

Interviewee: Wendy Wheeler  
Interviewer: Erin R. Anderson  
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Transcriber: Erin R. Anderson



**Abstract:** Wendy Wheeler was born in Worcester's Great Brook Valley in 1954 and attended Burncoat High School. After having two children and getting a job at Sprague Electric, Wendy met her second husband and moved to the Main South neighborhood. In 1982, they bought a Main Street restaurant, which Wendy ran with the support of family for two years. Wendy is still well-known in the Main South neighborhood as "Wendy from Wendy's Clark Brunch" (now Annie's Clark Brunch). In this interview, Wendy discusses the struggles and joys of her experience in the restaurant business. Growing up in a large family, Wendy learned to cook at a young age—taught by her father who had professional experience as a short-order cook—and carried this skill with her throughout her life. She discusses the challenges she faced in building up a successful business and the relationships she made as a surrogate mother to Clark University students who frequented the restaurant. Wendy elaborates upon the importance of family businesses in her life and gives advice to future women entrepreneurs. In this interview, Wendy also touches on her experiences as a young working mother and the changes that she witnessed in the Main South neighborhood over the years.

**EA:** My name is Erin Anderson and I'm here with Wendy Wheeler...in Leicester and it is October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006. We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's health education, work, and politics and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with your work. Thank you for your help in this important project.

**WW:** You're welcome.

**EA:** Is it ok to record your oral history today?

**WW:** Yes.

**EA:** What is your full maiden name and, if applicable your married name.

**WW:** My full maiden name is Wendy Denise ... . And my married name is Wendy Denise Wheeler.

**EA:** Ok. And where were you born?

**WW:** I was born in Worcester, Massachusetts.

**EA:** And when was that?

**WW:** That was in 1954. September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**EA:** Ok. And have you ever married?

**WW:** Yes.

**EA:** And what's your husband's name?

**WW:** Roy Wheeler.

**EA:** Do you have children.

**WW:** Yes, I have two children. Two daughters.

**EA:** Could you tell me about them?

**WW:** I have one daughter Denise. She is now 36 years old and she has three children of her own. She's married and lives here in Leicester. And I have another daughter Michelle who is 33. She has five children. And she lives in Leominster, Mass.

**EA:** And are these the children up here? [pointing to picture on wall].

**WW:** Yes, my eight grandchildren. Actually, there's seven there. There's one more since then.

**EA:** Oh wow! And can you tell me about your parents.

**WW:** My parents. My dad is, um—he grew up in Oxford and worked in Northboro and when he was a little boy he used to ride the trolleys from Oxford to Worcester 'cause his dad drove the trolley.

**EA:** Oh wow.

**WW:** Yep. And he grew up also working in, like a spa and soda shop store in Northboro and he became a short order cook when he got a little older. He went in the navy. And after he was out of the navy he married my mom. And his mom is a full Swede and his dad was a French—from French descent from France.

**EA:** OK.

**WW:** And my mom was born in Vermont, grew up on a farm. And she moved here I think when she was 13. She had three sisters and a brother. And, um, she sang from the time she was 13 she was a singer. Everyone said she sounded like Patsy Cline. She was a Country Western singer. And there's seven of us in my family. Four brothers and two sisters and myself.

**EA:** And where do you fall in that order?

**WW:** I'm the third girl, which is the third child. There was three girls and then four boys.

**EA:** Ok. So another big family...

**WW:** Yep. Big family.

**EA:** So you said you grew up in Worcester. What neighborhood or street—

**WW:** I grew up, ah, most of my life—well I was born in Great Brook Valley in 1954 and then we moved to Crystal Street for a couple of years, which is right near Clark University.

**EA:** Oh! I lived on Crystal Street, actually, last year.

**WW:** Yeah. We were only there a couple of years and then we moved—they bought a house—my parents bought a house—on St. Nicholas Ave, which is on the other side of the city off of Clark Street. So I grew up there until I got married in 1970.

**EA:** Ok. So you lived on Crystal Street for a couple of years when you were—how old was that?

**WW:** I was in Kindergarten and first and second grade when I lived there.

**EA:** Ok. And then you said, um, Clark Street—

**WW:** Off of Clark Street, which is Burncoat and Clark Street. That area I lived until I got married.

**EA:** And then where did you live after that?

**WW:** After that I lived back in Great Brook Valley for a little while. And then after that I lived for a couple of years in Shrewsbury and then we bought a house down on—in Webster Square area on Tirrell Street. We lived there for 22 years until we moved here.

**EA:** Ok. So, what year approximately did you move to Tirrell Street?

**WW:** 1978.

**EA:** Ok, and what, um, caused you to move there?

**WW:** We bought a big old Victorian house that my husband wanted to renovate and my aunt and uncle lived next door and the house was going up for auction and we just decided to buy it. So we totally gutted it and rebuilt it.

**EA:** Wow! Good deal.

**WW:** It was a house that was built in 19—I mean 1860. It was a historical house. It's just, I don't know if it's on the register, I never looked into that. But it was Curtis Marble Estate, which was factories down on Cambridge Street.

**EA:** Oh ok.

**WW:** Very prominent owners.

**EA:** Wow. Cool. And what was that neighborhood like generally at the time you moved in there?

**WW:** At the time we moved there it was a really wonderful neighborhood. It didn't start going downhill until about—I would say about 19—the late eighties it started going downhill. Started having a lot of crime and we think it was mostly because it was a lot of what you would call absentee landlords buying up all the 3-deckers. They lived in Boston and they just didn't care about the neighborhoods, so they were just renting to anyone and the people just didn't care. And it was a lot of, I think, drugs and prostitution and just a lot of violence. And finally we decided—when we wanted to move out of there it was getting violent with even like *gangs*, Asian group gangs were coming in the neighborhood.

**EA:** Was that one of the reasons you decided to move out? The violence?

**WW:** One of the reasons, yeah. It was just not a nice neighborhood anymore. But we lived there 22 years.

**EA:** Wow. And do you have any particular memories or experiences that you recall when you first moved in about what the neighborhood was like or who the neighbors were?

**WW:** It was a very nice close neighborhood. Everybody knew everybody. And nowadays you don't hear about that anymore. Nobody wants to know anything or know anybody. They don't want to be involved in anything. So it was just—it was really nice.

**EA:** And then did you have any particular bad experiences with, like personally with crime or violence.

**WW:** Yes. We were broken into a couple of times. Once while we were actually home. Once we weren't home. And the time we were home it was 3:00 in the morning and it was um—the person was in my bedroom while I was sleeping and it became violent. I grabbed him and he started beating me up and it was terrible.

