

Interviewee: Merith Lynne Cole
Interviewers: Marielena Layuno, Autumn Mongeon,
and Brittany Stewart
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Location: Holden, Massachusetts
Transcribers: Marielena Layuno, Autumn Mongeon, and Brittany Stewart



Overseen by Dr. Carl Robert Keyes and Dr. Arlene C. Vadum, Assumption College

Merith Lynne Cole was born in Granby, Connecticut, in 1943 and graduated from Bay Path College in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. She married at the age of 20 and moved to the Worcester area. She and her husband had three children. In the early '90s, the couple established a general contracting company in Worcester. After leaving the contracting company, she started a retreat center, True North Holistic Center, aimed towards helping women find a place where they would feel grounded and learn to love themselves. She also founded a food pantry called Loaves and Fishes. In this interview, Merith discusses her life as a professional and a mother, her experience with volunteer work and service for others, and her journey with spirituality. Merith also elaborates on how her experience with breast cancer has changed her perspective on life and how it has positively affected her. She shares that having breast cancer was the greatest gift she has ever received. She concludes the interview by advising women to, "Find out...who you are in the core. ... Find those things now and keep bringing those to the front of your life, because your circumstances will change and grow and be good and be not good...and then you'll find your own success, because you'll be your own person."

AM: My name is Autumn Mongeon and I'm here with Merith Cole, Brittany Stewart, and Marielena Layuno, sorry [laughs], in Holden, Massachusetts, and it is September 27th, 2016. 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, politics, and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with your work. Thank you for your help in this important project. Is it ok that we record your oral history today?

MC: Yes, it's fine.

AM: Thank you. So, what is your full name, including both maiden name and married name, if applicable?

MC: My maiden name was Merith Lynne Wood and my married name was Merith Lynne Cole. And I am since divorced, but I've kept the Cole [noise from nearby device] name.

AM: When were you born?

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MC: [] 1943.

AM: Now I know you said that you were divorced, what is the name of your ex-husband?

MC: James Cole.

AM: And, you mentioned earlier that you have a son. Do you have any other children or grandchildren?

MC: I have three children and five grandchildren.

AM: What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

MC: Well my family background is primarily English and French. Although I'm very drawn to the Scottish background, even though it's not mine, because my mother in law was born in Scotland and so we've followed a lot of the Scottish traditions, but it's not my personal background.

AM: Could you tell me about your parents?

MC: My parents were born and brought up in Worcester. My grandfather was—my mother's father—was a high school teacher in Worcester. They were married—my parents—were married in Worcester and lived there for several years, my father worked in the aeronautic engineer... as an aeronautic engineer and my mother had various jobs, including her first job as a telephone operator at WPI [Worcester Polytechnic Institute] years and years ago and she did mostly office work. And when I was young we lived in Connecticut, then moved to Pennsylvania. We followed my father's job around quite a bit and ended up back in Connecticut. But ties were always to, for my mother and father both, were always to Worcester. That's where my grandparents were, that's where my aunts and uncles and cousins all were. I don't know my father's side of the family very well. He had—his mother died when he was young and he kind of got bounced around to different relatives. And so we don't have a big connection with his side of the family, although, I do have a cousin on that side that I've reconnected with recently. With my mother's family, they're all still in this area so, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so I still have a strong connection with that side of the family.

AM: Where have you lived during your life?

MC: Born in Connecticut, moved to Pennsylvania, moved to out near Buffalo, New York and then moved back to Connecticut. Most of my growing up was in a small town called Granby, Connecticut, which was a little farming town. I moved there when I was going to second grade and I stayed there until, until I married. But I married at 20, so it was just shortly after high school. And then when I married, I moved back. I moved here to Holden, it's [where] my husband's family was from.

AM: Ok. So, you were not born in Worcester, when did you arrive?

MC: 1963.

AM: And how did you come to live in Worcester?

MC: Well, I came here because my husband's family was from here and his work was here in Worcester.

AM: Okay. Now, you mentioned that your husband's family—or ex-husband's family—lived in the same—in Worcester. Do any of your other family members live in Worcester or have lived in Worcester in the past?

MC: No. They've been in this area, in Worcester County, but not, not in Worcester itself. No. Well, my parents did but, you know, beyond them no. The next generation now have not lived in Worcester.

AM: If you don't currently live in Worcester, what is your Worcester connection?

MC: Well, I went to school in Worcester at the now apparently defunct [laughs] Worcester Junior College. I also worked there when I was first married. And then my husband and I established a general contracting company in Worcester 25 years or so ago. And I worked in that company for 20 years and was very involved in the Worcester community. I went to church at St. John's Episcopal Church in Worcester. Prior to that, I was at Salem Covenant Church which is also in Worcester. I did spend some time, while I was work—I worked at Clark University for about eight years and while I worked there, part of my job was—I was working in their Visual and Performing Arts Department, so part of my job was connection with Worcester Art Museum. So, my actual desk was at the Worcester Art Museum. Spent about three years working out of that facility so, you know, I feel like Worcester is kind of my—at least is my work home. [laughs]

AM: What challenges do you think this city, city still faces? And what changes would you make about—changes would you make about the city?

MC: That's a good question. I think our, our infrastructure is a mess. I think that's one, one thing for sure that, that our roads, bridges, and everything are in, in very poor shape. I would—I think we have good school system. I think Worcester has a good school system but I'd like to see some more support financial, and otherwise, for their, our school system to improve that. I would love to see more people become involved in the—I was going to say political process, but I don't know if I mean political process as much as I mean just the problem solving, the creativity, you know, that process of bringing some of the best minds. We've got all those colleges and we've got some of the best minds in, in the city. I'd like to see us drawing more on that. As especially, as an intercollegiate collaborative of some kind. To bring some solutions to some of the

