

Interviewee: Jane Fine  
Interviewer: Marie Thérout and Mae L'Heureux  
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Transcriber: Marie Thérout and Mae L'Heureux



Overseen By: Dr. James Lang, Assumption College

**Abstract:** Jane Fine was born in Brooklyn, New York on December 17, 1944, and attended New York University and Adelphi University where she received her Master's degree in education. She began her real estate business of Fine Properties Inc. during her first marriage when she needed to make money to support her three children. After her divorce from her first husband, Jane moved to Worcester with her three children where she lived for many years on Berry Road and in a condo at Salisbury West for fifteen years after that. In this interview, Jane discusses the struggles of being a single mother in Worcester and the opportunities the city offered for her to survive on her own. She elaborates on the difficulty of her divorce and the obstacles she was faced with. Jane touches on her accomplishments as a businesswoman in a thriving city as well as the challenges she has faced in the real estate world. Jane also shares the importance of her Jewish upbringing as well as how her religion has had a significant impact in her life. In this interview, Jane reveals her involvement with various charities and organizations and their role in her life.

**MT:** 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 education, health, work, and politics community involvement. We want to focus today on your experience. Thank you for your help with this important project. Do we have your permission, Jane Fine, to use – to record your oral history and use your name and the date, which is November 15, 2010?

**JF:** Yes.

**MT:** So, we begin the questions.

**ML:** What is your full maiden name, and your married name?

**JF:** Jane Rhoda Hurwitz was my born name and my married name is Jane Levine. And I have another name [laughs]. People know me as Jane Fine because I was married and divorced and I started a business under that name so it's kinda hard. Legally, I'm Jane Levine so – you know, it's kinda hard [laughs] for me because people know me as Jane Fine; they don't know me as Jane Levine.

**MT:** When were you born?

**JF:** December 17. I have to give you the year? 1944.

**ML:** What is the name of your current husband?

**JF:** Ed Levine. Edward Levine. It's spelt like Levine.

**MT:** And your previous husband's name?

**JF:** Was Fine.

**ML:** Do you have children?

**JF:** Yes I do.

**ML:** How many?

**JF:** Three.

**MT:** Their names?

**JF:** Jordan, Alicia, and Robin.

**ML:** Do you have any grandchildren?

**JF:** I do.

**ML:** How many?

**JF:** Five. And I have step-grandchildren.

**MT:** Yeah, feel free to just elaborate on any of these questions.

**JF:** Oh, ok.

**ML:** Yeah.

**JF:** I have six step-grandchildren. I don't like to use the word "step" but...

**MT:** So eleven total?

**JF:** Right.

**MT:** Big family.

**JF:** Yeah [laughs].

**MT:** What cultures, ethnicities do you identify with, like your family background?

**JF:** I'm Jewish and all my grandparents were immigrants from Russia but we don't have any Russian customs because they hated the country.

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

**JF:** What would you like to know? What they did?

**MT:** Sure.

**JF:** My father was a dentist. My mother was a teacher but she didn't really teach much because she sorta took care of us. My father was in World War II and he was – he didn't see me 'til I was fourteen months old cause he went overseas just right after my mother conceived or something like that. And they were very proud people and they were educated and they felt that education was very important. They were both very big in giving to charities and supporting and doing good things for other people.

**MT:** Do we have her parent's names?

**ML:** What were their names?

**JF:** Ruth and Irving Hurwitz.

**MT:** Where have you lived during your life?

**JF:** Ah [laughs]. I grew up in New York City, in Brooklyn right near Ebbet's Field. And in early high school, we moved to Jamaica Estates Queens and when I went to college, my college was NYU [New York University], but I lived in the dorms, which was in the Bronx, a different section of New York. And after I was married, I lived in Chicago and Texas and then I – we moved to Worcester, Paxton, which is right outside of Worcester. And then I moved into Worcester after my divorce. And just last – no four years ago, I moved to Shrewsbury.

**MT:** What was, – when you did live in Worcester, what was the neighborhood like generally?

**JF:** Right up the street [laughs]. Berry Road.

**MT:** Ok.

**JF:** Off of Salisbury.

**MT:** Mhmm.

**JF:** I lived in a house there with my kids for many years and then I bought a condo at auction at Salisbury West, and so I lived there for about fifteen years.