**EA:** Wow.

**WW:** It was a really weird situation.

**EA:** And was that toward the end of your time there, then?

**WW:** Yeah.

**EA:** Ok.

**WW:** And the police said it was probably drug related. All the people that come in your bedroom are probably high on drugs. They're not just going to go in your room if they're normal.

**EA:** Ok. So you said you lived on Crystal Street when you were a kid. Did you go to school in that area then?

**WW:** For a little while on, um, Freeland Street.

**EA:** Ok.

**WW:** Freeland Street and I don't think it's still a school. I think they closed it. It was over a hundred years old. It's like across from the old South High which is the Goddard Memorial School.

**EA:** Oh ok. I didn't realize that was the old South High. Ok.

**WW:** Yeah, that used to be the original South High. When I was a little girl that's what it was.

**EA:** Oh ok. So, you went there for Kindergarten, first grade...

**WW:** Mmhmm. I think second, too.

**EA:** Ok, and where did you go after that?

**WW:** After that I went to Burncoat Grammar School and then Burncoat Jr. High and Burncoat Senior High.

**EA:** Ok. And what was school like for you?

**WW:** I loved school. I loved school. It was interesting, fun, um...I always liked math. Um, what else? History. School is a lot different than what I see the kids going through today. We had fun in school.

**EA:** Really?

**WW:** Yeah.

**EA:** What do you see today that you think is different?

**WW:** Today they're all like competing against each other. There's always peer pressure and everybody always has to have the hip clothes or, you know, the up-to-date stuff like that. Back when I was a kid it wasn't like that. It wasn't like that at all.

**EA:** Ok. And how were your teachers? How did you get treated by your teachers?

**WW:** Teachers, they—to me, you respected your teacher back then and everyone listened and it was just—I don't know. It was just so different.

**EA:** Did you have a favorite teacher?

**WW:** I had a favorite teacher. Jr. High School. My math teacher was my favorite teacher.

**EA:** What was his or her name?

**WW:** Um...it's so long ago I can't remember! I really can't remember [laughs].

**EA:** What did you—was it a man or a woman?

**WW:** It was a man and he was a very good teacher in the aspect I think because he would always explain things to you if you didn't understand it and you could always go after school and have things, you know, explained even deeper. Teachers back then would stay after school and help you *a lot*. Now I don't think they even do that at all.

**EA:** And did—how were boys and girls treated when you were in school? Did you see differences in the ways boys were treated by the teachers?

**WW:** No. I didn't see differences.

**EA:** And you felt like—math is not something that girls are usually encouraged to do. Is that something—how did you get interested in that?

**WW:** I just enjoyed it. I loved math. I liked numbers, I guess. I still like math.

**EA:** Did you continue on doing anything with math in your future then?

**WW:** No, I didn't. No...

**EA:** What were your challenges in education?

**WW:** My challenges? I always had a hard time with English. I could never write a composition or a book report. I always had a hard time, and I always would have to read something two or three times before I can comprehend it. So it's like, someone else can

read it once and can understand it but I have to read it two or three times. It's always been like—and I still have that challenge. I'm getting better at it. I read a lot.

**EA:** And what do you read when you read now?

**WW:** Now I read a lot of the Bible and my Bible studies and the newspaper.

**EA:** Ok. Is there a Leicester newspaper?

**WW:** No, it's the Worcester Telegram and Gazette.

**EA:** Ok. Um, so when you were a child what did you want to be when you grew up?

**WW:** When I was a child, what did I want to be... I can't remember wanting to be anything special. I really—I don't remember ever wanting to be anything special, no...[laughs].

**EA:** No? Did you have, so your father you said worked—

**WW:** Well when he was young he used to ride the trolley with his dad.

**EA:** Right.

**WW:** But then he worked as a—a chef...[To woman at door] Come in! And then he worked as a butcher and then he worked in fiberglass. [Again to woman, whispering] I'm doing an interview. [Woman: Oh.] You can sit down! [Woman: Oh, I can go back downstairs. I don't want to interrupt.]

**EA:** [To woman] You're welcome to sit if it's fine with her. [Woman: What kind of an interview?] It's an oral history interview for the Worcester Women's History Project. So just about—

**WW:** [To woman] Because I had a business. [Woman: Oh, ok. Alrighty, I'll leave you. Is Roy gone?] No he's in there playing on the computer. [Woman: Oh, ok.]

**EA:** And did your mother work when you were a child?

**WW:** Yep. That's my mom right there. [laughs]

**EA:** Oh, ok. [laughs]

**WW:** She lives in the building. My dad lives here, too. Even though they're divorced. One's upstairs, one's downstairs.

**EA:** Wow. That's interesting.

**WW:** My mom, she worked in a plastic shop and she sang at night.

**EA:** Oh ok. For what, um—what did she sing in?

**WW:** She sang in small little places. You know, little nightclubs.

**EA:** Ok, cool. So did you ever go with her to work, or?

**WW:** Not until I was grown up. I went and saw her a couple of times.

**EA:** Ok, and where did she work at um, the plastic—

**WW:** The plastic shop, she worked at one in Shrewsbury. I don't remember the name of it.

**EA:** Ok, and did you continue on with any other education? Vocational school or anything?

**WW:** No, I didn't.

**EA:** Ok, so after you finished your formal education, what did you see as your options?

**WW:** I got married young and had my children. I didn't do anything right away.

**EA:** How old were you when you got married?

**WW:** I was 17.

**EA:** Ok, and how did you meet your husband?

**WW:** At school.

**EA:** At your high school?

**WW:** Yeah.

**EA:** Ok. Wow. High school sweethearts...

**WW:** [laughs]

**EA:** And can you tell me a little bit more about that? Your relationship with him when you were young?

**WW:** I'm divorced from him and I'm remarried now. I was married for six years to my first husband.

**EA:** And he was from Worcester?

**WW:** Yep. He was from Worcester. Yeah, he lived in Great Brook Valley.

**EA:** So you had children—

**WW:** With him.

**EA:** So how old were you when you had children?

**WW:** 17 and 19. My two children.

**EA:** And when you—after you had your children... Tell me about what it was like being a mother when you were younger.

**WW:** Well, I enjoyed being a mother. I really—it was like natural to me, I guess. It never bothered me to have children. And I was home with my first child and then after the second was born, I went to work after she was five months old. I stayed home and, let's see, that would be like—I was home four years and then I went to work.

**EA:** So when your second daughter was 5 months old, then you went to work.

**WW:** Yeah. I went to work.

**EA:** How did you work childcare kinds of issues?

**WW:** My mother-in-law or my sister would babysit. And then my mother babysat after that. So I didn't have childcare problems like, you know, no childcare center or anything like that. It was always a relative that watched my children.