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problems that we have. I think our homelessness rate could and should be improved. I did spend—I did create—I did start, actually—a food pantry years and years ago. There was just nothing around at the time, and I began a food pantry when I was involved with St. John's Episcopal Church. Called it Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry. It was heartwarming to be able to do that and to see the people being able to receive the help that they needed. But it was just heart breaking to see how over a span of about 10 years the need grew from a handful of families, when we first opened, to, you know, lines out the door years later, just the increase of need was just really overwhelming. Then, I've also been involved, for some time—I am not currently, but with the Interfaith Hospitality Network. And that program, if you are not familiar with it is, is a program that started out where families actually came and lived in people's church buildings. You know, Sunday school classrooms would be turned into, into living space. And they'd stay two weeks in this church, and then they'd pack up and go stay two weeks in this church, and then they'd pack up and stay two weeks in this church. And because families—there's no shelter in Worcester for intact families. A mother can only have a son with her until he's 12, and then he has—he can't—come into a woman's shelter. A dad can't take a daughter into a men's shelter. So, you know, if you're a dad with a daughter or if you're an intact family and you've got a couple of kids, there is no place to go. There is no—at least at the time when it began—there was no place for homeless families who were in need like that. Many of them were still—were working families, they just were down in their luck. And they just needed, you know, needed a place for a little while and so this Interfaith Hospitality Network started. And as I said, they would move from church, to church, to church. And then some of the liability and insurance issues kind of—it was starting to get concerned about that. And so they bought a building on June Street. So now they are housing people there on June Street. But, again, when you see the amount of need there was when that program first began, to the people waiting to get into that program now. So there's, there's a great deal of work to be done around that. So, I can't speak to the, the race relations in Worcester because I am not enough familiar, currently, with what that is. I know it's a problem, nationwide, but I don't—I can't—really speak to that for Worcester. But certainly those issues I know are major issues.

AM: What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

MC: Oh, gosh. Well. I've seen a lot of—I've seen changes in terms of things like shopping malls that have come and gone, and the DCU Center being built, and many more hotels, so structures and businesses I've seen kind of come and go. [long pause] Trying to be thoughtful about, about this... I think in some ways we, we are being more aware of the—Worcester is being more aware and is trying to address some of the problems. There is more discussion around some of the issues, I think, than there used to be. A good friend of mine who teaches at Clark, ran a program for some time called Difficult Discussions. And it was bringing in people from the community to talk about those things that are hard to talk about, like race relations or whatever might be. So, you know, I, I think there is an effort there, to, to bring more people into the discussions, and the problem solving than there was before. And then just, well, I've been here for 50 years so, you know, [laughs] you see things come and go. There used to be the, when it was first built, it was the Galleria downtown and it was like the biggest, greatest shopping indoor shopping mall. And, you know, then it became a wasteland and it's gone. So, to see some of those things change over

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time. See, the college I graduated from is gone. [laughs] So, some of that stuff has come and gone, but I think that's just kind of life. I don't know that that's specific to Worcester, but I do, I do think that there is some inter—at least—inter-faith programs that are going on that are helping the community unite and find common—commonality and work on some of the problems. So that's good to see.

AM: What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?

MC: [Worcester is... [laughs] is kind of too big to be a little town, and too little to be a big city. [laughs] So it's got its own little unique niche of, of size and, and its road system is, is, just go to Kelly Square. You know, the road system is just crazy. But, I think that there is a sense that you can find your place in Worcester, that maybe you would feel overwhelmed in a bigger city. But there is a growing culture of—for the arts, and for better restaurants, and so forth. So, you can find some of the things that you may otherwise have had to drive into Boston for, or Providence, or something, you know, you're beginning to find in Worcester. So it's just got its own unique size and flavor. We were on vacation in Bermuda one time, and sitting out in an outdoor café having lunch and hearing the people behind us talking, and you just knew they were from Worcester—at least from this area—and we turn around and said, “Do you happen to be from Massachusetts?” “Yes.” “Near Worcester?” “Yes.” Turned out they lived two streets over from us. [laughs] But there was just something about, about their, the way they were speaking and everything else, I don't know, it's just—it's not a city without its problems, but there is a certain sort of small town feel to it that you don't, you wouldn't get in a big city.

AM: What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

MC: I think it's been a hard road for women to be—to make their way in business in particular. I don't know so much about in, in academia. But I think there's been a little bit more of an openness in academia than there has been in business. I can tell you, as a woman who worked in the construction industry for 20 years, how incredibly hard it was to be taken seriously, to be respected, to find my way into that kind of typically male-oriented world. And what I--[sighs] the process would be, that a company would call in three or four general contractors to come in and look at a project, and put in the bid, and so forth. And, so we'd all walk into that first meeting, they'd be maybe four, five general contractors. And we'd all come in and the guys would all come in—I used to say this to my ex-husband all the time, “You go in there and you've got your suit on and you've got your brief case and you're coming in this meeting. And even if they've never met you before, the assumption is that you know what you're doing until you screw it up. I come in with my suit, and my brief case and the assumption, because I am a woman, is that I don't know what I'm doing.” And he said: “Well, we still have to each prove ourselves.” And I said, “Yes, that's true, but there is a difference when the automatic assumption”—and I think this is not just in that industry, I think this has been women's story for a long time—“is that just, at least in the business world, automatically, you're a suspect because you're female.” I've reached a place where I carried a great deal of respect in the industry, and had many, many good clients and good customers and people accepted me after I had been working in the field for a little while and, and some of that began to go away with the people

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who were used to working with me because they knew I knew what I was doing. But I think women have had a hard time. And it may be a couple of things—it may be just a mindset of, of women in this area who didn't necessarily feel empowered, or even sort of think, "This is what I should do—can—be doing with my life." So, some of it it's just the mindset, in general, of the area. Which is maybe not as progressive as a bigger city might be. But I think there's also been some of the good-old boy network, that's been really hard to break into, and I see that changing, I do see that changing, and that's encouraging. But it was, it was a hard, it was a hard thing to, as a professional woman, to find my way into, into the city. Power block of people [laughs], you know?

AM: Now, what do you mean by the good-old-boy network?

MC: Worcester's got some families that have been around for many generations who've always been the families that have been in the position of power. Not always the most financially wealthy, but oftentimes so. But there's just been a power group—there is a group—if I really put my mind to it I could pull out about 10 different names or six different names of families—Granger is one name. That's just one. And I'm not picking on them by any means, but there's been a Granger in some kind of position of being a strong company in the Worcester area who have been in power. Or maybe these individuals or companies have been in politics, or maybe they've been in leadership areas, leadership in the city. And there's just families that have been in these positions for so long and they've done wonderful things in the city. They've been, they've done a great deal of philanthropy work, and so forth. But they're kind of like the power—Morgan, there is a name, another name—they've been around for forever. And so, you're a startup, or you are trying to get into—I was never looking to be in this position of power, but you know, you're trying to work your way into a certain industry or whatever it is and you'll find that these are the groups and that they kind of all—they are all buddies, and they all play golf together and they're all part of the country club together. I think some of that is changing, but 50 years ago—45 years ago, when I was coming into the city and starting my work and a career, if your name wasn't one of these names, you just were not given the same credibility as if you could come in with one of those names. And I just think their work was all done with each other on a handshake—everybody knew everybody. And this family over here was going to always give the work they wanted done to this family over here. That's what I meant by a good-old-boy network. And women, minorities just couldn't penetrate that. I think that's changed; I do think that's changed. But slowly [laughs] and I think some of those names still are in positions of power in the city. I don't think they use it in a negative way, at least not consciously, but that little group of power people have been running Worcester for a long time, and I do think it's changing. So, I think that's a good sign. [laughs]

BS: So, you mentioned that you went to Worcester Junior College. Where did you go for primary and secondary school?

