

Interviewee: Ms. Nancy Dube
Interviewers: Deanna Ambold and James Lentini
Date of Interview: March 21, 2012
Location: Assumption College, Worcester Massachusetts
Transcribers: Deanna Ambold and James Lentini



Overseen by: Dr. Carl Keyes, Assumption College

Abstract:

Nancy Dube grew up in Framingham, MA and moved to Worcester, MA in 1971 when she went to Becker College. During her school years, she faced financial issues, but was able to overcome them. She married, divorced, and is now married to her current husband William Dube. Together they have had two children. After her divorce, religion played a huge role in her life and still does to this day, which allowed her to relay her faith to her children. After she got laid off, she decided to start her own business because she didn't want to go into corporate America again. She works from home. She is part of many community committees and does a lot of volunteer and non-profit work for Greater Worcester.

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

ND: Okay, so my maiden name is Whitman. I've been married before so I've also used the name of Johnna-Lewis and currently I use the name Nancy Dube.

DA: Okie Dokie. When were you born?

ND: 1953.

DA: Have you ever married? Well you –

ND: Yes, twice.

DA: Well, what were their names?

ND: My first husband's name was Neil Johnna-Lewis and my current husband's name is William Dube.

DA: Did you have any children?

ND: Yes I have two children.

DA: How old are they?

ND: My daughter is 24 and my son will be 21 in a couple weeks.

DA: Oh cool. Do you have any grandchildren?

ND: I have a step grandchild.

DA: From which side?

ND: From my current husband's son's child.

DA: Okay. So what culture or ethnicity do you identify yourself with?

ND: I'm Caucasian and I'm Jewish.

DA: So tell me about your parents. Like, where they lived.

ND: I grew up in Framingham; my dad ran a retail store. His name was Harold. He ran a large drug store in the center of Framingham as the store manager. My mother's name is Ethel and she was a personnel manager.

DA: Have you lived in Worcester – you haven't lived in Worcester your whole life, so when did you move here?

ND: I originally moved here in 1971 and I went to Becker [College]. Sounds like forever ago!

DA: What neighborhood do you live in now? Like, is it a ruffian neighborhood?

ND: Sure, I live in Winter Heights, which is up behind St. Peter Marian's at the base of the water tower.

DA: Okay, so how many other places have you lived in your life?

ND: Let's see. Before Worcester, I lived in Spencer, and before Spencer I lived in Framingham... I lived in Brookline... Quincy. A few.

DA: Oh wow, that's impressive. So do you have any family members in the area now?

ND: Well, I have my husband; my daughter is currently living with us, looking for an apartment. My son is home this weekend and he's at UMASS Amherst and I have a mother in a nursing home in Worcester.

DA: Okay. So what challenges do you think the city still faces, like, what would you change about it if you could?

ND: Hmm. [laughter] It's still run like a small town instead of the big city that it is. It's not as progressive as it needs to be to compete even with the [Route]495 belt, Marlborough, or to bringing her ___? into Boston. What would I change about it? It's a hard question.

DA: It's pretty deep.

ND: I think – I think I would make the lines of communication between city governments and the tax payers more open. I don't think just through our – our city council is clear lines and our communication is disseminating down.

DA: If you have seen those, what changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

ND: Oh my gosh, tons of changes! When I first came to Worcester, downtown Worcester was an active strip of stores, and restaurants, etc. I've watched them take Worcester Center down and watched it rebuilt into a galleria, into a mall. Then I watched that fail. I've watched them put in a whole bunch of little stores, then I watched them make it into an outlet. I watched hospitals and – and businesses such as St. Vincent's and Fallon Clinic grow from little tiny Ma and Pa operations to the predominate things that they are in the community today. So a lot of physical changes.

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

ND: Distinct characteristics... probably the consortium of colleges.

DA: That's what I was thinking. So many colleges. All you see, just waves of colleges. So what do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been, generally?

ND: I think they're coming around a lot more. I'm active in – I'm on the advisory board for the *Sensible Women in Enterprise* so I'm obviously a proponent of – of women and both non-profit and in business. I think they should be on mentorship programs and I think women in the city should be mentored more and helped more. From the top to the bottom.

DA: So this is now the education area: So you said you attended college here at Becker, so where did you attend primary and high school?

ND: I went to Framingham South High School, so I grew up in Framingham. I also took my HR [human resources] certification here at Assumption.

DA: Oh cool. Did you attend a graduate school after?

ND: No, I didn't.

DA: Okay. What were the challenges that you faced in education, like studying or extracurricular programs?

ND: I faced a lot of them. Some of them were financial. It was difficult. I wasn't pushed to go to college. I wish I had gone further now. The single biggest challenge was that I wasn't really pushed to do it when I was younger and it's a lot harder to go back as an adult.

DA: So upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

ND: Work. [laughter] Work forever. I still see it as my option.

