

Interviewee: Julie Holstrom  
Interviewers: Michela Lavin and Dori Rogers  
Date: October 5, 2017  
Place: Worcester Business Development Corporation,  
Worcester, MA  
Transcribers: Michela Lavin and Dori Rogers

Overseen by: Dr. Carl Robert Keyes and Prof. Caryl Nuñez, Assumption College

**Abstract:** Julie Anne Holstrom was born on August 4th, 1981. An only child, she grew up in Auburn, Massachusetts with caring, loving, supportive parents. Julie often visited Worcester as a child and holds fond memories of the city close to her heart. Julie went to the Auburn Public Schools, got her undergraduate degree in political science from Providence College, and after graduating earned her master's degree from Clark University in public administration. Today, Julie is a senior project manager for the Worcester Business Development Corporation. Throughout the interview, Julie speaks of Worcester in the highest regard and with much appreciation for how far the city has come. In the interview with Julie, she tells of the mentors she has had along the way that helped her to get where she is today. Julie describes the struggles of women in a male dominated field of work. In the interview, Julie shares the struggles her family has faced with her four-year-old daughter's health issues and how her family overcame this difficult time. Julie conveys how lucky she feels to have had great health care when her daughter ended up needing open heart surgery. She would advise young women to "Push. Stand up. Say what you believe. Do what you want to do."

**ML:** 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 experiences, Julie Holstrom. Thank you for your help with this important project! Do we have permission to record this interview on October 5th, 2017, Ms. Holstrom?

**JH:** Yes.

**ML:** So, we will get started. What is your full name including both maiden name and married name, if applicable?

**JH:** Julie Anne Holstrom, that's my maiden name and married name. [all laugh]

**ML:** When were you born?

**JH:** August fourth, 1981.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

**ML:** OK. So you said you have married, what is the name of your husband?

**JH:** My husband's name is Jonathan DeFusco.

**ML:** OK...Do you have any children?

**JH:** We do; we have one little girl. Her name is Jacqueline Rose DeFusco and she is four years old.

**ML:** Aww. [laughs] What cultures and ethnicities do you identify with...or if you want to just tell us a little bit about your family background.

**JH:** So my family is primarily Scandinavian, I have relatives that came from Sweden as well as Norway so that's primarily where both the sides of my family came from. My mom's maiden name was Johnson, which is a very Scandinavian name too. So, that's really our ethnic background, but my family has been in the United States since the very beginning. I'm actually—we were able to trace our lineage back, and I am a Daughter of the American Revolution. My grandmother's maiden name on my father's side was Prescott, so fought in the American Revolution. It's kind of a cool piece of history.

**ML:** Do you have any like family like family traditions that go along with your ethnicity, or with being a Daughter of the American Revolution, or not?

**JH:** I mean, not necessarily with being a Daughter of the American Revolution. From a cultural perspective, I mean, your typical like holiday stuff, you know. We eat a lot of the Scandinavian foods at Christmas time, which my husband does not really enjoy, but I love tremendously.

**ML:** What's his background?

**JH:** He is Italian.

**ML:** The food is different; Italian's take their food very seriously. [laughs]

**JH:** The first time he had Swedish meatballs, he was like, "This is not a meatball," and I was like, "It is to me."

**ML:** Could you just tell us a little bit about your parents, and how they have influenced your life.

**JH:** Sure, my parents are two of the coolest people. So, they are both born and raised in the Worcester area. They both were born in Worcester, grew up in Auburn, which is where I grew up. They still live there today, both very hard working people. My mom has worked in municipal

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

government since as long as I can remember. She worked for the town of Auburn for a while, and then came to work for the city of Worcester, and she works for the city of Worcester now, for the Police Department. My dad, he is an engineer, a mechanical engineer, and was also on the Auburn Fire Department. But they were both, growing up, very civic minded, were engaged with our community and as a result of that I would be the five-year-old sitting in the back of the selectmen's meeting. So, they exposed me to that at a very young age, which has really kind of, I think, helped guide me and keep an interest in that type of stuff. Which I am extremely thankful for. Being an only child, I am very close with my parents. You go through those phases of not liking your parents, and now, I mean, I count my parents as two of my best friends.

**ML:** Aww that's so sweet. Well, obviously, it sounds like your parents are definitely two of your role models, but other than your parents, or if you want to speak about that in a different way, who are your role models?