**ML:** Do other family members live in the same area?

**JF:** Of my family? Or my kids? You know, when I think of my family...

**MT:** Yeah

**JF:** I think you know of my cousins, my first cousins...

**MT:** Either or.

**JF:** ...and older, but no, nobody lives – nobody except my kids. I have -- my eldest daughter Robin, she lives in Westborough, and I have a daughter, my middle kid who lives in Brookline and my son had lived in Worcester for a few years after he was married but he moved to New York City – right outside to Long Island. He works in the city (cough).

**ML:** What is your Worcester connection?

**JF:** My Worcester connection, when I moved to Worcester I was divorced with three kids go – went through a very, very miserable divorce which took many, many years and many times in court, and it was ugly. You know, one of those I hope you don't know anyone who has one of those but sometimes you can be the good guy and get totally messed up 'cause you don't have the money for the lawyer. And you're – especially if you're a woman and your ex just happens to have political power in the city or know people, you know, everybody thought well he was a doctor so therefore he had to be right and he was wonderful and there I was the woman. And I had to give up everything, my house, he wasn't paying anything. Everything almost went under foreclosure, bankruptcy, I mean it was, it was a total mess. And I decided that I, you know, had my kids to support and I happen to like nice things and that I had to do everything on my own. So when I moved to Worcester, it was giving me an opportunity to have my kids go to school and go to the JCC [Jewish Community Center] after school instead of getting a babysitter and allowing me to go out to work and whereas I had my Masters degree in education, it was a time where they were not taking – hiring teachers. Substitute teaching wasn't much fun. The salary was awful. It was, in Worcester, it was 25 a day in those times and I had gotten 75 a day in New York ten years earlier. So I realized that that was not where I was going to continue especially when I had to leave the house and get a sitter before my kids were on the school bus. I mean, it just didn't sit well with me cause my kids came first so my connection to Worcester was basically giving me the opportunity I could not have done what I did if I stayed in Paxton. I also couldn't afford a big house so.

**MT:** What challenges do you think this city still faces and what would you change about the city?

**JF:** The challenges this city still faces? Right now, as a businesswoman and I've had my business – I started my own business after I was in real estate for a few years -- they really don't know how to respect business – other businesses. They have a big gap in the tax rate – the commercial properties are taxed at 33 dollars or so a thousand, 33% I think and residential is about 14 or 12%. That's almost double and by doing that, I have noticed over the years that a lot of companies who own real estate or who have offices are moving out of Worcester because it's much cheaper for them to build buildings in another city nearby. And the taxes are much less. So they really shot themselves in the foot by doing things like that.

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

**JF:** What changes, let's see. Well the magnet schools, the charter schools that have come. The downtown has changed considerably. I mean they've always talked about the streetscapes and it's nice to see Shrewsbury Street with some life and hopefully they'll finish the renovations at the mall that have been stagnating for a while. But they have done, you know, the city center.

We are lucky to have Tim Murray as a lieutenant governor because he does help bring money around. I've seen a lot of change on Water Street. I've sold a lot of buildings there. And Congressman James McGovern helped a lot getting money and electricity and power and the necessary things on Water Street so these people who had renovated their buildings and had new elevators and put a million dollars into a building were able to use the building. I mean, you know, it's just like – I felt like Worcester wasn't planning for growth and didn't know what to do and everything was really stagnating and I think that O'Brien has been doing a great job as a city manager; since he's been in things have moved a lot.

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

**JF:** It's a small – big small city or a small big city. But, you know, it's funny even though I moved out four years ago, I still feel like Worcester – I have more roots in Worcester than I did, or do, in Shrewsbury cause my kids went to school here and I went to Temple here and you know there, there were different schools and graduations and events and the community is a friendly community and more or less a safe community. First Night is a nice function, the park, the park in the summer the concerts in the parks and you know, they try to be a friendly city. They're – but they are a little, I really don't know what the word, they aren't really promoting themselves as a city. Sorta like a secret most people don't know; and they don't know how to pronounce it either [laughs].