MC: In Connecticut.

BS: In Connecticut.

MC: Yeah. Yeah. In Granby, Connecticut. Starting with the second grade, and through high school. And then I did go to—I actually graduated—from Bay Path Junior College. I went there for a couple, for three semesters. And then I got married, and then moved here to Worcester, so I finished my last semester at Worcester Junior College, transferred the credits back to Bay Path. So I'm actually, a Bay Path graduate. Even though I was employed at Worcester Junior, and took a semester there my credits actually went back to Bay Path.

BS: What year did you graduate?

MC: 1966? 66. Yeah.

BS: What did you study?

MC: At that time, Bay Path was—it's now a four year, full coed college—at that time was a two-year women's business college. So it was, it was an associate's degree but it was, it was strictly a business school. Secretarial school. I studied office procedures and secretarial work and, which is pretty much what I did most of my career after that. So, it was very, it was so different. We couldn't go off-campus during the week after six o' clock at night, we had a housemother we had to sign out with, and tell her where we were going, and who we were going with, and when we were coming back. And we had a 10 o' clock curfew on Friday night, and 11 o'clock curfew on Saturday night. And, oh it was just—I got a great education there, but it wasn't [laughs], wasn't necessarily the right school for my personality. I was a little bit too much of a rebel, I didn't like to be quite so confined. But it was a good school and I got a good education. Yeah. Very different from [laughs] what it is today, I'm sure.

AM: Now, sorry, was that common for colleges at the time or is that unique to Bay Path?

MC: There were a lot of women's colleges, they were very much like that. Tufts University had Jackson College, and it was, it was their women's branch. That's where my sister went and that was four years, but, it was the women's college. Men went to Tufts and, but the women graduated from Jackson. And the rules, regulations and, like I say, those curfews, that kind of same thing they were—I think Bay Path was particularly overprotective of its students. [laughs] But I do think, there were, many, many women's colleges, two-year and four-year back in the 60's they were a lot like that. Yeah.

BS: What challenges did you face in your education?

MC: I don't think I really faced many challenges. I loved learning, I loved being in school, and I don't know that I faced too many. The one thing, when you are talking about what it was like for women back in those days that, when I graduated from high school, there was a criteria for becoming nominated up for the National Honor Society and your principal had to nominate you. You had to have certain grade point average and you had to have certain community involvement in different—and I had all that in, in spades. But I wasn't planning to go to college

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after I graduated. I was going to get married and my principal wouldn't nominate me to the National Honor Society because I wasn't going to go on to college. And you know, that's not what the National Honor Society was all about. It should have been about how my career had been in high school. But he would not nominate me for that because I wasn't going to go on to college. I really had a very positive experience in my education. In those days women were not encouraged to do anything much more than there be teacher, a nurse, or a secretary, that was pretty much it. Nobody really encouraged women to go into the Arts and Sciences and anything like that. So, it wasn't like what we say to our daughters now, "So, what do you want to [be], you can be anything you want to be when you grow up." It was not. It really—you really were sort of put into a box. But in high school there was a track for those people who were going to go to work, and there was a track for people who were going to go on to college, and I actually was able to complete the requirements on both of those. So I had the best of both worlds. But I love school. I've been taking classes here and there, off and on, over the years. And I love it. I don't really feel I had too many challenges, other than not being super encouraged, but I think if I'd said I wanted to go on and be a rocket scientist, I could have made my way there. It's just the mindset in general was not like that, so I didn't even think about it. But, yeah, I don't think I would have ever been discouraged, or held back from it if I wanted to do that.

BS: What support networks and mentoring have been important to you?

MC: Well, my family has been very supportive, always. My parents were both very pro-education, so they always encouraged. I have just one sister, who is 11 months older than I am, so that's my only sibling. And they really were very encouraging of us to continue our education. So, from the beginning, I always felt like education was an important thing, but—and had support there. In school, I had a lot of good—I had some excellent teachers who were very supportive and, you know, very much mentors to me. And then other, other women, which is why, when I eventually went on to do is so important. I had a very—and I've always had a very strong network of female friends who have been mentors and teachers and supporters. That's always been really important to me. Yeah, so. That's what I try to turn around and do for other people.

ML: So, what was your first job?

MC: My first job was probably when I was in—well, my first job, you want to know what my really first job was [laughs] because there was a little farming town where I grew up and they grew—we had fields and fields and fields of tobacco that they grew—that they made the outer casings for cigars out of. And at age 14 you could get a farming permit. You couldn't work in an office or anything like that until you were 16, but at 14 you could get a farm permit. So, all the kids worked in the tobacco fields in the summertime and they'd come around at some awful—some god awful hour in the morning. It was still dark out and they'd pick us all up in a bus and take us out to these tobacco fields and we'd work out there and, and then they'd bring us home hot, tired, and dirty [laughs] at the end of the day. And that was my first job, I did that for two summers. And then when I was—when I was 16 I could get a regular work permit and I was

driving at that point and so then I started working in offices and then the first job I had that summer at 16 was working in an office for a small electrical contractor in Hartford.

ML: What other jobs have you had and what do you do now?

MC: I worked off and on in various offices, insurance companies, and so forth until I got married. And then, when I moved—married and moved here I did go to work at Worcester Junior College and worked in the registrar's office there until my first son was born and then I had 12 years off of work where I was able to be home with my kids, which was just such a great opportunity for me. And when I went back to work was when I went to work at Clark University and I worked there for eight years. As I said, I was an administrative assistant in the Visual and Performing Arts Department and then I left there to go and help my husband start our construction company. I worked in that for 20 years until I left there to go start my retreat center.