**EA:** And did you prefer it that way?

**WW:** Mmhmm. Yeah.

**EA:** And did your husband at that time help out with raising the kids, housework, that kind of stuff?

**WW:** No. My first husband did nothing. [laughs]

**EA:** No? Was it just expected that you were going to do that work, then?

**WW:** Well, I actually...within a year of going to work, that's when I left my first husband and, um, met my second husband. And he did a lot. He helped raise my children and we both worked and he is excellent. He does housework and helped raise the children. He does everything. He's a great man.

**EA:** Ok. So, um, what made you decide to go back to work—or to begin work when you were—

**WW:** I went to work because...I needed money to get by. You had to help the income. And then another thing, my ex-husband didn't want to work so it was like, I *had* to go to work.

**EA:** He wasn't working at all?

**WW:** No. He didn't work. [laughs]. He wasn't working at all. He was in the service for a while and then he got out of the service and then he just...he was very irresponsible.

**EA:** So when you first got married to him he was in the service?

**WW:** No, when we first got married it was just—we had just gotten married. He went in the service a year later and then when he got out of the service he just decided to be irresponsible and not work and just be like a *kid* again or something. I don't know.

**EA:** So while he wasn't working, you were still doing all of the housework and stuff?

**WW:** Oh yeah. I always did all the housework. And took care of the kids. And then I went to work, too.

**EA:** Wow. And what was your first job?

**WW:** At Sprague Electric, which was right behind Great Brook Valley, so I could walk to work. I didn't have to worry—I didn't have a car either, when I was young. I never got my license 'til I was 21. That was after I left my husband. And Sprague Electric, I worked there for five years.

**EA:** And what did you do there?

**WW:** I worked on the wet line at first. They make integrated circuits, so you're doing the process of making integrated circuits. The photo line, then the wet line. I worked in the mask and control room. I worked in diffusion. I did a lot of different jobs there.

**EA:** So was it difficult work?

**WW:** No, it's not difficult. Very interesting work, making integrated circuits.

**EA:** Yeah. That sounds like it. I don't even think I know what an integrated circuit looks like [laughs.]

**WW:** It's a little microscopic things that work computers and stuff. They're made on silicon chips, I mean on silicon wafers. And there's thousands of them on each wafer and they cut them up and they all make things work.

**EA:** Ok. And how did you get that job.

**WW:** Just applied for it. They just hire anyone, and, you know, they teach you. They train everyone.

**EA:** So how did you find out about it initially?

**WW:** Um...just went and applied. I was looking for work and just applied all around me.

**EA:** Ok. And you got training on the job as you went.

**WW:** Yeah. On the job training with every job you did in there.

**EA:** And who were the people you worked with? Did you work with a lot of people from the area?

**WW:** Well it was funny. I worked there and I found that there was a lot of people I'd gone to high school with and then I met many other people. Some people from the area but many people were from far away. Like my husband worked there and he's from Littleton. So the engineers and the management people didn't all live close by, but a lot of the working people did.

**EA:** And how did you get along with your coworkers?

**WW:** Oh, wonderful. I get along with anybody. I'm a personable—you know, people person.

**EA:** And the management was also—

**WW:** They were very good, yeah.

**EA:** Did you work with women or men primarily.

**WW:** Both.

**EA:** What other jobs did you have? So after you quit that job—you said you worked there for five years, what—

**WW:** Then I stayed home for another five years. And that is, let me see...and that's when my husband decided for me to have something to do he'd buy a small business so we looked into what we wanted to buy. We figured a place like a breakfast-lunch is just common sense, so that's what we did. Shopped around and we found that one there next to Clark University.

**EA:** Ok. And why would you say it's common sense?

**WW:** To do breakfast-lunch? To just cook—cook, make people’s meals, make them happy, you know.

**EA:** Is that something you’ve done a lot of?

**WW:** Oh, I’ve cooked all my life. Yeah. When I was 9 years old, I knew how to cook for 9 people. Seven brothers and sisters. My father taught me how to cook.

**EA:** Oh really? Oh, right, ‘cause you said he was a short order cook.

**WW:** Yeah.

**EA:** So how old were you, would you say, when you learned how to cook?

**WW:** Nine.

**EA:** You were nine? Oh, ok. And what did you—what was it like learning to cook from your dad?

**WW:** Oh, it was great. It was fun, it was fun. I loved cooking. I still love cooking. I bake all the time now, my husband and I, for where I work now.

**EA:** And did your mom cook at all?

**WW:** My mom doesn’t cook a lot [laughs].

**EA:** Yeah, my mom would like to think she cooks. [laughs] Ok, so you said you took five years off—

**WW:** Being home with the children. Yes.

**EA:** Ok, so what brought that about when you—

**WW:** Just wanted to stay home with my children. Didn’t want the stress of working and having kids. They were, you know, getting older. It was good to be home with them.

**EA:** How old were they during that time?

**WW:** They were, I would say...let’s see...Michelle was 5 or 6 and Denise was 9. Yeah.

**EA:** Ok. So they were in school at that time?

**WW:** Yes. They were in school.

**EA:** And where did they go to school?

**WW:** They were in Freeland Street School. The same one I was in when I was little.  
[laughs.]

**EA:** So had you moved by that point?

**WW:** We had moved to Tirrell Street. We were on Tirrell Street right there in the Webster Square area.

**EA:** So did you move to Tirrell Street after you started working at the Electric company?

**WW:** Yes.

**EA:** But before you, before you started Wendy's.

**WW:** Yes. Before we bought Wendy's, yes. Actually, I was still working when we moved to Tirrell Street and I quit probably within that first year when we moved into that house and refurbished that house.

**EA:** And how did you get to work when you were living there?

**WW:** Which—to Sprague?

**EA:** Yes.

**WW:** My husband worked there. So we went together.

**EA:** And then, Wendy's—tell me more about that. Starting Wendy's. What was that like?

**WW:** Oh boy. It was stressful at first! Because, I knew how to cook but it was like—you're cooking right in front of people, so that was very stressful. I had to learn not to think about anyone watching me and just do it. And at first I was really panicking and stressed, so my dad was always there helping me and teaching me, you know, to relax. 'Cause he came to work for me, too.

**EA:** Oh, ok.

**WW:** And he helped me there. And it was so much fun after I got going, it was like—it was like everyone that came in was your family. It was close. Everybody knew each other. Everyone was friendly. And they actually started calling me "mom." They said, "You're like my mom when I'm away from home! You come and take care of me and you feed me!" And I started naming my breakfasts after the kids 'cause they started making up their own breakfasts and what they liked, their favorite foods, or whatever. So the specials had their names on them.

**EA:** What's an example?

**WW:** They loved that. One of the examples was this one kid would come in and want...four eggs, on a hamburger, with bacon, on a bulkie. And we called that “Shep’s Special,” ‘cause his name was Shep. [laughs] It was the strangest combination I had ever heard of.