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

**JF:** Well, I lucked out. I could not have done what I did in New York City. I probably would never have made it in real estate in New York City 'cause when I went to sell my mother's house, those people there were horrible. I could never deal with them, they're – but here, not only did I work and do pretty well, I had my own company and I do mostly commercial and in the beginning, the guys – most of the people in the commercial divisions were men and you know, there I was selling everything. Did I know what I was doing in the beginning? No, I really did not but I went and took classes and I learned what to do and it was an opportunity to, you know, – I never would have achieved had I been in New York City.

**MT:** So, now we are going to move on to the education section of our interview. Where did you attend school and what were their – the names of your schools?

**JF:** I went to PS 241 in Brooklyn and when I was in school it was pre busing or something so they changed the makeup of the neighborhood and they had a lot of kids who didn't speak English in the school. And they didn't have English as a second language and I was in fifth grade and these people were on a first grade reading level. And my mother was kinda upset so my folks pulled me out and I went to a private school called Packer Collegiate Institute, it was a school from preschool through junior college and I went there for seventh through tenth and in my tenth year in high school, my folks moved to Queens. So when they moved, I argued I wanted to go to public school so that I could meet people in the neighborhood and whatever and you know, I mean I realized after I went and I met these wonderful people, I would have been better off staying at private school but it was like four trains and a bus and two hours one way to get there every day. And I just didn't – I just couldn't do that, I didn't want to travel that much

so. But there was a big difference from the private to the public school. Then I went right to, NYU [New York University] and I was in the uptown campus which no longer exists, they sold it to the city. And then when I finished college I realized that I wasn't really prepared to do anything. I mean, when I went to get a job, they said do you type and I didn't type they wouldn't let me type. They made me take Latin, two years of Latin in one instead of taking typing in high school and you know, I couldn't type, I couldn't do anything and I couldn't get a job for 100 dollars a week and I just said (\_\_\_\_\_???) I went to college. You know, I could do better than that. My kids – friends who never went to college are earning much more than that in those years. And now you probably laugh, 100 dollars a week but that was a lot of money. So I went for my Masters in education and I attended Adelphi University out in Long Island.

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

**JF:** In my education? Well I remember in public school before I went to private school never being challenged, you know. Everything was very easy. In private school you really had to do your best. Whether your best was a C or an A, it didn't matter but you really had to work your rear end off and study and everything seemed to be put together. When I went back into public school, my last two years in high school, there were 4– 1239 graduates in my senior year; 1239 people in just the senior class. It was a very big school, you know, I got to know people but it was like you were sorta lost and by the time you finally, you know, each class was small it took me a while to adjust especially after coming from a private school where we had like 50 in the whole sophomore year of the other school. So it was big shell shock. And in college, I felt it was more, you know, more like my private school very, very informative but the education for me, there was no place to go, it was pure liberal arts; they didn't have all these other opportunities in the NYU uptown campus as they did downtown. They didn't have the education, you know, if you wanted to go into education they didn't have phys ed. They didn't have a lot of things and so who knew of anything to what you're gonna go into? It was sorta – so when you were done after four years of college, you aren't prepared to do anything unless you were premed. So that was an awakening that I don't think would have happened had I been in another school.

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

**JF:** What was that?

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

**JF:** Well for me the Realtor Association has done a lot. When I first started working, the place I worked at said don't become a realtor so I decided to become a realtor and once I became a realtor, I realized I had to get out of that office, as fast as I could because it wasn't really a very, – it wasn't a place you know,– I thought things were weird you know, but I didn't know that there was such a thing as exclusive listing. I was wondering why certain things happened, I mean, I sold a lot but you know, I knew something wasn't right in. When I became a realtor, they more or less talked about code of ethics and conduct and all these things came up that were not happening in the office I was in. So I became a realtor, switched companies as soon as I took the orientation and realized what was happening, and at that point they tried to tell me to go into commercial, cause I was doing commercial and residential, and that's when I learned I got my

whole education out of the Realtors Association and I've learned so many other things as the years went on that its incredible. So that was one. The other thing was that I belonged to the Worcester Executive Association and I've been a member and past president for many years and there's only one person per category in the group and you network with different people around the Worcester areas. It's based in Worcester, but it's more or less Worcester county and the third one was I had been when I first started in the Chamber of Commerce and I was involved in some of their educational committees and real estate committees. I remember speaking to the chamber on some educational issues but I sorta dropped that a few years ago. I don't – it's because they got rid of a lot of the things that I liked so those were my three biggies.