**JH:** Well first and foremost, yes absolutely, my parents are definitely my role models from a personal level. I mean, they have done so much for our family, that I just hope I am able to replicate that for my family. They are certainly two of my biggest role models. From a professional point of view, I have had a couple of different role models. There is one in particular who is actually our congressman, who I worked with. He was the first political campaign that I got involved with at a young age when I was in high school. And I got to know him, I got to know his family, and I got to know his politics and I really identified with his politics. I really was just blown away with how open and honest he was and I just really appreciated that type of political candor and ability to just be open with people and tell them, you know, how you feel about things, and not be apologetic for it. Which I find to be very refreshing. [All laugh]

**ML:** Absolutely. Could you tell us where you have lived throughout your lifetime, places you've lived?

**JH:** So, I grew up in Auburn. Which is right outside of Worcester. And, when I graduated from high school I went to college in Providence. I went to Providence College and lived there for four years. After I graduated from college, I moved to Boston for [pauses] three years. I worked in the city so I lived in Brookline for a year, and then I moved to Dorchester for a couple of years. And then I moved to Worcester when I started working here in the city. And then my husband and I moved to Waltham for a short period of time and I was still working in Worcester, so it was reverse commuting. And then we bought our first house in Franklin and two years ago, now, we moved to Shrewsbury so that's a whirlwind tour.

**ML:** A little bit all over the place [laughs]. What was it like growing up in Auburn, what was your neighborhood like, what were your experiences as a child?

**JH:** I had a very quiet neighborhood, there were a couple of kids that lived down the street from  
Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

me that I used to play with, but for the most part there weren't a lot of kids in my neighborhood. But it was a very quiet neighborhood. I lived next to a little town park that had like a little swing set and a pond and stuff. So we used to go over there and hunt for treasures and everything over there. But growing up in Auburn, it's a great little town, you know, everybody knows everybody. And with my family being there since the beginning I feel like we had a really close-knit community. And most of my family lived there, like my aunts and uncles, my cousins, and my grandparents. So, are a very tight knit family. We got to do a lot of stuff with them and to not have to travel too far.

**ML:** That's always nice. Absolutely. How about, like, I know you didn't grow up in Worcester, but did you spend time in Worcester, and what was that like?

**JH:** Sure, we came to Worcester quite a bit. I mean, we would come to the Worcester Common Fashion Outlets. When I was in high school I would have—our parents would drop me and my friends off at all the different movie theaters that are in the city. We would really come in for more of the entertainment things. I remember being little and coming into the city with my parents to come to some of the parades, like the Columbus Day Parade. So, going to Green Hill Park, my dad used to work right down the street right here at Kenwald and my mom and I would come in and meet my dad to go to lunch and we would go up to Green Hill Park and have lunch up there on his lunch break. I always thought that that was the park that my dad owned because that was the park that we would always go to with him, so obviously he owned it. [all laugh]

**ML:** So, as far as Worcester, what challenges do you think the city still faces and is there anything you would change about the city?

**JH:** What are some of the challenges? Some of the challenges that I think the city is faced with is still combating the perception that Worcester isn't a great place. Because I think it is or I don't think I would be doing the kind of work that I do. How do you overcome that? I think it's just getting out and telling the story and showing people all the great things that are happening here. And I think that's not just the case for telling outsiders and kind of informing them of all of the great things that are going on here in the city. It is educating the people that work here and live here and are in Worcester on a daily basis. You know, I think you can tend to—you look past some of the good things when you pass them every day and you don't really realize that there is progress happening here. So, that's, I think, one of our biggest challenges and probably one of the best ways to overcome it.

**ML:** Yeah, absolutely. What changes...so you talked about the progress, what changes have you seen in Worcester over time specifically?

**JH:** So growing up in this area, I feel like I've seen the good and the bad of Worcester. Like I said, when I used to come into the city to go to the movie theaters and everything, it would be such a bustling place, and then those movie theaters started to close up. And now, prime example

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

of kind of progress, I have seen the downtown Showcase Movie Theater be open, close, and now it's where the Hanover Theater is. I have seen the complete evolution of that neighborhood in particular and it is tremendous. So, I feel like I have seen Worcester at some of its low points, but I have seen it as some of its high points. I see it now, and having worked in economic development now for 10 years, which is scary to say, I am blown away with the progress that this city has made. And I am blown away by the amount of activity that is down here and it's all good activity, so it's exciting, it's really exciting to see.

**ML:** That's awesome. Are there any like distinct characters you think have added to that progress or make Worcester what it is?