ML: How did you come to do this retreat center?

MC: From the time I was in my, I don't know, I was married and—and so maybe in my mid-20s or so, mid-to-late 20s. I have always been a religious scholar, if you will, or a studier—seeker. So, I was doing, I was doing a lot of leading—a lot of women's Bible studies at my church and other women's religious studies, spiritual studies and at one point decided—a bunch of us decided it would be fun to do a retreat so we rented a cottage on a lake and we were somewhere around here. We went there for the weekend and we had a blast. I said, "I really love doing this," and so bit by bit those started to grow, be more popular and then, the home that I lived in then at the time with my husband—we had a barn in the backyard that wasn't being used—we didn't have any horses anymore, so I turned the hay loft into a little meeting space and several weekends a year, he would go out and stay in our summer cottage and I would have the women come in and take over the house. And they'd come Friday night and stay through the weekend and—and it just—I loved the work. I just loved the work and the women just absolutely—just ate it up. They were so happy to have a place to go and we were really studying women's spirituality at that point. It began to grow beyond the—the women in my church and we began to really sort of expand our understanding of spirituality and—but we would come in, they would come in for the weekend and we would do some studying, we would do some, maybe some craft-making, or we would do some, some kind of experiential things. We did—we had somebody come in and teach sacred dance one time, which was just fabulous, you know. So we would spend the weekend together and the very—and the more I did it, the more I wanted to do it and the more I realized I was good at it and people seemed to get something out of coming on these weekends. And the last one that I had at my home, we had—we had 15 women there for the weekend and the youngest one was 35, the oldest one was 72 or something like that. Some of them were married, some of them weren't. Some of them had children, some of them didn't. Some worked, some didn't. So a lot diversity amongst them about what their current life situation was. But as we talked around the room at the end of the day on Sunday before we broke up, every single woman around that room said, "I've never felt like I was enough," and that was heartbreaking for me because that had been part of my story too. And I don't want to say a lot

about this, but my dad was a difficult person to live with and, and I never felt like I could be good enough and so, to hear all these women, from all these different backgrounds saying, “I’ve never felt like I was enough.” I realized we’ve got to be different. We’ve got to learn to learn to think about ourselves differently. We’ve got to create some place where women can come where they can be encouraged. Where they can be empowered. Where they can see what incredible creatures they are [laughs] and what gifts they have and what strengths they have and where they, you know, where it’s safe to be who you are and not have to put on a mask for anybody and just have some time to get out of the busyness of the world and just find yourself in a way. And a lot of the work that I did was for women who—whose kids were finally kind of launched and they were—so they’d had their life of being a mother. So, they filled a role, they’ve been a wife, they’ve been a mother, probably during that time they’ve also been an employee of some kind and everything else and now all of a sudden their kids were gone and they’re kind of looking like, “Who am I? What, what happened to me? What happened to the me that I was when I was younger?” or “What happened to my dreams?” or “Who am I now?” And so, to have a place where, where women can come and really just learn that about themselves. And this group that was coming to the house was wanting more and more and more of this time and it was feeling like I couldn’t really keep asking my husband [laughs] to leave for the weekend and it just felt like it was time for, for there to be a space set aside specifically for women to just explore who they were and to be supported. And I know you were talking about a support system and all that kind of stuff and I had an opportunity to—I had a financial situation come up where I had some—I had an opportunity to buy this house, this great old farm house up in Hubbardston. And I bought it and began this retreat center. And when we first started we called ourselves The Gathering Inn. We wanted to be The Gathering Place, but we couldn’t. That name was already taken so we became The Gathering Inn and we were that for a long time because it just felt like, you know, we were in either about I-N or I-N-N, both things, you know. People coming in. We’re gathering them into the folds so to speak, but we’re also an inn in that they could come and stay overnight and, and you know, then spend some time there. And we eventually changed our name to True North Holistic Center because it—first of all—The Gathering Inn was confusing people, they thought we were—we were either a restaurant or maybe a battered women’s shelter, or they didn’t know what we were with the word inn at the end, so everything seems to be all about branding these days and the branding wasn’t working. Anyway, we did change our name to True North Holistic Center and that suited us well for how the work had sort of evolved over the years and the “true north” coming from the fact that years ago, when sailors were out at sea, they didn’t have all these instruments or anything. The only way they knew where they were is by the north star and as long as they could keep that in mind and in view, then they couldn’t get too far lost. They might veer off the course a little bit, but as long as they could follow that true north, then they stayed the course and they were safe and they didn’t get lost. And my sense is that every woman—every person—but because I was particularly focusing on women—has that true north within herself. What are the things that guide your life that aren’t moveable? There are some things that are going to change as you grow, as you age and have different experiences, but there’s some things that just aren’t moveable for you. Maybe it’s that you feel very honor bound to always speak your truth or family is so important to you or service to others is so important to you. Whatever those things are that make you who you are, the things that make your truly inner core being, those things don’t change in your life. Your circumstances

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change, the people may come and go in and out of your life, but those things don't change. If you can stay with that true north of your own personal being you're not going to get too far lost. You might wander off into something else and decide that that's not so good for you or you might get involved with a person that you kind of think, "Eh, that's not so good for me." You're always going to come back to that, that guiding principle in your life. So, that's how we chose that name and why we came around to using True North. But, but we—and we did many programs, but there were mixed gender programs and those were great because I think that within each individual is that balance of feminine and masculine and if we're asking our women to find that balance with themselves and we're asking our species to find that balance with themselves, then we got to help our men find it as well. They've got to find it. A way to be in touch with, with their feminine side and get that in balance for themselves. So, we started doing some mixed gender things which were—which were great. But primarily because my heart was towards helping women find, [sigh] you know find that place within themselves where they feel grounded and whole and learn to love themselves. My, my main focus was always on the women.

ML: What were or are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework and childcare?

MC: In my years as a wife and mother?

ML: Yeah.