**ML:** When did you begin working and what did you do?

**JF:** When did I begin working? What in real estate 'cause I had done other – I had been married for a while so when my kids were young, (\_\_\_\_\_???) my ex that I didn't work so I did a lot of charity work and was very involved in a lot of different charity organizations fundraising and things like that because I'm not one to sit still. And a lot of gardening. But then, when I needed to make money, life changed and you know, you just don't have the time to enjoy things when you know you got to put food on the table. It's really different. It's like – that was a real awakening to me so um it gave me the opportunity to reach my potential.

**ML:** What has your real estate work meant to you?

**JF:** Hm?

**ML:** What has your real estate work meant to you?

**JF:** What does my work mean to me?

**ML:** Mhmm.

**JF:** It's interesting; I don't ever feel like its work cause I'm always – it's sorta – I use all my teaching skills at you know when I work with someone to buy a house or business or whatever it is, it's really dealing with people and finding out what they want and what's important to them and helping them and pleasing them. And I've been very lucky because I get a lot of repeat business; a lot of referrals from lawyers and other realtors from other parts of the state. Just works like that.

**MT:** What are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework?

**JF:** Me? [Laughs]. Right now, very little, very little. My husband's semi-retired and we do have someone who comes every other week so you know, we both cook or you know whoever's home first and we share everything. And he does all the food shopping, almost all the food shopping for me and I love it. [laughs] Just love it. Spoiled. I never had that before, but there were many years where my kids were too young to do anything. I mean like you know it was three kids, single mom, are you kidding? Ugh, it wasn't easy.

**ML:** How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles and interests in your life?

**JF:** That is difficult. That is difficult. It's much easier now because my kids are grown and they're – two of them are married, they're out of the house and I don't have to you know deal with it as a top priority. But my family has always come first and there were times where my kids would need me even though they were married. You know, something came up or whatever and you know that's my first priority. It's tough though. I do remember when I was a single mom. It was tough [(laughs)].

**MT:** How would you characterize the personal and professional costs of your chosen path?

**JF:** How would I justify my what?

**MT:** Personal and professional costs.

**JF:** Of

**MT:** Of your chosen path.

**JF:** Of my chosen path? So what it cost me to be in real estate? It was much less than what my father paid for me to get my Masters degree in you know at Adelphi for educat – you know for teaching. But I did spend a lot of money because I went to like a – I almost completed the – it's like a PhD program in real estate for commercial it's called CCIM and [Certified Commercial Industrial Member] and I took almost all my classes and then they changed the requirements and it was like 1000 dollars a pop and you had to give up a whole week of work and most of the time it was in Boston and it was hard to come home and commute; especially when you had three kids and study at the end of the week. You had this exam that was like so intense, it was incredible. But, I've tak – I've had other designations in real estate that I go to or accomplished and I'm constantly taking classes because if you're not ahead of the game, you lose. So you know that's that's sorta norm. I mean we have to do so many for, for the state, but those – the classes that are required for your license are not the kind that I like to take. I mean, they're boring. It's not the kind to get you ahead and know more so you can help the people you are working with more.

**ML:** Do you consider yourself politically active?

**JF:** Oh I am [(laughs)]. I'm a federal political coordinator for the Realtors – for the National Association of Realtors. And my liaison is with Jim McGovern – Congressman James McGovern, to be proper. And so I give him the realtors – give out money to certain people and like for this last campaign, I gave him two different checks adding up to 6000 dollars just from the realtors from the national level. And we give it out to any candidate who's running who is friendly with the realtors in the sense that they believe in home ownership [(laughs)], they believe in the kind of slate the realtors believe in.