**EA:** Eggs on a burger...with bacon?

**WW:** Yeah, a hamburger with bacon and four eggs and cheese on a bulkie.

**EA:** Wow. That’s a heart attack waiting to happen! [laughs].

**WW:** Yeah. And there was another kid who ordered an omelet and he always wanted four eggs but only one yolk, so it was mostly whites, so he was eating more healthy. So he had a four egg omelet with only one yolk. It was all kinds of—it was fun. And you know, the funny part about it is, they would all help and do whatever they had to do if the place was busy. They’d get their own coffee. They’d write up their own orders. They’d actually set their own plates, silverware, you know, things like that. And it was so funny, I’ll never forget this one situation. I always did the short order cooking, or my father. And we opened at five in the morning. And my husband worked a full time job, but he did help me out on the weekends or after work he came and helped me clean up. Well this—I was never sick, and even if I was sick I could get up and work. And this one time, I just couldn’t get up, I was so sick. My husband had to go in to work and open up. And, um, my two daughters also waitressed, but they didn’t go in *that* early in the morning. They would come in around eight. And my husband went in by himself at 4:30, or it was around that time—quarter past four, whatever—cause we opened at five. And you’d go in get everything going, the coffee and everything. He said when he got there, there were so many kids outside waiting to get in the restaurant he couldn’t believe it. He was panicking. He was like, what’s going on? They were up all night *studying* so they were all hungry! [laughs] And we could fit like 50 people in there and they filled the place. He said, “It was terrible! I didn’t know what to do!” He said...but they all just started making coffee, writing down their orders, giving me their orders...and I just kept on cooking and they just kept coming and taking the food and doing the work and doing it all for themselves and it was wonderful. He said they were even running the register! [laughs] He trusted them ‘cause we knew them so well. I said, that’s really crazy.

**EA:** So you had a lot of Clark students that were—

**WW:** Oh, a *lot* of Clark students. And we had all of them—the whole physical plant would come down on their break and lunches. And we would get them in and out ‘cause we knew they have fifteen minutes for break and then they had their half hour for lunch. And so we did really good with them and we would get them in and out, so they loved coming in. And we had homemade lunch specials and homemade soups.

**EA:** What kinds of food—what was your specialty, would you say?

**WW:** Ah, my specialty... One of my specialties is chili—my five alarm chili. Everyone loved chili. We had excellent meatloaf. Porkroast, that was one of the real good things that people loved. And our fish and chips on Friday. That was a big thing. Where my husband worked, they would actually order from there. Like, we would have 13 or 20 orders of fish and chips going out to where he worked at Sprague Electric. And he'd come pick it up and take it [laughs].

**EA:** So your husband...you bought the restaurant together—

**WW:** We bought it together, but it was in my name. And I was there all day and he would help me at night—come help me close up, clean up, and start preparing for the next day. You always prepared your homefries and your bacon and your sausage for the next day. You precooked it all.

**EA:** Ok. So at that time he was still working at Sprague—

**WW:** Yeah, he worked at Sprague and when he got out he'd be over to help me by about 4:00. I closed at about 2 or 3. I can't even remember—3, I think I closed at 3. And then he'd come and scrub my grill and I had a couple of Clark students that would help. One would come and wash the floor. And the waitress—a couple of the waitresses from Clark would be there helping me clean up before we went home.

**EA:** Ok. So, where you open every day of the week?

**WW:** We were open every day of the week. Seven days a week.

**EA:** Wow! Wow, that's exhausting. How did you manage?

**WW:** It's a lot of work. We didn't just take vacations. All it was was work.

**EA:** So between what years were you running Wendy's, then?

**WW:** [To her husband in the other room] Hon, did we buy it in 1984? [Husband: Yeah.] And we sold it in 1987.

**EA:** Ok, so, for 3 years straight you just worked?

**WW:** Worked. Workaholics.

**EA:** So before it was Wendy's, was it another breakfast and lunch place?

**WW:** Yeah it was. For many years it had been a breakfast-lunch place. And the funny thing is, when we did buy it, we found out that our neighbors across the street who were the Mitchells used to own it when *I* was a little girl. Our neighbors were in their 80s and they owned it when I was a little girl, they said. And I remembered it, but I didn't remember them. 'Cause everyone that came out of St. Peter's Church would come over

there for breakfast afterward. And I went to St. Peter's Church. And when I bought it, it was owned by a gentleman who—he wasn't even from around here, was he? He was from Auburn. [Husband: He was a part owner of Chopsticks Restaurant.] Chopsticks Restaurant his wife owned, yeah. Him and his wife. And *he* had just let it go down in the dumps. It had gotten dirty and he just didn't care about it. It was just something for him to do. He didn't even care. It wasn't even making any money. [Husband: It was so bad, if he got an order for eggs and toast, he sent somebody out to buy the eggs and bread. Really! I would estimate he had a figure around \$35,000 a year. And when we sold it we were doing 175.]

**EA:** What do you think was the secret?

**WW:** Just serving good food and being personable. You know, being friendly. Having a good atmosphere, good food, good price. That's all you need. It's all you need to have a good business.

**EA:** And did—was it the same crowd coming in before that? Was it the college crowd—

**WW:** No, the college crowd really wasn't coming in before that. It's just all his buddies were hanging around in there. So then it started building. We built—within the year, it had tripled what he was making in one year. So that was really good. And before that, it had been a breakfast place. You know, it was—for *years*, from the 50s on up it was always a breakfast place. And there was—Bove's owned it for a while. And people knew them. I don't know, they owned it for maybe 20 years? Something like that.

**EA:** And you said "Mitchells"?

**WW:** Mitchells before that, in the 50's, they owned it.

**EA:** Before Bove's?

**WW:** Mitchells was before Bove's, and then it was Bove's, and, I don't know, there might have been two owners after that, and then me.

**EA:** And you said your dad worked there with you? From the beginning?

**WW:** He came to work for me a few months after we bought it. There was a short order cook there, a guy that was there when I bought the place, but he was a creep. A maniac. I found out that he was [laughs] an ex-con. He was in jail and out of jail. And he, one day he started throwing things around in the back room—knives and pans and everything—just flinging them around back there and I was like, "whoa!" I got rid of him when I found out all of this craziness. He was like a ticking bomb. He was *violent*.

**EA:** So, what did—how was the work divided then? What did your dad do, what did you do, what did you have other people working on?

**WW:** My dad would do the short order cook first thing in the morning and I would prepare the lunches. You know, you'd have to like prepare your soups and whatever you were going to do for lunch. And I had a sister-in-law that came in as a waitress and another waitress that was there before I bought the place. She stayed on.