MC: [long pause] Oh, we pretty much sort of divided up the housework, I was pretty much responsible for what was inside and he responsible for outside—mowed the lawn and you know, shoveled the snow and that sort of stuff. And I was pretty much the—the cook, the cleaner, the housekeeper. Fairly traditional roles that we played, just—we had a very—because we worked together for so many years, in that context was very clear what our roles were, you know. He was the—he was the president of the company, he was the boss and I had my role over here. So, that was always pretty clear and pretty easy to do. It wasn't a—it didn't seem to be a problem. And at home it was pretty evenly divided up and—and it was also again I think based a lot on... [pause] We [sigh] well, when we went into the marriage, I think he was basing a lot of his expectations on what his parents' marriage had been like and I loved his parents so dearly. They were just the most incredibly wonderful people, but his mother was a very passive person whose sort of sole job was to take care of everybody in the family, you know. I was going to do more. I was happy to [laughs] take care of my family, but I also wanted some things for myself. So, I was a little bit more of a, a little—not so much just a stay home, take care of the family. I always wanted to work and always wanted to be involved in—when I wasn't actively employed I, I—all those years—and when my kids were growing up, I was very active as a volunteer and all kinds of things in some organizations and stuff like that. But still I think pretty much as you look back over the whole history and you know, we, we pretty much divided up the inside-outside work.

ML: How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests?

MC: Sometimes it's been hard. [pause] I was—as I said I was fortunate when my kids were little to be able to be home with them. I really respect and understand what it is—how it must be for women who—my girlfriend's daughter just had a baby over the summer and she's a teacher and come September, she went back to work. She had to go back to work financially. You know, it would have killed me to have to leave my child with somebody after three months. So, I was very blessed and very fortunate to be able to not have to do that and be able to stay home, but I know that it's a different world now. So, you know, I don't judge anybody for doing that. They're doing what they need to do, but I just think it's got to be really hard. So, I didn't. First I didn't have to do that, but as my kids were older and they were sort of launched out on their own or they were in high school, they were, you know, they didn't need me to that level. I did get involved in a lot of different things. At one point I was very, very active in the National Association of Women in Construction, otherwise NAWIC for short. And I traveled a lot with that. I was the northeast regional director which put me on the national board, so I traveled a lot with that. And then I got involved with their nonprofit National Education Foundation and was on that board for a while. So there was a lot of traveling there and it created a few ripples at home too because I was gone quite a bit traveling with that organization. And I found it hard to balance all of that. I really... [pause] I found it hard, I didn't find it hard to balance it in terms of what I needed to do and wanted to do and what my responsibilities, and I found it hard relationally to balance that. It always felt like there was somebody else who needed something with me and I was busy over here and then I'd get over here and then somebody over there needed something. It was hard, I felt, I felt that in terms of relationally that it was hard to have enough time to give to everybody and so, again, what did I do but shortchange myself, you know. Who do you take care of last? When you've got all these other people looking to you for something, you usually take care of yourself last. And I, and I paid the price for that health wise and everything else. It just—I just wasn't—it was hard, so... [pause] I think that's one of the biggest challenges for women is to try to balance their responsibilities and their—what they want to do with their families, and with their work, and with having personal life of any kind.

ML: How do you feel about the choices you've made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

MC: No, I don't. I, I feel like, I feel like, you know, we all have a path to follow and as I look back over my life, things that seemed difficult at the time or seemed like maybe they weren't a good choice or something. I can now see the wisdom of how they played into my life and what I've gained from those experiences, even the more difficult ones. So, I don't—I kind of don't think there's wrong, you know. For me I don't feel like there are wrong choices. I feel like they were the best choices that I could make at the time and, and I've learned from them all. They've all been, they've all been good teachers, even some of the ones that might have looked like bad decisions at the time. They've all been good teachers for me and they've all made me part of who I am now. I don't look back with, with regret. Yeah, I really can't say that I do. I mean, there are some things that were sad the way they turned out, [pause] but, but I think even that has played a part in, you know, in the path that I'm walking and just made me, made me who I am, so.

AM: Do you consider yourself active politically?

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MC: I consider myself strongly opinionated politically [laughs], as opposed to active politically. And I haven't been active politically in recent years. I was when I was a little bit younger, but, but I haven't been and for a couple of reasons. I think one is that in the role of a leader in such a thing as the retreat center. Not only, I needed to always be sort of conscious of several different things. One is that, is that everyone who came there, came with a different—their idea of what spirituality is was different. So, I couldn't. I needed to always be inclusive and mindful that everybody was coming from a different place and be respectful of that. So, I didn't want to impose my opinion on anybody. And I, I think that I sort of carried that throughout everything, you know. I'm not going to speak politically. I'm not going to speak religiously or anything like that with other people because I don't want to be in a position—as I was somebody that people were looking up to as a leader—I don't want to be in the position of feeling like I was imposing my ideas on anybody. So—and I have family members who are polar opposites of my beliefs politically. So, [laughs] so you know. I just—I mean I vote, I'm involved in and I—all that, but I'm not one whose been very vocal politically.

AM: I know you mentioned some of your volunteer and community work based things that you have done, the food bank, the Interfaith Hospitality, as well as the nonprofit National Education Foundation. Are there any other groups or volunteer opportunities that you have been involved with in the community?

MC: [long pause] I'm a hospice volunteer. That's something that's recent with me, I just finished some training. That's something that I've been wanting to do for quite a long time. I've been involved in recent years with MVOC, which is the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center. They do incredible work and just about a year or so ago, they bought a house in Winchendon and opened it up for women—for female veterans because there's no residence in Massachusetts for homeless female veterans. There's plenty for male veterans, but not for female. And so they just bought this house and converted that and made it into a home for female veterans and I've been—was very, very involved in fitting that up and getting that building converted and outfitted for women and I'm still very involved in that. I've been involved with HOPE in Gardner, which is the House of Peace and Education, which is a place for women, who are—primarily for women who'd like to get into or back into the workforce after they've been out of work for a while. And they have after school programs for the kids and summer, summer programs for the kids, so their moms can be getting their training and get computer training and job skill training and social skill training and that sort of thing. HOPE has a class, an eight-week class for the women. They come in, like I said and do their computer training and that kind of stuff and then they go out and they get internships and they eventually find—hopefully find themselves a job. And so each of these eight-week classes, I've always gone in and done a day with them on what is spiritual wellness and what is holistic wellness and talking about physical wellness and emotional wellness and financial wellness the whole package of what holistic wellness is. And I've—so I've done that with, with each class that's come along. So I've been involved with a lot of that lately.

AM: Now you've very involved and you're associated with a lot of organizations, so what led you to be so involved with volunteering and dedicating yourself to the community in general, or maybe in particular instances, some specific organizations?