**MT:** You mentioned you did a lot of volunteer work -



**JF:** Mhmm.

**MT:** - in your first marriage. What kind of, like could you elaborate?

**JF:** I still do.

**MT:** You do?

**JF:** I work for Hadassah and that's an organization that supports a hospital in research in Israel. They also have youth programs and all kinds of medical studies. In fact they have some stem cell research where they have found the gene for Parkinson's I believe and they do stem cell research which finds all these things before other people do cause they're allowed to use embryos or whatever we're not allowed to use in this country. And they're on the cutting edge in – and they have all kinds of different programs. They came up with a program on breast cancer – I for – what was the name of that? It was Check it Out. That was the name of it, Check it Out. And someone in – on the national level had breast cancer and it was – a program designed to teach women how to feel themselves and what to look for in to check it out once a year, etc. So, I've been active in that and there've been other things I've been active in with the Hadasa as well as you know, fighting for stem cells and going to the State House, things like that.

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

**JF:** I guess that's my focus, my center. Something that, you know, is there and I believe in my holidays. I like celebrating with my friends their holidays. They come to my house and celebrate my holidays but it's – it has more or less grounded me as a person and the values of what would make me know that, gee this real estate company isn't right there's something you know, you just sorta, you know what's right and wrong and you know I get it from that.

**MT:** Did you grow up with a Jewish background?

**JF:** Yeah.

**MT:** Practicing?

**JF:** Yeah. Yeah. My parents were Kosher, I'm not, but they were. My father didn't have a beard or any of that stuff, you know that's really super Orthodox but they –both of them had grown up in Orthodox families not like Rabbi Fogelman (ph) here with the you know that might have been in Poland or something, I don't know. But I mean, they were religious. It was just something, that where I lived, everybody did. You know, I mean, then there were Jewish holidays all the schools were closed. So, – but it's not like that here. My daughter teaches and she has trouble just on the main holidays. It's like equivalent to your Easter and, and Christmas and they don't give them off. And she has to take a personal day. It's not even like, you know, an excused absence as a teacher. It's kinda like, you feel like you go backwards but whatever.

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

**JF:** I've been pretty lucky. I've had back surgery, been in some car accidents, broke my arm but nothing really major. But illnesses can really ruin a family. When my brother died when I was twelve and my granddaughter passed away when she was eighteen months, and as I said before, my daughter needed me. I mean, it was, it was horrible. You know, it's still horrible. And it's something that affects your whole work and everything that you do. It does.

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

**JF:** What are? I didn't hear the whole thing.

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

**JF:** I resent what they've been doing, very much. When I broke my arm, it was a very bad break and I chose not to have surgery. The surgeon said well we could do this or we could do that but I can't promise it'll be much better and I hate surgery so I said no. But I couldn't lift my arm. And the health care after six visits, said you don't need physical therapy anymore. I couldn't even get my hand this high, I mean you know, like, so I decided that when I go, I'll pay for it myself or whatever and I was speaking to a friend of mine who was a lawyer and he said bullshit, first of all you have workman's comp. I said, I do? You know, I didn't know [laughs]. You have to have it if you have your own company (laughs). I never needed it, you know, I have my company since '88 but, you know, so I use – I was very happy to have it but I still never forgave Harvard Pilgrim for the aggravation that they gave me when I – I'm not one who gets sick often. I fell working, I mean, it was a legitimate claim, but you know, how dare they turn you away after six visits? I mean, my arm – everything isn't always the same. You can't package it and say you only have six visits here and you only have that there, no. I think that the whole medical system has to be changed. And I think that the concept of everyone having it is wonderful, but I just don't really like to pay for somebody else when I can't get the minimum that I need when I'm sick. And I don't like the idea of thinking that when you get older they're gonna not let you have any medicine or fix you up because it's time to die. You know, I mean, you know, it's scary. My aunt was on hospice, the one who just died today, and it's sad, she ran out of money, I mean, how many people expect to live 'til ninety-nine? And it was costing her 4000 a week to have 'round the clock treatment in the house. And they wouldn't pay for any of it and she got to a point where she couldn't go to the bathroom by herself and she couldn't this and she couldn't. It was horrible, horrible. And I hope I'm never in a position like that but you just don't know. And you know, that gets me sick when you hear things like that.