**EA:** So is there a cooking area in the back also?

**WW:** Yeah, there's a big kitchen in the back. There's a gas grill, like a charcoal grill. There's a 6 burner stove, a big oven, a big prep area, and a big walk-in cooler in the back.

**EA:** So did you tend to work back there or in the front?

**WW:** Both. Both. Actually, my dad and I would do both the same, you know? Back and forth, the grill and the prep work.

**EA:** And you said an important part of the business was being personable, talking to people—

**WW:** Oh yeah. You always talk to everybody, get to know everybody...

**EA:** Do you think that the way that you were—that being in the front there and having people watch you cook was part of that?

**WW:** Probably. Probably. I think people love to watch you cook. Yeah. And I got where I wasn't nervous anymore so it didn't bother me. And learning to cook eggs and flip them real easy and good and stuff. And we had almost everything was homemade. We made our own homemade pancakes, you know, griddlecakes. And like I said, the soups and if you made meatloaf, it's all homemade, all fresh. And the mashed potatoes were real mashed potatoes [laughs]. And the homefries? We peeled potatoes every night. The kids, my husband, myself. We peeled potatoes ourselves. Cut them up, boiled them.

**EA:** So you had the kids working, too?

**WW:** Oh yeah. My two daughters did everything with us. Yeah. And they waitressed. Boy did they love that on the weekend! They could make a hundred dollars a day waitressing and they were 14 and 12 [laughs.]

**EA:** Wow! Not bad! And so, it seems like a real family—

**WW:** Oh yeah. It was a family atmosphere. Definitely.

**EA:** And how, you were talking about, you know, learning to cook eggs, right? And things like this. What would you say were other skills you had to learn on the job or before you—

**WW:** Skills I had to learn on the job... Well, I had never waitressed either! [laughs] I had to learn to be a waitress. And one good thing is to try to remember your orders without even having to write them down. That's the best thing. You learn that too. Um, you learn to multitask really easily. You can take orders, pour coffee, set tables, cook...do it all! And run the register. [Husband: and bookkeeping...] Yeah! And then I did my bookkeeping every night. I had to learn that.

**EA:** Well there's the math, right? Coming back...

**WW:** I *did* use the math. That's right. [laughs]

**EA:** And how did you learn to do the bookkeeping?

**WW:** My husband. He's very educated, so he taught me that.

**EA:** And what did you enjoy most about running the restaurant.

**WW:** Being out with people. Yeah. Being able to cook their food and make a really beautiful plate of food and they could really enjoy it. Everyone liked their food. That's a good thing.

**EA:** And now Annie's is pretty affordable. Was it the same kind of thing?

**WW:** Oh, right. Yeah. You have to have a good price. Definitely a good price. You want to have quantity of people coming in there so you have a good price and the more you have coming in the better it is. [Husband: The President of the college at the time, Mr. Traina, came in one morning for breakfast and he came into the back room to wash his hands and commented to me that our prices were too low for the students at Clark]. [all laugh]

**EA:** As a student, I appreciate that! So you said the Clark students were a lot of your customers and you said the people from the physical plant—

**WW:** Yeah, the physical plant. All the maintenance people and grounds people.

**EA:** Did you have other—

**WW:** Neighborhood people. Neighborhood people, yeah. And some of the professors. Um, I'm trying to think...I know that we would have business neighborhood people would come in, too, like all the other people on their lunch break. We'd even have some people coming in from downtown.

**EA:** Oh really? They would drive down?

**WW:** Yeah.

**EA:** And did you have—were there different kinds of people coming at different shifts throughout the day or was it pretty evenly spread?

**WW:** Pretty evenly spread, except that when all the Physical Plant people would come in they'd all be in at one certain time. Nine to 9:15 and 12 to 12:30. They're break was always the same and every morning and every afternoon they'd all have to come at the same time. [Husband: Every Friday I'd get take out...40 orders or something like that.] Yeah, I told her that [laughs].

**EA:** Wow. That's funny. Um...what challenges did you encounter as a restaurant—female running a restaurant?

**WW:** Female running a restaurant...what challenges. Hmm...I guess just making sure that the business would grow and it would not go in debt, and I was very proud of the fact that we were never ever in the negative. Always able to pay our bills. It was wonderful.

**EA:** That's a big deal. Especially if the guy before was having such a hard time!

**WW:** Right. Because they say that most people starting their business are in debt for the first three years or five years, and we were never in debt. We were able to pay the bills from the get-go. So it was really good.

**EA:** That is impressive!

**WW:** Yeah, and I had three employees, so that was pretty good. You know, I was able to pay them and pay the bills. And I still had a profit at the end of the year.

**EA:** Good! That's important too. [laughs].

**WW:** So it wasn't like I didn't make money. Because most people—you just don't make money in your first year. [Husband: You were profitable from day one.] I know it! It was great.

**EA:** So what do you think Wendy's meant to the Main South neighborhood or Clark University?

**WW:** I think it meant a lot to people. Yeah, they were very sad when we were selling it. We probably wouldn't have sold it, but we ended up with a really sad situation where my husband's son had passed away and he'd gotten down and depressed and plus he, um, lost—they terminated his position. And it was like—it had got so depressing that he just wanted to sell and I couldn't talk him out of it.

**EA:** That's hard. So that's what brought on...

**WW:** Yeah. That's the only reason we sold it. We probably never would have sold it. We'd probably still be there! [laughs]

**EA:** You think you could have managed the seven days a week?

**WW:** Well, you could have other people running it for you on other days. You could learn to trust people. But at first when you're in business, you have to do it all yourself, you know? 'Cause you don't have anyone you want to trust with everything.

**EA:** So you sold it in 1987, you said?

**WW:** Yes.

**EA:** And who did you sell it to?

**WW:** We sold it to two brothers who didn't keep it very long—not even a year, they sold it to Annie.

**EA:** Oh really? It was a quick turnover. Yeah, 'cause Annie said she started working for two brothers, so she never worked for you—

**WW:** Yeah. She started working for them. And they sold it to her.

**EA:** And do you ever go into—

**WW:** I had been in there off and on—but I haven't actually been in there, I think, for three years now.

**EA:** Ok, and had you noticed any changes or anything?

**WW:** I noticed some changes a few years back, like it was, um, *dark* and it used to be bright and different. And also I didn't like the music. They were playing— [Husband: I think it's brighter now, though.] It might be. They were playing like hard rock music, which I don't like... [Husband: The other thing that you learned quickly was, you had to generate and incorporate your own ideas not everyone else—everybody in the world had ideas. Do this, do that, do something else. And they were just like coming off the wall with it and you really had to stop and think about what you wanted to do. And so she put the thinking cap on and started to say, "No! People want this." Or "People really want this." And that's what she would do. And that's what worked.]