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

ND: What's important with mentoring?

DA: I suppose.

ND: I think when somebody can guide you and help you navigate your course as opposed to doing it on your own and trying to figure everything out. I haven't always had a mentor. I think that's important.

DA: So this is for the work aspect. So do you work outside the home or...?

ND: Actually I work from home.

DA: Really?

ND: Yes, three years ago I started Dube Consulting which is my own business and I'm a human resource consultant to small businesses and in addition I write resumes for people who are in transition work, on coaching people around that. And I also do some classes around LinkedIn and social media.

DA: Oh, wow.

ND: Yeah.

DA: That's useful, that's pretty useful. Yeah, let's see, so how—how did you come to do this instead of working outside? How did you work from home?

ND: I got laid off about three years ago when we were in a down economy and I had been working as a human resource consultant and decided that I didn't want to go back into corporate America, and said, "Let me try this myself" ... here I am.

DA: So what has this work meant to you, how's it important?

ND: It's allowed me to grow more professionally. I've learned to be an entrepreneur, I've learned that I have to work very hard. I can't depend on anyone else for money or for support. Anything that I want to generate has to come from within but it's also allowed me to have more creativity and a lot more freedom.

DA: Alright. So what are your primary responsibilities in the term of house work, like, are you the main component?

ND: Everything!

[Both laughing]

ND: I'm the maid. [Laughing]

DA: Okay, does your husband or kids do any or is it just -- ?

ND: Once in a while, sometimes if I ask they'll do something. Most of the time it's not volunteered but if I ask.

DA: Fair enough. How do you balance different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

ND: By asking for help, reaching out to friends and utilizing my network of support. It hasn't always been easy.

DA: How would you characterize the personal and professional costs of your chosen paths, and what are the benefits of what you do now?

ND: [Thinking] That's hard. Well the benefits of it are that I have freedom. The balance of it is that I have to work a lot more hours and a lot *harder* to make a living because no one is giving me a paycheck every week. If I want to make money I have to be visible, I have to market myself, I have to do the work. I have to engage in conversations.

DA: Okay, so what type of work does your husband do now?

ND: My husband works in manufacturing. He does quality control and inspection.

DA: Where's that? Right in Worcester?

ND: No, he works for a company right in Charlton.

DA: Oh okay.

ND: So, it's not too bad.

DA: So the next chunk is on politics, and community involvement: So how do you consider yourself active politically?

ND: Other than going to vote not too much, any more. When I was younger I did some campaign work for various candidates, but not too much today.

DA: Okay.

ND: It's no fun.

DA: Not any more. Have you been involved in volunteer community work – oh – so what groups did you work for?

ND: Yes, well as I mentioned earlier, I'm currently on the advisory committee for the Center of Women and Enterprise. I also sit on the advisory committee for the Worcester Credit Union, although that's not volunteer. I mean that's not profit I think that helping others and mentoring others is —is huge here so, yeah.

DA: Yeah, so what role has religion played in your life?

ND: An important one. I didn't know that growing up, my religion was driven into me. I was mandated to follow it, and I rebelled against it and thought it wasn't going to be any part of my life. As I got older and as I got divorced, I found out that I had a very strong connection with God and I've been practicing my faith. It gave me some stability and helped me over some really difficult times. I raised my children with a religious background, and I've built some relationships that I've had for over twenty years, people that I met that way. I'm a lot stronger than I ever thought I would be.

DA: Okay, so the last main chunk that we have is just your health, so, how have health issues impacted your life, of you and your family?

ND: Well my health is great; I have no problems with it. I'm active, I eat well I – I've experienced through my husband as he battles with cancer; that's been dramatic, I've lost my dad, so that's been difficult. So, had to balance some health issues with other families.

DA: What are your experiences in accessing quality or affordable health care?

ND: I pay for it myself, and it's difficult. The health care process is difficult for anyone to navigate, when you're self-employed you have to pay for it you have a real appreciation of it, luckily I don't use too much of it, so.

DA: Okay, so you kind of already answered this but whose health are you responsible for besides your own and you mentioned your husband's and --?

ND: Yeah, but my husband is well today.

DA: Yeah.

ND: I mean he's totally cancer free and has been for a while and my children I think are thriving. My mom's health is seriously declining, she's really close to the end so... but I have assistance she's just in a nursing home, I'm not doing that myself.

DA: Yeah true. So there are only two questions left, so the conclusion is: now that we are working to tell the full story of the history of a woman that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include and is there anyone else that you would suggest we to talk to, like would you know anyone that we can talk to broaden our views on women's history around Worcester? Like any political figures that you know personally from --?

ND: Senator Chandler. She would be someone worth speaking to if you haven't already.

DA: I think that's it there, just questions that you pretty much hit on. So I think were done with the questions, so thank you very much.

ND: Thank you.