**JH:** Distinct characters?

**ML:** Characteristics, I'm sorry.

**JH:** I was like, people...? [all laugh]

**JH:** Perseverance is probably the biggest characteristic. You know, change and progress do not happen overnight. It takes time, especially in a development-type of world. So, you just need to have a little bit of patience and stick it out because sometimes it's not always easy. If there is nothing else, this city has a great deal of perseverance. I do a lot of writing here in the office. And we try and think of different ways to characterize Worcester. One of the key phrases that I have used time and time again is, "Yankee Ingenuity," of getting something and really trying to make it your own. It may not be the best thing that you have, but you embrace it and you really make it the best thing that you have. Which I think Worcester is just a prime example of that type of ingenuity.

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

**JH:** I'm not quite sure. I think women's experiences here in the city are not unlike women's experiences in other urban areas. And in the workforce sometimes you can be faced with some issues, but I think that that's just the time that we're in. It doesn't always make it right, but I don't see, I haven't had any personal issues. I don't know exactly how to answer that to be perfectly honest.

**ML:** It's okay, that's a hard question. We'll move on to education, so we'll move on from that. Where did you attend school?

**JH:** So I went to Auburn High School, but I went to college in Providence [RI]. I went to Providence College. I was a political science major with a minor in public service. After I graduated I went to work. I went and got a graduate certificate in Women and Public Policy at

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

UMASS Boston at the McCormack School. And then I went to Clark University and got my master's in public administration.

**ML:** Wow, cool. Okay, sorry... [pause] So, what years did you attend those schools? Sorry, I should have asked that from the beginning.

**JH:** It's fine. I went to Providence from 'Sept 99 to May of 2003. I did my graduate certificate program at UMASS, which was a year program, in [pauses] 2005 to 2006, if I recall correctly. And then my master's I went from 2007 to 2009.

**ML:** Thank you, sorry, I should have paired that. What were your most significant extra-curricular activities in college?

**JH:** I did a lot of stuff in college that I loved. I was on the student congress all four years. I was a representative for my freshman and sophomore year, my junior year I was the vice president, and my senior year I was the president of my class, which was very exciting. I was a member of a service-based organization called the Friars' Club, which they act as student ambassadors, both internally as well as externally, which I really enjoyed as well. But those are two of my largest extracurriculars.

**ML:** Awesome. What were your biggest challenges when it came to education?

**JH:** Paying attention [all laugh]. No, some of my biggest challenges would have been focusing on doing everything that I needed to do. I mean, I still am today, I am quite the procrastinator. I would always wait until the last minute to write my papers and that would mean that you are up at three am, bleary eyed, "Why didn't I start this two weeks ago?" So that was probably my biggest challenge, just trying to focus and kind of nail down and say, "Yup, you need to just get this done."

**ML:** That is a hard one for everybody.

**JH:** Right, Right.

**ML:** So, upon finishing your formal education, I know you said there was kind of a bit of gap between when you finished your education and then went back and finished your master's, what did you see as your options? Both once you finished your undergrad and then when you finished your graduate degree?

**JH:** Well, once I finished my undergrad I knew that I wanted to start to work. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do for like a graduate program. There was a point in time that I was thinking I wanted to go to law school. I don't know why that was ever an option for me. But I wasn't sure what I really wanted to do. So, going to work was really the first thing that I thought of. And

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

then, I decided to go back and get my certificate: it was really because, I was living by myself I was going home at the end of the day, after working all day, and I was like, “I feel like I’m not using my brain enough in the evenings.” I was looking for something else to do and I found this program and I absolutely loved it. It challenged me. It gave me some activity to do and actually reintroduced me to some of my friends in the city that were actually in the program with me that I didn’t even know lived in the city, which was really nice.

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

**JH:** My family has always been my biggest support network. Through everything: school, life, I owe a lot of my late-night paper writing to my mom who would read my paper and say, “You are completely wrong. Erase that and start over.” So, I would say that’s certainly my parents have been an incredible support system. Mentors? I’ve had a lot of great—I’ve been very fortunate to have a lot of great mentors in my professional life. I would say, essentially every boss that I’ve had has really kind of helped guide me and shape me into where I am today. I don’t feel like you often get that; I am fortunate to be able to really say that.

**ML:** That’s really nice. What difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood?

**JH:** Aside from being an awkward teenager. You know, forcing you to be out on your own and be independent. I always considered myself a very independent person growing up. I think my parents would tell you that that’s stubbornness versus independence, but I think going out on your own, living on your own and you know, the first electric bill comes in and you say, “Oh man, I have to pay that, that’s why my dad kept turning off the lights growing up,” like that’s the biggest struggle. Really realizing all the things you took for granted growing up, going grocery shopping, “Oh, fresh chicken costs how much? I’ll just get chicken nuggets.” You know, just silly things like that, but really the struggle of trying to determine what your independence is and really kind of getting a sense of what that is. That was probably the biggest challenge. I think I fared okay.