**ML:** Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

**JF:** Just me and my husband. You know.

**MT:** What major historical events in Worcester have occurred during your time here and did they impact you personally?

**JF:** Major events. I can't think of any major events [laughs] right now that would influence me. I mean, I remember seeing [President Bill] Clinton at a fundraiser. That was exciting that he was in Worcester and oh and just recently, I had my picture taken with Vicki Kennedy. But that,

you know I mean, that was – but I don't, you know, I've been to groundbreaking and stuff like that, but I can't say there's anything really super spectacular.

**ML:** How old were you when you were allowed to date and where did you go on dates?

**JF:** Ah ha [laughs]. How old was I? I remember my freshman year in high school and I had met this guy from the Temple and we went to – my parents were having a New Year's Eve party and they let me go with him to New York City by train and we went to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to see the ball go down. And I remember wearing a brand new camel's hair coat with a velvet collar and I would never ever go there again because on the way back, some drunk spilled this liquor, booze all over my coat and I didn't drink, but I, you know, was so upset that it was stained and that it smelled [laughs] and my parents would think I was drinking but it was such a pushy-shovy thing I would never go again but it was a great experience [laughs].

**MT:** What was considered fashionable when you were a young woman?

**JF:** When I was young? I remember miniskirts of some kind, really, really, really like – but we didn't wear the leggings with it. And I remember kilts, that was high school. I remember in my private school, if our skirt wasn't by the crack – I'm sure Catholic schools are like that. My friend – my Catholic friends say the crack in the knee, you couldn't you couldn't wear it. We had to wear skirts to school. We were not allowed to wear pants. Oh, no way. Even in high school. You could not wear pants. Forget jeans. Jeans were like you know – I used to have to beg my mother to have a pair of jeans. And sneakers, lots of sneakers. And then when I was in college, I was a cheerleader, so it was saddle shoes to cheer in. So we started a fad in college with the saddle shoes. And the trench coats and you know, every year there was something different. Just to sell ya something.

**ML:** What was your favorite musical group or song?

**JF:** I liked the Beatles [laughs]. I liked a lot of the folk songs, you know. I was with the era of the 60s. So all that music was great.

**MT:** How were girls treated when you went to school?

**JF:** Well, my private school was an all-girls school after third grade. Up to third grade, it was coed. Now, it's all coed through the junior college. But at that time, it was only girls. And it was started – school started in the 1800s when women weren't allowed to vote even and they felt that women should be educated so it was one of these very prestigious schools and whatever but it was very nice 'cause women were very important there. And I didn't feel anything 'til college. When I hit college, I really felt, you know, like the – I blew up the lab in chemistry [laughs]. I was tired and must have mixed the wrong thing and everybody's thing was turning blue and mine's smoking and then it goes pop and we all had to leave. And the professor, he worked on an atomic bomb and he said something to me that maybe I should not be pre-med because you know like he [laughs] – I was afraid to light the Bunsen burner. I used to have the guy in high school light it for me because I was afraid I'd cool it in the water and it'd break. And I was so bad cause no one taught me anything, you know? So, he said well maybe you should change

your chemistry because, you know, talking down 'cause I'm a woman and all that stuff and I'm sorry I agreed to that, you know. I could have done it if someone taught me what to do and I just chickened out at that time. But he couldn't believe I said – he didn't believe me – we used to have in New York these tests at the end of the year. Are you guys from Massachusetts or?

**MT:** No.

**JF:** Oh, well, in New York they used to have Regents, these tests that were state tests and I had gotten – done really well in my chemistry and he didn't believe me 'til – when I told him, he didn't believe me [laughs]. I said look it up for yourself [laughs]. But, no, you know.

**ML:** What were your most significant extra-curricular involvements?

**JF:** In college it was definitely cheerleading. Oh God, that was, that was great and when I was in high school, I didn't transfer 'til my junior year so it was too late and oh I – we traveled with the team, our team was very good basketball team at that time and they'd go to the NCAA and we'd go and I mean, it was just some really great experience. Just different, but then you realize that there are other things that are better.