**EA:** Can you give examples of that? Like what kinds of decisions you made?

**WW:** I decided to put a fresh salad bar in the summer months 'cause people always liked fresh salads. And I decided on the weekends not to do the lunch specials because everyone just wanted breakfast. All throughout the whole day. [Husband: The other, the biggest thing, when we first went there, the short order cook was making lunch and I was looking at the menu and it had exactly the same thing every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday! You could count on it. She and I got together and started

working and she came up with the *kind* of food to make and I had the time to put in what I called the rotating menu. You didn't get the same thing in a month, ok? And what a difference. People would come down and see what was on the menu for the day because you could never count on it being the same as it was the month before.] Every day was a different special, yeah. [Husband: But the *type* of food, the luncheon special, was what she felt would really go over.] Things like shepard's pie, you know, meatloaf, American chop suey— [Husband: porkroast!] –porkroast, spaghetti and meatballs, the chili, the beef stew...all good homemade cooking.

**EA:** Sounds delicious! So it sounds like you sort of were in charge there. Is that a good characterization? [laughs].

**WW:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I was in charge.

**EA:** And how did you like that?

**WW:** Well [laughing], my husband says I'm bossy anyway so it was good! And my sisters always say the same thing. They say, "She's in charge!"

**EA:** There you go! [laughs]. And working with family, you know, you've got some license sometimes to— Ok, and how were your interactions with you—you have a lot of regular customers, you mentioned— [Husband brings in refrigerator magnet and places it on the table] Haha. Funny. "I'm not bossy, I just have better ideas."

**WW:** [Laughs]

**EA:** Ain't it the truth! Could you tell me about some of your regular customers? Any favorite customers?

**WW:** Ah, favorite customers...hmmm. [Husband: Besides the college students?] [Laughs]. [Husband: You had the group.] The group? [Elroy...] Oh, we had all the funeral groups would come in whenever there was a funeral across the street, all the guys would come in and have coffee and muffins while the service was going on.

**EA:** Oh, the people that carry the—

**WW:** The pallbearers and the drivers—the ones that drive the cars, you know, the hearse and the limos. Got to know all the different ones, you know, the Roy's, the Fay Brothers', the O'Conner Brothers' Funeral Home. And there was one other one. So whenever there was something going on across the street you were expecting them and usually it was like seven to ten of them came in and filled up the counter. And I always enjoyed the college kids. They were all so good. They were very polite. They were very good kids. Never had any rowdy group of kids come in there.

**EA:** And you said they, you know, sort of thought of you like a second mom.

**WW:** Yeah! They would call me their mom and they said I would take care of them and they, they were really—the really appreciated me, you know? And if a kid didn't have his money on him a certain day, I would let them run a tab. I mean, I saw them every day, you know? It was great. And they would even bring their parents in when their parents would come and introduce their parents to me. [laughs]

**EA:** Ahh, that's nice.

**WW:** And some of them would actually say, "This is my second mom." [laughs].

**EA:** I bet the parents appreciated you too, then.

**WW:** Yeah, they did. Some of them even said that to me. "We appreciate you taking care of him when he's away from home," they'd say.

**EA:** Oh. That's sweet. And so you had like a—I assume you didn't have the same kind of relationship with all the customers.

**WW:** No not all of them.

**EA:** —because you wouldn't be "mom" for the funeral people. What were your inter—did you have different kinds of relationships with different kinds of customers?

**WW:** Oh yeah. There were—they would all come in and be just kidding around when they were in for their muffins and their coffees and everything. They [laughs] they'd be funny. They'd all just come in and start yelling out what they wanted as they walked by the grill, so you'd just throw it on. And some of them would get their own coffee, too. [laughs].

**EA:** Oh, ok. And you said they sat at the counter, usually?

**WW:** Yeah, they sat at the counter.

**EA:** Did you get the college students at the counter as well?

**WW:** Most of the college students liked to sit at the booths. Yeah. They preferred the booths. Unless, they were by themselves, they would sit at the counter.

**EA:** That's what the counter's for, right?

**WW:** Yep.

**EA:** What would you, well...what did you do after Wendy's?

**WW:** After we sold Wendy's, I was offered a job by one of my customers—said he needed a purchase and sales clerk in his business down at the end of Grand Street. And I

told him I had never done any of that! You, know, I didn't even use the computer. I didn't know how to use the computer. He said, that's alright, we'll just teach you. So I worked there for three years. And then he—something happened with his business...between divorce and stuff like that. So he closed up. And after that, I...what did I do after that? I forgot! Oh, that's when I applied for—I got my job at Imperial Distributors. I was a [Husband: Accounts receivable.] Accounts—no, I wasn't accounts receivable. I did accounts payable. Yeah. I billed all the Shaws, and the, which is now Price Chopper, it used to be Big D, and one other store, I forgot. And I worked there until I went to work for Webster First Credit Union. I became a customer service representative there. For 10 years, I worked there.

**EA:** Ok.

**WW:** And then after I left there, that's when we bought another business! I had Family Kitchen up on Hamilton Street.

**EA:** So, what did you—what was it like for that period between businesses. What did you think of the—were you happy with the work you were doing?

**WW:** I was ok with it, but I preferred working for myself. Yeah. Working for the bank was very, very stressful. It's weird. That sounds weird because working for yourself should be stressful too, but I found working for myself it wasn't as stressful as working for someone else.

**EA:** What was—can you pinpoint anything that you found stressful there?

**WW:** Ah, working for the bank? Yeah, having to solve other people's problems. [laughs]. That's what customer service does. Always having to, um, solve the fact that everyone's bouncing their checks and they'd come in yelling and screaming at you. People were always in a bad mood and you had to change them around and you had to fix all their problems, that's what customer service does. And it's not the same in the food business. I mean, they come in, they're in a good mood, they want to eat, and if you give them a good meal, it's great.

**EA:** It's a different kind of customer service...

**WW:** It's totally different! Totally different customer service. [Husband: Then it's just walking in the restaurant in the morning and finding that your front cooler was broken down.] Yeah, that's the other kind of stress you'd get is if your cooler broke down or something.

**EA:** Did that happen?

**WW:** Oh yeah! We had broken down coolers— [Husband: Wherever you could crowd it to keep it cold while we got it fixed.] Yeah, you'd call—they'd come right away, though. That's what's good about refrigeration people. They'd come right away.