**ML:** You seem just fine.

[Recording stops, and interview starts again]

**DR:** Let’s just start...do this again...what was your first job out of college? I know you said you worked in Boston.

**JH:** So I worked in the Massachusetts Legislature. I worked in the State Senate for a Senator from Cape Cod and the Islands.

**DR or ML:** Cool...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

**JH:** Yeah...

**DR:** So what other jobs have you had and what do you do now...

**JH:** When I was in the Senate I had three different jobs. I did constituent services, I did budget work, and then I was the senator's legislative director. After that, I came to work for the city of Worcester in their economic development office. I was just a project manager there and then I came here to work for the Worcester Business Development Corporation. And I have been a project manager and now today I am a senior project manager.

**DR:** So what is the difference between a regular project manager and a senior project manager?

**JH:** More responsibility.

[Laughs]

**JH:** I have taken on my own projects in terms of redevelopment projects. So I do a lot of the—I'll do the grant writing, but then I'll also do the grant administration of the projects too.

**DR:** What has this work meant to you?

[Long pause]

**DR:** This is a hard one... (\_\_\_\_???)

**JH:** My work has been very rewarding in this job in that I've been able to see change happen in a community that I love and be a part of that change which is really exciting for me. I was just talking with a group of students a couple of weeks ago and they asked why I liked my job and I said because I love being able to be a part of something that you can see. And I always say that I don't know that I would be able to do my job as it is today in Boston. Because I have lived in Boston, but I do not have that type of connection to Boston. I grew up here and being able to improve an area where you grew up, that's something special. That is one of the highlights of my job.

**DR:** So what do you think of the pros and cons of the job path you chose? [Long pause]

[Laughs]

**JH:** The pros are just doing—I don't do the same thing on a daily basis. I am constantly learning new things. I am constantly doing things that I never thought I would do in this job. My father-in-law jokes all the time, that as a poli-sci major, like I am on construction sites. ...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

[Laughs]

**JH:** ... and I've driven large heavy equipment like that's not something that you're normal political science major has done or even wants to do or envisions themselves doing at any point. So that's probably one of the best pros of my job, that I'm doing something new every day, I am learning something new every day. The con of it is, there are days it is tough. Our company takes on projects that a normal market would not necessarily take on for a number of different reasons. If it's environmental contamination or historic issues. And there is a reason why they don't do it because there are issues with it so that some days work is tough and some projects stall and that's a downside. You know, it can bum me out a little bit but you get through it.

[Laughs]

**DR:** So do you believe that being a woman has been the cause of any setbacks or disadvantages in your career?

[Laughs]

**JH:** Working in this field, which is heavily dominated by men, it's development and construction, it's a male-dominated world, and I don't know if I have ever seen setbacks. I know I definitely had a couple of looks like I don't know what I am talking about or you don't belong here. And I think that's like some of the initial thoughts of some—sometimes that's the initial thought, but then once you're sitting around a table, and you're all trying to work together and kind of figuring out the day's problem. You can prove yourself and they can realize, "Oh she does know what she is talking about." That's one of the more difficult things. Like walking onto a job site and I just came from a meeting where I am wearing a dress and heels, but it's a construction site, you get the "What are you doing here? Like you're not even dressed properly," but in actuality I am dressed properly. I am dressed for work and this is part of my work so...

[Laughs]

**DR:** Do you believe that some men have been threatened by your success? (\_\_\_\_???)

**JH:** I don't know. I mean...[long pause] they might be, they might be threatened by my success or they could be just intimidated by the fact that I can walk into a room and I do—I don't always know what I am talking about, but for the most part I can kind of get my way through it and I can prove that I do a little about what they are talking about and I think that kind of—sometimes that can set people back on their heels and so, "Oh sorry about that," and that makes them feel a little silly but...

[Laughs]

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

**DR:** Yeah...so we are going to transition into the topic of housework... what are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework, childcare?