**MT:** What did your parent's education consist of?

**JF:** Well my father went to dental school and he taught – he also taught at Columbia Dental School at sometimes he would teach some classes when I was really, really young. And my mother went to college. But my mother always took classes, different classes. Just to, you know, just to stay smart. Whatever, interesting – things that interested her. A lot of Bible things, things like that.

**ML:** What difficult transitions did you go through when moving from childhood to adulthood?

**JF:** My voice is gonna go. My brother died when I was twelve and a half. So that was just at the age before you're thirteen and when you really – and it messed me up a lot. We did -- my parents were – you know, everybody was miserable. And it was a surprise, it happened in two weeks. Nobody knew my brother was sick and nowadays there's cures and things that can be done but it was very hard to adjust – it wasn't so much the teen years but becoming a single child. You know, an only child. And a lot of times I wouldn't even tell people if I had a brother or not because I just couldn't – the pain and some of my friends from high school and elementary school would say I remember you Jane, you would never talk you know; they didn't know what to do, you know? And it's certain things like that, very painful so that I was not – I was so concerned about my parents and their feelings that I didn't have time and they didn't have therapists or they didn't believe in that then but no one talked to me and it took me going through divorce to wake up and realize what messed up my life or how to turn it around. And it was a tough learning experience.

[Phone Rings]

**JF:** Let me just turn that off.

**MT:** When you were not at home, where did you usually spend your time?

**JF:** When I didn't live at home or when I was a kid, when I'm an adult?

**ML:** When you were a kid.

**JF:** When I was a kid. When I lived in Brooklyn, I loved going to the Botanic Gardens in Prospect Park with my friends. We'd walk my dog you know, go all over the place. And, other times we went to Manhattan, we'd go to Broadway shows. There were twofers we could get for 2 dollars and 90 cents (laughs) (\_\_\_\_\_???) if you waited on line and got them. My father had a patient who owned a travel agency, sightseeing around New York City so I'd go in with my friends if we ever stopped to say hello he'd always put us on a bus and send us to see the Radio the Rockettes or whatever. You know and yeah we always kept busy. New York City is a great place to live and there's always something to do.

**ML:** Do you do hobbies or have any regular leisure activities that take you outside of the home?

**JF:** I go to the gym every day or like five times a week. I take different classes whether it's Zumba or step or one of those. I do knit 'cause I started with my first grandchild making blankets and I try to – it sorta calms me down because I have to sit still for a while. But I'm in a knitting group so we can talk and our mouths are exercised [laugh]); it's kinda funny how these knitting circles start. I also where I live, I live in a condo complex so I'm in charge of a few of the committees there that run the club house and the social committee. I've done a lot of fundraising for Worcester execs and the realtors and all this other stuff so you know it doesn't end, I'm always busy. I look for times when I can do nothing.

**MT:** How do you get through tough times? What kinds of thoughts keep you going?

**JF:** Well my aunt, the one who passed today would say: Tough times pass by, but tough people stay. And it you know – when I went through my tough times with the divorce, my ex was crazy, crazy, crazy. My kids were going crazy. My daughter stood there with a knife, she was gonna kill herself. It was horrible, just really tough. And I didn't you know – I went for help and all that stuff, but I didn't have a choice. My kids didn't ask to be here and go through [ ] like that, [laughs] so oops could you erase that? But my kids didn't ask for it and I – there was no choice. I had no choice. It was no choice. I just say you sink or swim and I'm not sinking. I gotta swim. I can do it, I can do it. And I'll do the best I can and that's what I do. Just keep moving forward and doing the best. Sometimes you just have to take a deep breath and get ready [laughs] to do some deep breathing and then just go for it.

