah, so, we had a dog, we had a cat, we had a bird, we had a mouse, we had--

**CM:** Oh my goodness.

**SM:** Very tolerant.

**CM:** Makes it more chaotic.

**ML:** What's that?

**CM:** Makes more chaotic.

**ML:** Oh, the dog was the worst; he was a bad dog--

**All:** *[laughter]*

**ML:** --awful dog, but anyway, no, growing up I never had, you know, any pets. It never interested me, I guess. Well actually, I was always scared stiff of dogs, so--

**CM:** Well that explains it--

**ML:** --Yeah, so even our dogs; mine was such a terrible dog. Oh well.

**SM:** So, based on your life experiences, what advice would you give to women today and in future generations?

**ML:** I don't know if I have any advice. I think just do what you think you can do or want to do, and you know, you're going to meet challenges along the way, and I think you have to deal with it. I don't think things have changed, I think things are still difficult for women, but I think things are maybe getting a little better. And I would say don't let that stand in your way, don't let, you know, what you hear, you know this is going to be too hard, or not too hard. I think, just go ahead and do it and I think it's amazing that people can do a lot of things they don't think they can do, if they just go ahead and try it, you know, persevere a little bit.

**CM:** Take chances.

**ML:** I'm not a good advice-giver, I can tell you.

**SM:** So is there anything you want us to be sure include to tell a complete story of your past?

**ML:** *[laughter]* I think I've included too much. No, because you know, at my age, I could probably go on for another hour or so, but you wouldn't be interested in all the different things I have to tell you. But no this is fine, this is just fine.

**CM and SM:** Well, thank you so much for doing this.

**ML:** Well, thank you for doing it; I hope it will be interesting to somebody. I don't know, probably not.

**SM:** I think it will be, definitely.

**ML:** But whatever, thank you.