[Laughs]

**JH:** I mean I...[long pause]

**DR:** You could explain your routine if you want.

**JH:** No I mean, thankfully, my husband and I really kind of—we divide and conquer which you really kind of have to do with a toddler. We both really kind of take divide up everything around the house, yard work, cooking, cleaning. I tend to do a lot more of the laundry just because I don't like how my husband does the laundry. [laughs] But you know we both get up with our daughter, and get her dressed, and get her showered, and make sure that there is dinner on the table. We both really love to cook and we love to cook together so that's one of the things that we do kind of as a family, which I really enjoy and I can see that my daughter is starting to enjoy it too, which is really exciting. So I'm very grateful that I'm able to kind of divide up the house chores. It does not always work, but for the most part it does.

**DR:** Is your daughter in preschool?

**JH:** She is. Yup, she is in preschool in Shrewsbury.

**DR:** So does he drop her off or do you both?

**JH:** It depends on the day. I dropped her off this morning, but he typically does drop-off and I'll do pick-up, but sometimes we'll reverse it or if I have a meeting, he'll pick her up or if he's traveling, you know, that's—you make it work.

**DR:** So how have the responsibilities changed over-time...from when you were first married to now?

**JH:** Having a kid really changed (\_\_\_?) [laughs] everything. But I mean when we were first married, I feel like I was always trying to be like, "No I don't need you to do this stuff, I am going to go cut the grass," but now I'm like, "If you want to go cut the grass, please go right ahead and cut the grass, I do not want to do it today." So that has certainly changed. In addition to our daughter, we have a dog and when we first got the dog that—I mean, dogs are like children, and they require a lot of attention. So that was—and thankfully as he's gotten older he does not need as much stimulation or attention so that kind of evolves things. Like taking the dog for a walk and make sure he goes out and all this stuff and now you settle into things as the dog mellows out and becomes an old man.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

[Laughs]

**DR:** So we are just going to transition again, do you consider yourself active politically?

**JH:** Yes. (\_\_\_\_???) [Laughs] I try and make sure that I am up on all the local politics of stuff. I don't necessarily go to a lot of campaigns. I'd love to volunteer a little bit more in campaigns. Unfortunately, there is not enough time in the day. [Tapping of ring] But I do do some volunteering work in Shrewsbury. Like for an economic development committee which kind of allows me to keep a political...foot on the ground in some of that stuff too which I enjoy.

**DR:** What led you to join with this organization?

**JH:** I actually was informed of it from someone in the town we had done some work in my professional career and it was something that I said, "You know what, I've always known that once we moved to a town and said that this is where we are going to set our roots, that I wanted to become involved. I wanted to make sure that our family was involved. So that was a no-brainer. It was economic development which I really enjoy doing and it's in the community in which I live which is a win-win.

**DR:** Right, right. What are the organization's main goals?

**JH:** The economic development in the town of Shrewsbury, so there's a number of different goals that they have set themselves. One of which is enhancing their master plan, looking at the downtown and trying to revitalize the downtown of Shrewsbury. But they also own a large piece of vacant land that they are trying to market for redevelopment which is interesting and certainly has it's goals but...

**DR:** What do consider the group's major accomplishments?

**JH:** I am relatively new to the group s I don't know that I could speak to their accomplishments. I've only gone ...

**DR:** Oh okay!

**JH:** ... to two meetings but this is brand, brand new so I don't know that—I mean I would say having a master plan is their accomplishment right now. Now it's the implementing of it.

**DR:** Do you want to do the...

**ML:** Sure, so we are going to move on to health. How have health issues impacted your live or those in your family?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

**JH:** [Long pause] I personally haven't had any major health issues. My daughter has had some health issues. When she was born she had—she was born with congenital heart defect. The doctors had said you are perfectly fine, she'll just have to go through doctors' appointments and you just monitor it. Last summer she went for her yearly check-up and her pediatric cardiologist informed us that there had been another development that occurred, and that she had to go into open-heart surgery last summer.

**DR:** Wow. That's scary...(\_\_\_???)

**JH:** Which for a three-year-old...was a bit of a shock to us all. And it really kind of shook us, you know, you don't always expect to hear those kind of words. Especially when they had been telling you, 'Oh like this—everything should be going in the right path,' and this kind of turned for us. But she came through the surgery with flying colors. Our doctors told us that she is fixed and that there shouldn't be any issues and she can go on and live her life like you or I.