**EA:** Well, they've got to, right? So you said Family Kitchen...what was—what made you decide to—

**WW:** Well it was weird. I wasn't even thinking about it. I left my job at the bank because I just couldn't take that stress anymore and I just asked my husband, I said, you know, "I have to leave. I just can't stand it." So one day he takes me for a ride and he says, "I want you to come and see something." 'Cause he had seen it in the paper, I guess. And we go up there and we're in there having breakfast and I just guessed, I said, "You're thinking of buying this place, aren't you?" [laughs] And he says, "yeah." So, we talked about it and I said, "Alright, sounds good to me." So it was another small place. It was actually a little smaller than the one next to Clark University. [Husband: It was half the size of the other one.] Yeah, it could only have 19 seats and we had 50 something seats at the other place. So, it was smaller and it—it needed a lot of work! [laughs] We had to clean it, we had to paint it, we had to make it nice. And it wasn't making any money, again, just like the other one. But we knew we could turn it around.

**EA:** The new challenge.

**WW:** The new challenge. [Husband: And for \$10,000, you couldn't go wrong.] Yeah, it was only \$10,000, so it was a very good deal.

**EA:** And what were the differences between starting that business and starting Wendy's?

**WW:** Well the difference starting that is that I knew what I was going to do. I knew what I had to do and I just went in there and did it. Totally different than when I started the other place, I had never done it before.

**EA:** Right.

**WW:** So the difference with this other place is that we decided to make a *lot* of unique things. Like made different types of omelets and scrambles were our specialty. People just loved it. Like, just make up things. You know, your own recipes. Like, um, a southwestern scramble had all like spicy and hot sausage and you scramble it all together with vegetables and stuff. And we had the broccoli and cheese scramble, people just loved that. It had a six cheese Italian cheese blend with steamed broccoli—delicious. And we had a taco omelet. We had the chili and cheese omelet. And my husband came up with this idea—he said, "What about a pizza omelet?" And I said, "That sounds really weird! That sounds gross, a pizza omelet." But he made it and it was delicious and we did it in the round omelet pan so it was round instead of folded in half and you put the pepperoni and the cheese on it, throw it in the microwave and melt the cheese after the omelet with done. It looked just like a pizza! So then we said, ok, they could put whatever they want on it—their own toppings. So you had this pizza omelet with your choice of toppings.

**EA:** Was it popular?

**WW:** It was *very* popular, yeah. And the taco omelet, they loved that. That one was really good. And you'd top it—

**EA:** Now I'm not familiar with—oh sorry, go ahead.

**WW:** —with cheese, sour cream, all of that, too. You're not familiar with what?

**EA:** Hamilton Street. Where is—

**WW:** Hamilton Street is, um, do you know Grafton Street?

**EA:** Yeah.

**WW:** Well Grafton Street bears off like this and there's a rotary here. Well if you go straight up, that's Hamilton Street. So the next big intersection, right? You can see it from the rotary—is Plantation Street and Hamilton Street and it was right in that block, it was right in there.

**EA:** Ok. So was it a different type of neighborhood?

**WW:** Yep. Totally different type of neighborhood. You didn't have any colleges but it ended up with the same type of thing. There was a hairdressing school, so *they* always came in and it was wonderful. I mean, they were in there almost every day on their breaks—their coffee break, their lunch break. And then you'd have—I didn't have a lot of work people around there, but you'd have just neighborhood people or people that would drive by, so it was a totally different setting. Totally different. [Husband: And you built up regulars again.] Built up regular people coming in—Oh! And we ended up with people coming in that heard about the fact that Wendy's back! They said, "Wendy opened a new place!" Cause the *Telegram and Gazette* had done an article on us, so they saw that previous owner of Wendy's Clark Brunch has now Family Kitchen, so we ended up getting people coming up there saying, "You're back!"

**EA:** Wow! You're famous. That's really great.

**WW:** Yeah. That's funny.

**EA:** So how many years was it between the two.

**WW:** Well, that was a lot of years. Let's see 2001, '87 and we bought the other one in 2001.

**EA:** Ok, and how long did you have that one? [Husband: 'Til I finally decided to retire].

**WW:** [laughs] Three years.

**EA:** Ok, and were you both working there then?

**WW:** Ah... [Husband: Well what happened was, I finally retired, finally *learned* to retire from the working world—I was driving all the way to Lawrence and back every day—and finally said that’s it. It was on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. I said, “I could always go to work with my wife, you know?” So I did. Starting in January.] Two years by myself then he came. [Husband: The problem *was*, once we were both there I ended up working 14 hours a day again...] And it kept building up more and more [laughing]—Sundays! Oh, Sunday was so busy. It was like so stressful. He was like, “Aaahhh, I’ve had it.” He says, “I don’t want to do this anymore.

**EA:** Wow. And were you still doing seven days a week?

**WW:** [Laughing] Yep. [Husband: Oh yeah.]

**EA:** So how did you—what was the division of labor there? Who did what when you...

**WW:** He did most of the prep work. I did the cooking. And, um, he would always do a lot of the dishes. And I had two of my granddaughters waitressing on weekends.

**EA:** Now your granddaughters! Wow!

**WW:** Yes! [Laughing] My granddaughters. First my daughters then my granddaughters. Isn’t that funny? My daughters in the first place and my granddaughters in the second place.

**EA:** And did you enjoy working with family?

**WW:** Oh yes. Oh, and my mom and my dad would help out here, too. It was *really*, definitely Family Kitchen. And then one of my nieces came to work for me. [laughs].

**EA:** And was it hard to give up that restaurant, too?

**WW:** Yeah, I was like, “Oh I really don’t—what do I want to do?” You know, “What am I going to do if we sell this place, too.” It was like, now I work for my brother in law at Banana Joe’s—fruit and vegetables and deli. And we bake. We make homemade banana breads—my husband and I. Bake it here at home. Make it here at home. [Husband: Pumpkin bread...] Yeah, we have fruits and vegetables there all the time and bananas, you know how fast they go. So if there’s any left that are starting to over-ripen, I made banana bread. Now we’re making pumpkin bread and now he wants to make apple and cranberry bread [laughs.]

**EA:** And this is—you sell at...

**WW:** We sell it to Banana Joe and he sells it there, yep. So we bake it, make a profit on it... So we have a business on the side [laughs].

**EA:** That's funny. You're very entrepreneurial. Did you ever—when you were young did you ever see yourself going into business?

**WW:** No, I never thought about that. Nope.

**EA:** And do you miss—do you miss being a business owner, then?

**WW:** No, actually right now I don't miss being a business owner. I just have to go to work and come home. I don't have to do any of the paperwork. Don't have any of the headaches. I don't have to run the place. I just go to work and go home.

**EA:** Do you have a similar sort of social atmosphere at Banana Joe's?

**WW:** Yeah. You have all your regular customers. You have the same type of customers where—I actually work with some family again. In-laws. Yeah, I work with in-laws. Sister-in-law, brother-in-law owns it. And my—this is my ex-family and we're still close. And my ex-mother-in-law. She's still there. She's—she's almost 80 and she still works part-time doing—filling all of the containers with potato salad, macaroni salad, tuna, and all of that.