MC: I've just always drawn to it. Maybe it was because my mother volunteered at a lot of places. She was a Girl Scout leader and different things like that and that set a tone. My sister is very, very involved in volunteering too. She's the political one. [laughs] She's very involved in the political process, but she does a lot of volunteering as Well. I've always felt like I gained more when I volunteer somewhere than what I give. I'm involved with the women's—it's called the Women-to-Women Committee on the Gardner Chamber of Commerce and we do monthly luncheons with speakers and so on and a lot of other things too and our—sort of our theme this year was about, "Give a little, get a lot." So when you volunteer, you're giving some of your time and you get so much more in return. I've always found that volunteering is just so enriching and I meet some great people and I learn so much from them and people are so appreciative when you just do little things. But it just, it enriches my life. It just, it just adds a whole layer of, of experience and contacts with great people and helps me see the world through a different lens than I would if I was just in my own little world. You get out and you see what some people, what people's lives are like, and some of the struggles that they have. And it makes me so grateful for the life I have, but also makes me realize that I've been blessed with a lot. So, I need to, I need to and want to give that back because I enjoy it and I feel like I've got something to give and—but it just adds such a richness to my life by doing it. So, it's just been a part of what I've done my whole life. Maybe I'm a—I don't know, I'm always collecting people around who need help for some reason or another [laughs], I just, I just—including four-legged people. So, but yeah. I love volunteering and, and a part of being at this place where I'm finally retiring is, I'm going to have a little more opportunity. I can't see myself sitting out on the porch with my cup of tea. I'm going to—I'll find the things to be involved in and I have some more time to do that and not have the work responsibilities. So great, looking forward to that.

AM: What were the main goals of your service, or what are the main goals of your service to the community?

MC: To help other people. To ease some of the stress and the burdens that other people are carrying and help maybe facilitate a way into some of the solutions of the problems that other people are facing that can become more permanent solutions for them instead of just the short-term. I mean the food pantry is great and people are hungry and they need it, you know. You send them home with a bag of groceries, but that hasn't really changed their lives. If we can find ways to help them find better employment or find better housing—cheaper housing or something, so they don't need to be in a food bank line. So—but again, I think I just—there's people under such burdens and they're so stressed and they're so, they're carrying such heavy weight, so many of them, and if I can help find a way to [pause] ease that for them. Maybe point them towards some resources that are going to help them be a little bit—have a little bit of a, of a break—be a little bit of respite from that, those struggles. Now that just makes me very happy. [laughs]

AM: What was the main program or initiative you've worked on?

MC: Now that I'm expounding on all of this, I do seem to be drawn a lot towards situations where people need housing or that kind of thing. Between Cathy's House and the Hospitality Network and all those kinds of things. So, until I heard myself explaining all that I guess I didn't really know how much I've been drawn into that particular part of problem solving. [pause] But I do feel that in many ways we, and women in particular, just don't understand what strengths we have within ourselves, and maybe to solve those problems for ourselves. And so, for me to be able to help people find that inner strength and discover resources within themselves that they didn't know they had and to offer a support—a network of some kind of support. I guess I like taking people with a problem, and solutions over here, and finding a way to put them together, you know. And it doesn't always have to be me that's solving anybody's problem, it's just that I love taking the situation over here and this situation and like, "Oh look it, that would be a perfect combination and that would, you know, that would help somebody's life," so, I kind of see myself sometimes as the hub, pulling in different parts of the wheel until it comes together. So, I really enjoy that aspect of it.

AM: What would you consider your or, your—or any of the organizations you have worked with, major accomplishment, like the greatest? [laughs]

MC: The greatest accomplishment [pause] I think when I've had people come to me, after they've been involved with True North or been at one of my retreats and, and say, "You know what? You've opened my eyes to something I never saw before and [sigh] being in this situation has, has really changed my life—has really grounded me—has really given me a foundation that I didn't know I had that I could stand on." Even though I've loved the group things, I've especially loved the one-on-one, and lots of retreats we had at the beginning, were just individual women who would come for a weekend or come for two or three days. And I realized that Friday night, everybody's kind of feeling each other out. Nobody knows anybody and you're not sure if you can trust anybody. But by Sunday to be at a place where that woman is able to sit down over the kitchen table with a cup of tea, and trust me enough to tell me her life story, because in the telling of your story is the healing—that's the beginning of the healing. When you can tell your story, you can hear yourself tell it—you—it's the—story telling is powerful and you can begin to hear the solutions and you can begin to hear, "Huh? I've really got something here I didn't know I had." And I feel such a privilege, and such an honor, and such a sacred trust that people will tell you that kind of a story and really just open their soul and get up and walk away and say, "You've changed my life." Well, I haven't changed their life. Their being able to see their life through a different lens is what's changed it. So, you know, if it was only one person in my entire life who ever walked away and said, "Having time spent here talking with you like this has changed my life," would be worth everything that I've ever done. [laughs] It just is an amazing privilege and I've heard that over and over and over again in the last 8 or 9 years running this retreat center. It is people coming back and saying, "My life is grounded and balanced in a way it never was," and gosh, who gets to do that? You know, who gets to do that kind of work? I just think it's such an honor and such a privilege to be doing that. So, yeah, I mean [laughs] it's such a joy, such a joy for me. And I imagine I'll find some way to keep doing that on some level with

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the business, the business officially closed. I'm sure I'm going to find other ways to continue to do that kind of work because it just feels like what my life is about. So, yeah I—there's so many wonderful things that happened, and—but they're all about women and they're all about empowering women. It's all about helping women, whether it's through the construction industry, whether it's the veterans, whatever it is. It always comes back to helping women really find themselves and become empowered.

AM: You have mentioned how religion has inspired your life, as well as your work. Would you like to say more about the role religion has played in your life?