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

**JF:** Success isn't just making money. I mean, you know, it's great to make money but it's also nice to have the acknowledgement of other people that recognize that you do a good job. That they appreciate what you do and the type of work that you do. And that they, that they acknowledge all the work that you've done and I've been very lucky. A few weeks ago I just

won the biggest award there is in the realtor's association. I – I didn't know I was going to win it believe me I thought the people who won it were the presidents of the state association and I'm sit – they called me and said that they had – that I won these two tickets for the awards night dinner and I said oh I thought it was for the conference that you were doing those little things for. No, no, I said ok we were planning to go anyway and then when we go there I said, 'Gee we have table number two they always put us in the back I wonder why we're in the front.?' And I'm sitting there and they're talking about this award, which they give out every year, now you're sorta like, you sorta doze off a little and then I said, "Oh my God, I thought I heard my name. But why would they call my name?" My husband's saying, "Jane get up, you won. Jane get up!" [Laughs] and I'm sitting there, totally shocked. Out of 20,000 realtors, this year I was picked. I mean, I never knew that they had me on the slate for several years but – for all the stuff that I did I was like, and that was like – my own board had a reception in my honor a few weeks. later. I mean it was like oh my God (laughs) and that's nice you know because it's something you don't know you're gonna get but you're recognized. So it's kinda neat.

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

**JF:** Well, I would have preferred to have chosen to have gotten married only once, but I didn't and there was a reason and I guess I had to grow up and get my act together whatever it be. But I really don't have any regrets. Right now I just seem to be moving forward, as they say.

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

**JF:** I would definitely say that I think every woman should not – my mother always said you have to have a career and I always said I wanted to be in real estate. She said, "You don't want to be in real estate" and I said, "Yes I do I wanna be in real estate. " And that's a whole story altogether and it ends up, you know, where did I go? But I did get my, you know, my mother said go get your Masters and get educated and you know (\_\_\_\_???) and if there's any crisis you'll always be able to teach. Well I couldn't teach; they wouldn't give me a job. So you know, it's like, but you still need to know that you can do something. I think every woman should be prepared to do what they want to do. Don't listen to anybody else and to also sorta feel out different opportunities. You know, like, when I was young my father would say, why don't you be a dental hygienist? He never said why don't you be a dentist? You know, my brother was gonna be a doctor but I would be the dental hygienist. You know, I mean like hello? Women aren't there anymore, thank God. A lot of women dentists, a lot of women this a lot of women that. But there weren't many role models when I grew up of women doing that. I mean I do remember an orthodontist who was a woman who was one of my father's friends. But he never said gee why don't you do that? I mean, you know, the thing is, I think women need to be exposed. I like that program where women go to work with their fathers. Wouldn't have helped me, my dad's office was in the house, I was always there you know. But you know, I didn't want to do teeth just because he did it. But, you know, I think the exposure and somehow I think in high school if there's a way that kids can get exposed to different type of things at that time. Of fields and interests that they know what they want and go from there.

**ML:** Do you feel you have a legacy?

**JF:** A legacy to carry on after me? I don't – my kids I wish they would go into real estate. I wish my son would have done it. But no, he you know – they all went their own way and they're doing what they want to do so they're all successful in what they're doing and um I hope I have a legacy. But I think everyone has their own unique-ism (ph); whatever that unique thing is. That's it.

**MT:** Now that we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include?

**JF:** I don't hear you very well. I hear her better than you, I'm sorry (laughs).

**MT:** Now that we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include?

**JF:** Of the people in the past? Just that you know, with each generation, women have been – the ceiling has been raised and we're almost there. I don't think we're there yet and I don't think we're treated equal. I don't think we get the same amount of money and jobs. I don't think we're taken as seriously, especially the young ones. You know, I'm sure you know there's still some what do you call that? Sexual harassment at the workplace. I mean I remember when I was young and teaching and all that other stuff. If you wore heels, the looks and the comments and stuff like that. I do, I remember that. And I think I think that it has changed tremendously since I've been working.

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

**JF:** I think maybe my friend Betty Custer (ph). She's about eighty-something. She's a hot ticket [laughs] yeah she must be eighty now. I think it was about ten years ago she was 77 so she has to be at least eighty. And she has had breast cancer and she's a survivor. And she's just really upbeat and she had a whole career before she went into real estate. And um, I think that'd be nice, you know, she's –you might be able to – you want her phone number?

**ML:** Sure.

**JF:** Why don't you turn the stuff off so – you know, I'll give it to you.