**EA:** Wow.

**WW:** Yep. She works four hours a day. So I work either the deli or the cash register. So I'm running back and forth doing different things.

**EA:** Ok, and where is this?

**WW:** It's on West Boylston Street across from Quinsigamond College.

**EA:** Ok, I actually think I've seen it.

**WW:** It's a very, very popular place. Fresh produce, deli, and baked goods. And, it's called—Banana Joe's Fruit and Farm Stand...is that what it's called?

**EA:** [Reading from her shirt] Farmstand and Deli.

**WW:** Yeah. Farmstand and Deli. Now we're making homemade banana breads, pumpkin breads. And they have milk, eggs—they have just about everything.

**EA:** And you enjoy working there?

**WW:** Oh, I enjoy working there, yeah.

**EA:** And you think you'll be there for a while?

**WW:** Oh yeah. I think I'll be there 'til I retire. I can retire in 10 years. [Husband: 20 more years.] [Laughs]

**EA:** How do you determine—determine that?

**WW:** I can—well, I can retire at 62 if I want to. That's all.

**EA:** Ok. Um, let's see. How would you characterize the personal and professional costs of the path that you took in your career?

**WW:** Costs?

**EA:** Costs or benefits or—is there anything that you regret or feel like was great about what you did?

**WW:** Maybe I regret the fact that we didn't do a lot of family things when we owned a business. 'Cause when you own a business, it's a lot of work and it is seven days a week. And my children missed out on any kind of family type trips or anything like that. They always said, "We don't do anything! We don't go on vacation! We don't do anything..." So maybe that's one of the things that I regret, but I think that's the only thing. I think, um, having your own business and working hard—I think it *taught* my children a lot. It taught them how to be responsible and gave them a lot of experience for their future. So—

**EA:** And what do they do now?

**WW:** Ah, one daughter works—she actually does her own business in housecleaning.

**EA:** Really?

**WW:** And the other daughter went to work out of high school at UMass Medical Center. And after she had her third child she decided she could work. So she's home right now, the other daughter.

**EA:** Ok. And you have a good relationship with your grandkids—you get to see them a lot?

**WW:** Oh yeah.

**EA:** 'Cause everyone's still relatively nearby.

**WW:** Yeah. Leominster and Leicester. The one in Leominster I don't see them as often, but it's not too far. Forty five minutes drive.

**EA:** And do you still have a connection with Worcester, or with Main South, or with the neighborhood where your other restaurant—

**WW:** No, actually, I don't. No. I haven't been down in that area for a long time.

**EA:** Well, you should stop by Annie's sometime and see how it's changed. [laughs]

**WW:** Yeah, I will! [Husband: Would you recommend other women do what you did—get into business?] Sure! Sure.

**EA:** That's a good question. Or what advice would you give?

**WW:** Um, just go about it with...just common sense. Be personable. [Husband: There's another "c" word—confidence.] Oh yeah, have confidence. [Husband: 'Cause you can succeed because nobody goes into business thinking negative.] Yeah, that's the most important thing. Never go into business saying, "What if? What if? What if?" Say, "I *can* do it. I'll make it work. I can do it." Just have that confidence and you can do it.

**EA:** And how do you define success in your life?

**WW:** How do *I* define success in my life...

**EA:** [Laughs] Big question.

**WW:** [Laughs] Hmmm. [Husband: You know the answer.]

**EA:** Or is there just something that you're really proud of?

**WW:** I'm proud that I was able to run a business and never had a problem with it and it always had a profit and it was never in the negative. And that's really something to be proud of. And if you just have confidence in yourself, you can do it. [Husband: See, the way I look at it, if you take someone—and she's already told you about her earlier life. It was like nothing—she had to drop out of high school and that is not indication of what a person is capable of—] Yeah, that's one thing—not having an education and still making it. [Husband: —looking at her, I came from having to stop advancement to doing advancement and imagine what I could have done if I had gone on to college or something. So that would give people the idea that look, we—] I tell my children and my grandchildren that you don't *have* to have a college education to have your future work for you. You just have to work hard and be determined and you can be whatever you want to be. [Husband: It's just that college makes it a little easier.] College makes it a little easier, yeah.

**EA:** And did you ever—had you planned to go to college before you decided to get married?

**WW:** Um, I wasn't even thinking about college because it would have been the next year before I had to start thinking about that. And I had to drop out of school because I got pregnant—17, left school and got married.

**EA:** So was the pregnancy the impetus for—was it something like, “Oh, now it’s time to get married.” It wasn’t something you had planned necessarily...

**WW:** Right, I hadn’t planned on that right then and there. [laughs] Right, right. So that’s, um, something that really stops you in your tracks. Back then, you couldn’t go to school pregnant. That’s a strange thing, isn’t it? You couldn’t even go to school.

**EA:** So what did you do?

**WW:** I had to—I had a tutor for a while, but then I just—when the baby was born I just got married and I didn’t finish school.

**EA:** Ok, and did that bother you at the time?

**WW:** It did. A little bit. It did. ‘Cause I had never thought about dropping out of school.

**EA:** But you found your own path regardless, so...

**WW:** Yeah.

**EA:** Do you feel you have a legacy? Another one of those big questions [laughs]!

**WW:** Do I have a legacy! [laughs] Yeah I think that I do, because people say, “There’s Wendy from Wendy’s Clark Brunch.” It’s so funny whenever people say, “I know you from Wendy’s Clark Brunch.”

**EA:** And here I am, right?

**WW:** And when you called, “Is this the Wendy from Wendy’s Clark Brunch?” And I went, “Who would be calling me from there? [Laughing].

**EA:** Isn’t that funny? I was embarrassed. I didn’t know how to ask—

**WW:** That’s ok. [Husband: And if she were to walk on campus during a work day and people from Physical Plant—] Oh yeah, people from Physical Plant still know me. Isn’t that great? [Husband: And they still rant and rave about the breakfasts and how it was right there and ready. They got free ones on Sundays every now and then. Because she let me feed them when I was down there doing prep when we were closed.] [Laughing].

**EA:** Let’s see, so now that we’re working to tell a fuller story of women than has been recorded in the past, what would you think we should include?

**WW:** Say that again?

**EA:** Um, in the story of Worcester women, what do you think is important to include in that story?

**WW:** The story of Worcester women... I think as many women in Worcester that have had successful businesses and, um, it's just—they just have to go at it and be determined and make a go of it.

...

**EA:** Well, is there anything you'd like to add—

**WW:** No.

**EA:** Or any questions you have?

**WW:** No questions.

**EA:** Alright, well, thank you very much!

**WW:** You're welcome!