MC: [sigh] Religion has, religion has changed a lot for me. What I've discovered over the years is a difference in, in my mind, between religion and spirituality. With religion being—spirituality being the way we all individually connect to, to each other, to the planet, you know, to our universe, to whatever and however we see that guiding force in our lives. To me that's spirituality. I—dogs are spiritual, you know, people are—there's a spark of life within us, that universal spark of life, that I feel is spirituality. Sometimes that gets expressed through religion. And by that I mean a specific set of doctrines or beliefs or practices, where we live out that spiritual spark that's within us. So, I see a big differ—I was very involved in, in the structured church religion expression for most of my life. I'm not now, which is surprising to everybody. I don't go to church. [laughs] And it's like I've lived in church for years. It was just, it was my life. I was there all the time. And I don't now, and partly it's because I've just spent the last, what, nine years working in an environment that's constantly dwelling on spirituality so, I felt like I had a pretty good spiritual diet going on there. But I also don't find, I find that any kind of religious expression through a specific church, or mosque, or synagogue, or whatever it might be is too confining for how I see my connection to what I feel is that spiritual world. I feel like each one of those is a beautiful expression, but an incomplete expression of that spiritual spark. So, I want to be able to come over here, and do some Buddhist practices, and then I want to be able to come over here and do this, and come over here and do that. And so, I can't find a church, you know, that holds it all. And so, it's been a very interesting process for me to kind of let go of some of—I was a very strong Evangelical Christian, at one point, and probably pretty obnoxious about it too if I look back [laughs] on it over the years. [laughs] “This is the only way!” And I don't think it's the only way anymore. I think they're all, you know, they say there's many paths to the same mountain. And I think they're all—they all have something beautiful to bring and I can learn, and I can be, and I can experience from all of that. So, there has been a shift for me between the place of organized religion in my life versus the place of spirituality. And I think everything falls in—I think washing dishes is a spiritual experience, you know, I mean it doesn't have to be sort of those things that we think of spiritual. I think it's just we are spiritual beings. We're all spiritual beings just living, you know, we happen to be living in a human environment at the moment, but we're all—our core is, is spiritual. Feel like we've come from a spiritual place, whatever you want to call that. Have—are having this experience of life now in human form and all that's wonderful about that. And that when we die, we'll return to some spiritual place, and so, I'm just so broadened how I see it, that I don't, I don't see myself as being religious anymore. [laughs] So, I don't know if this makes any sense to you or not.

AM: It does. [laughs]

ML: Makes perfect sense.

MC: Yep, so, which doesn't mean I can't go to church and hear beautiful music and see beautiful liturgy and think it's gorgeous and be uplifted by it. Or I can sit out in the woods and meditate and have this same experience. So, I think there's a great place for religious expression. I just haven't found where I want to do that now right at this moment. So, and that's part of being—having so many people come through those doors in the last eight, nine years, each bringing their own expression and their own understanding, that I've learned so much from other people that I just, I—it's just sort of blown the lid off what I used to believe and, and broadened it. I don't think it's—I haven't rejected anything I used to believe. I just—I've broadened it to mean so much more. So the spiritual connection to that Creative Force, whatever anyone wants to call that, has been part of my life since I was a little girl. I've just always known that was there, and it's always been important to me. It's just taken different—taken on different forms over the years. I can walk out in the woods and feel that connection. I am kind of a pine needle path girl. I like—[laughs] I love being out in the woods, and being out in nature. I feel really connected, spiritually, that way. But, but religion, in terms of belonging to an organized practice is not a part of my life anymore.

BS: How have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

MC: Well, [sigh] in 1990—I'm basically a very healthy person who's had a couple of dramatic things. So, in 1991, I fell off my horse and broke my back and was in a body brace for 10 months. And I had to learn to accept—ask for, and accept help. For somebody who thinks they can do it all, that was very hard. It was hard for my family and it was hard for me. I was just incapacitated; I couldn't do anything. I had to ask for help and that was a hard lesson for me. I think it made me more aware though when I got into some of these other volunteer things that I'm doing of how it feels to be the person who's accepting some help and so you offer the help in a different way that doesn't make them uncomfortable. I know how I felt when I had to ask for help and so when somebody asks, well It's just made a difference in how I go about some of my volunteer stuff. But I recovered from that and I'm great, fine, healthy.

Then I developed breast cancer. And I had a mastectomy, and chemo, and went through a very, very difficult time and I am cancer free at 10 years now and everything's great. But when you really look at your vulnerability, when you look at the fact that, "I could die from this," it changes your perspective on what's important in life. And it, it really—I guess that's all I can say is just your priorities—you just realize what's important, what's not important, and the things that used to maybe bug me just doesn't matter. I'm here. I'm seeing the sunshine, and smelling the air. I'm good. I don't—things, they just aren't important to argue over or get upset about. And it was a huge, huge, huge, huge change in the way I look at life when you, when you look at your own mortality in that way. And I had wonderful support through that, and I kept a journal and had have gone back to that journal over and over, and over again. And when I read all of the synchronicities of the wonderful things that happened, and the way that people helped, and the

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way things just fell into place when I thought there wasn't a solution to anything, and when I... yeah. I just, I just look at that journey and realize that—and I said this many, many, many, many times that having cancer was the best gift I could have ever had. It completely—it just completely changed—it changed my life, in a way that has made me so grateful for just little things. And, you know, grateful to be alive, and grateful and, and to not worry. That's part of what I was saying about, you know, your path—when you're talking about regrets and stuff. Your path, is your path, and that was a big huge U turn in my path that—but the things that come along, you just know you're on a trajectory and you're on a path and, and just flow with it. You know, just flow with it. I mean there's so many things that I've let go of that, that in the years past I would have tried to clutch onto. As an example, when I was going from the divorce one of the things was [sigh] the house that we lived in. And I loved that house. It was my sanctuary. I helped design a lot of it, and everything else and I loved that house. And I was like, "I'm not going to let go of this house. I'm going to fight tooth or nail to keep..." And I had this dear wise friend that said to me, "Merry, what happens if you just hold the house in an open palm, and if you're meant to have it, you'll have it. If you're not, then letting go means something better is coming along." I said, "No [groans]." But I finally got to that place where I could say, "Okay, alright. So be it." Whatever is going to happen is going to happen. And I didn't get to keep the house, and it was okay. It was just okay. It's fine. In hindsight it was hard in the moment. But in hindsight it's like, yep it's okay. So, things like that that—outcomes that seem so important or the—being attached to the way things you think things should be. And things are going to be, the way things are going to be and not that I become a doormat and roll over. I've got a lot of things I want to do, and things that I'm trying to make happen, but if they don't, okay they don't. Then you move on to something else so going through that cancer experience, as I said, is just—is probably the greatest gift I ever had. So I'm very happy to be sitting here having a chat with you lovely ladies. [laughs]

BS: What are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable, health care?