**ML:** That is amazing.

**JH:** And I mean even just a couple of days after the surgery you could not keep her down. [laughs] She has so much energy and she would be running around the hospital and my husband and I are going, "Please don't touch it." Like you just want to keep them in a bubble. And I look at her today, I mean, it was a year ago in July that she had surgery and you wouldn't be able to tell if you saw her today. You would have absolutely no idea, but for her scar. And that had such a huge impact on our family. It really shook us. So much so that we met the people who were sharing our hospital room. We developed a really close relationship with them. Their son who was five at the time he was going in for a consultation of a heart transplant. I mean it's so sad but he did not—does not have a very happy story. He ended up passing away in July. But I thank God that we had a happy story. We are lucky that that happened. My husband and I have taken it up as our cause. I am a member of American Heart Association, their chapter here. I am on the board and I want to figure out the best way how to educate people on these types of defects that so many young children are born with. We raise money for Boston Children's Hospital for their heart center because she had some of the best care in the world there so why wouldn't I want to give back to them? I feel like that particular health issue in our life has had a huge impact. It has guided us to—and like I love being able to—like my daughter is learning about the body in preschool now and they have big cutouts of each other and she was telling us this morning, "And we cut out a heart and we have to put it on our body" and I said, 'Oh where is your heart?' and she pointed to where her heart was and she goes, "I have a special heart, the doctors fixed my heart." And if that doesn't just make you—it tears me up. She's such a strong girl. I can't imagine, I can't imagine [long pause] she's just crazy.

[Laughs]

**ML:** That is amazing. Wow. So you mentioned that you got some of the best care in the world at  
Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

Boston's Children Hospital, what experiences have you had in accessing quality, affordable healthcare?

**JH:** Thankfully we have such great healthcare. I've had great healthcare through my office, through my husband's job that we didn't have to worry about trying to find a doctor or paying for it. I mean when we left the hospital last summer, we got a number of different bills and, you know, they are itemized. [Laughs] And I look at what they charge and what healthcare covers and what we paid out of pocket, and my God if we didn't have insurance, we wouldn't have a house right now. I mean it was incredibly expensive. What we had to pay out of pocket was a fraction of it and I think about the people caring for her and the place where we were. We had the absolute best. We had the head of cardiology as her doctor. We had one of the best cardiologist surgeons and who I will forever be indebted for the rest of my life. And we had to pay a small amount of money. I'll do that all day...all day.

**ML:** So obviously you, yourself, your husband, and your daughter but are is there anyone else's health you are responsible for, like your parents or anything...?

**JH:** Thankfully no, I mean, my parents are both healthy people and the only other person that I would be responsible for would our pets, thankfully. You know, my husband is healthy, my daughter is healthy so. [claps]

**ML:** We're going to kind of do some wrap up questions now. How do you get through tough times, like obviously you and a pretty tough time last summer, what kind of thoughts keep you going?

**JH:** My family keeps me going, all day. [long pause] Last summer, in the days leading up to it, I remember completely freaking out and you can't do that in front of a child because then they get worried so we focused all of our energy on explaining things in the best way that we possibly could, but making it fun and like trying to keep things light. That's how we really dealt with it; that's how we powered through them. You know we spent a day in pre-op so then afterwards we were like, "You know what! Let's go to the aquarium, do you want to go see the penguins?" "Yeah that sounds great!" Like let's do something fun and keep a calm face and when you do breakdown, like explain it's okay to cry, like it's okay to be upset, it's okay, but know that you can be brave too. Even if you cry that doesn't mean you are not brave and that I would say that's what kind of kept us going, really trying to focus and that the other people around you weren't freaking out because inside you were, but you knew that it was going to be okay.

**ML:** Yeah, wow. Based on your life experience what advice would you give to women of today or future generations?

**JH:** Push. Stand up. Say what you believe. Do what you want to do. Don't let people tell you that you can't do it. And [long pause] push—like don't—if you want to go into the construction

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

world, just do it. If that's what you want to do, do it. Don't let anybody tell that you can't because you can.

**ML:** Absolutely. Do you think that feminism has changed during your lifetime? Is it different from today than it was the 1960s or any other time from the past?

**JH:** I do think it's changed; I think that it has changed because women's role in the world has changed from when feminism first emerged as an ideal I mean it was really kind of fighting to be recognized whereas now it is trying to find a seat at the table. Which is great in the fact that you are getting recognized for being there, but trying to push forward and be a part of that conversation, I think that's where we are today and I think we are pushing past that too, which is great. I feel like we are making tremendous strides.

**ML:** Awesome. I think that is a pretty good place to stop, but do you feel there are any questions that we missed that tell us who you are? Anything really important about yourself?

**JH:** I don't think so, I think you got all of them. [laughs]

**ML:** Alright, well thank you so much, we really appreciate it.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – [info@wwhp.org](mailto:info@wwhp.org)

[www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org)