MC: Quality affordable health... I have always been fortunate to have my health care provided through my employer and even now, I am covered on a group policy through the former construction company that I worked with, with my husband and now my son. Our son owns the business, and so I'm still in that. So I am fine. I haven't had to, to look for, or struggle to try and find any help. I know it's a big issue other places, but I haven't—personally haven't had to experience that so, yeah. Very lucky for that, but [laughs] I know it's a big, it's a big problem for a lot of people.

BS: Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

MC: [My dog] Abby's. [laughs] At the moment, nobody's. I had been caregiver when both my mother and father-in-law were in their upper 80s, and they were both in poor health, and I was their full-time caregiver for about five years. And then when my mom was in her mid-80s too—she died when she was 90. As a matter of fact, all three of them died when they were 90. At different times, but I was the caregiver. Not a day-to-day, but I was sort of responsible for

looking out for my mom. So I've been that route, but right now I don't have anybody that I have to be responsible for health wise.

ML: How do you get through tough times, and what, what kind of thoughts keep you going?

MC: [sigh] I am a certified Reiki practitioner, and so I do that energy healing for myself when times are—when things are stressful, or when I am worried about anything. I have practiced yoga. I wish I could say I was a little more faithful to it than I am, because I love it. I get busy and... hard time getting on the mat. But some of the yogic philosophies, really are helpful for me. And meditation, and just time to be alone. If I can be outside in nature, and meditating, I can get really grounded in times when there's difficulties or there's decisions or there's stress. Or then I call up a good friend. My sister and I—she lives in Florida—but she and I are—we touch base almost every day and, and so, there's always somebody there that I know I can reach out to, and get—with a voice, and I can say, “Ahhhh, I'm losing my mind.” And, you know, she talks me off the ledge. But so, we offer that to each other, and that's been really helpful. I do find, as I get older, I need a lot more time alone, just to be by myself and be quiet, than I used to. Used to be this whirling, dervish, running from thing, to thing, to thing, to thing, and really thriving on being energized by other people. But as I get older, as much as I love being with other people, and I do still get energized by it, I need a lot more time to be quiet and be alone. So, that really helps me.

ML: How do you define success in your life? Has this definition changed over time?

MC: Well sure, when you're young, you think success means you're going to be at the top of your career field. Or you're going to have financial success. And—I mean I've done well. I've been very blessed. I've never had to worry about, I've never had—I've never been struggling for how I'm going to live, or how I'm going to support myself, or how my family's going to be in terms of that. So, I haven't had to struggle with that. But for me, right now, I feel like success is if I can live my days, get up and spend a day, where I'm able to be true to myself, and to help other people, and to [sigh] just, just feel that I've walked the path I'm supposed to walk for that day. That's success for me. I don't, I don't need a lot of fame, and spotlight, and I think just to be—mostly just to, to be—to spend a day being true to myself. Being who I am. Being grounded in that is the most—makes me feel like I've had a successful day.

ML: Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

MC: Well, I think that kind of goes back to the success answer because to—I would say at a young age to really spend time getting to know who you are. You know, who's the real you when you're not trying to put on a face for a friend, or you're not trying to fill a role for somebody, or you're not—what are the things that make your life feel juicy? What are the things that make you feel alive? Where's your passion? What are the things that you're passionate about? What are the things that are your true north, that thing that's not changeable in your life? Find those things now, and keep bringing those to the front of your life—the forefront of your

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life. Because, your circumstances will change, and grow, and be good, and be not good, and be up and down, and all over the place. People who will come into your life, who will try to draw you away from the truth of who you are, and as a former people pleaser, I often would deny what I really wanted because I wanted this person to like me or I wanted to look good and some of those things took me off course. I got involved with people who weren't good for me. They drew—they sapped energy from me, and I didn't even realize it at the time. So I would say, the best thing for young women to do is really spend some time now at this age, finding out those, finding out who—what your core—who you are in the core. Who are you when nobody's looking? What are the things that are important to you? What are the things that bring joy, and satisfaction, and a sense of well-being into your life, and, and a sense of fun, and—but don't lose fun, because you get buried, and you get out of school, and you get into your life, and you're building your career, and your family, and you can't forget to have fun. You know, life, life should be fun. Take your sidewalk chalk, and go out and have fun [laughs]. One of the most successful retreats we ever did was finding your inner child, and the women just came for the weekend and we did exactly that. We got out sidewalk chalk, we got out hula hoops, we got bubbles, and everything else. And these were all women who were in their 50s and they were having so much fun. Although, we all figured out that we couldn't jump rope for as long as we used to be able to. [laughs] But yeah, we forget to have fun. That's why adult coloring is becoming so popular. We forget to have fun. I think if you can find that sense of who you are in the core, and find some things that will support you in that, and encourage you in that, and help you stay grounded in that, you'll have a better opportunity—sort of stay true to that as you make your way through life. If you can start to recognize what some of that is now. And then, circumstances can change around you. The house—you can have the house or not have the house. Won't matter. You know, you'll feel, you'll feel grounded, and where you're supposed to be. Balanced if you stay true to that. And if you can focus on that—finding that about yourself—if you can focus on that and keep coming back to that because over the years as your life circumstances change, you need to keep reexamining that. Because it'll be easy to get buried under other things. So just keep bringing it back out. And keep a journal about it, keep tabs on what you're thinking about those things and [laughs] you'll be fine. You'll be good. And then you'll find your own success, because you'll be your own person.

ML: Okay, now that we are working to a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include in your opinion?

MC: You're telling the full history. Say that again.

ML: Okay, now that we are working to a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what, in your opinion, should we be sure to include? Anything at all.

MC: I think it would be easy to get caught up in this project in facts, dates in history, and this woman who did this, and was the first women who did such and such, or, or whatever. And statistics, and all that. Get to their hearts. Go to where their hearts are about. For example, the women who—that woman who was the first one who did whatever it might be. What was she feeling? What kind of support did she have? What was her heart about that? Why? What drove

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her to do that? I think, I think that's, to me, as important, or more so even, than the statistical facts of who did what, when, where, how, you know.

ML: Is there anyone else you would suggest us we talk to?

MC: Who has a connection to Worcester? You're really looking for... [pause] Nobody that comes to mind right now, but let me think about that.

ML: Sounds good.

MC: Yeah let me think about that.

AM: Well, thank you so much for speaking with us.

ML: Thank you very much.

MC: Well, you are welcome. Thank you. I am excited about this project. I think it's great.

AM: Your story is definitely inspiring.

ML: It really is.

AM: Is very interesting.