

Interviewee: Patricia Jones
Interviewers: Nicholas Curello and Priscilla Rodriguez
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Abstract: Patricia Jones was born in Worcester in a neighborhood near Chandler Street. She dropped out of school at age 16 to marry and have children. When she divorced, she realized that her calling was to public accounting. She attended Quinsigamond Community College and discovered she liked accounting. She went on to earn her bachelor's degree from Suffolk University and later her graduate degree from Bentley University. Patricia Jones began working as a partner and eventually became the owner of P.L. Jones & Associates, P.C. She is dedicated to her work and doesn't even consider it a job. She has always been active in the community. She is a proponent of Abby's House that assists women in need. She is also involved in the Greater Worcester Foundation. She reflects on the changes in Worcester over time, how women are still at a disadvantage, and the excellent family support system that she has.

NC: 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 and the community involvement. We wish to focus today on your experiences in women's work. Thank you for your help with this important project. And do we have your permission to record this oral history using your name and the date it is recorded on?

PJ: Yes you do.

NC: Thank you. What is your full maiden name and if applicable your married name?

PJ: My maiden name is Patricia Linda Coffey and my married name, the last name now Jones.

NC: Where were you born?

PJ: In Worcester.

NC: Have you ever married?

PJ: I was married twice, for ten years to Victor Magliaro and for the last 35 years to Kenneth Jones.

NC: So your current husband's name is Kenneth Jones.

PJ: Yes it is.

NC: And the name of your previous husband?

PJ: Victor Magliaro.

NC: Do you have children?

PJ: I have six children.

NC: Do you have grandchildren?

PJ: I have 13 grandchildren.

NC: What cultures and/or ethnicities do you identify with, with your family background?

PJ: Well I claim to be Irish, more than anything else, but the reality is that I am – my father was Irish and my mother was French.

NC: Tell me about your parents.

PJ: My father was older when he married my mother which was common for the quote old Irish families and I believe he was 48 when he married my mother and he had spent lots of years in military and in the navy. And when he settled back in Worcester he was a firefighter and my mother had moved to the Worcester area and from what I understand her family was, I know her family was one of twelve – she was one of 12 or 13 – and during the Depression the families relocated to where there were jobs. And apparently back then there were lots of mill jobs in the Worcester area so she relocated to Worcester and met my father and they married and my sister and I were born. And again my father was probably 50ish and my mother mid 30s so they were older parents. That's one of the major things I remember that I remember about them.

NC: Where have you lived during your life?

PJ: I have spent all my life in Worcester County and for probably fifteen years lived in Leicester [MA] and 15 years lived in Princeton [MA].

NC: Did you grow up in Worcester?

PJ: Yes I did.

NC: In what neighborhood?

PJ: I had identified it as the Chandler Street Jakes Ave. Not sure if it would be defined as a neighborhood. It's a – in the city now it's a very, very difficult, rough neighborhood for families.

NC: What was the neighborhood like, generally?

PJ: It was very poor, and it was a difficult environment to live in.

NC: Do other family members live in the same area?

PJ: Of my family, siblings or children? Are you asking?

NC: Your family.

PR: It could be your sisters, your brothers, or daughters, or grandchildren.

PJ: For my siblings I have still two living and neither one of them live in Worcester. I have six children and they all – five of them live in Worcester or towns surrounding Worcester and one of them is in the Dartmouth area of Mass so five of them again are very, very close and one of them is an hour away.

NC: What challenges do you think this city still faces, and why would you...what would you change about this city?

PJ: I think that there are economic challenges that exist in the city. I probably have, would have more concern because so much of the base that drives the city and the economy in the city is service related being colleges and medical care or by-products of medical care and I would like to see a little more diversity in the Worcester base. I think that would make it stronger. I think that what has transpired and for a city whose origins were the mills and quote the smoke stacked industries, I think Worcester has done a fantastic job of adjusting and changing and if the leadership in the city and in city politics are willing to stay current and adjust and change, I think the city will do well and continue on this strong path, and I think Worcester is on a strong path.

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

PJ: Probably, probably the – well actually its origin was so much diversity and I think that that still does exist. Originally the diversity was ethnic and now it still is. I think that the colleges contribute a great deal to keeping it vibrant.

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

PJ: In general, I believe that this continues in – probably Worcester is even more of an example of a culture [phone rings] with the glass ceiling that women attempt to overcome because I still

think that the power, if that's the right word for influence in Worcester, is still within a smaller group of what were for typically, historically the white male quote power structure. I, that would be one area that I don't think that Worcester has been as open and has not made as much progress on. I think that probably your project that you're doing today is undoubtedly going to end up in some more recognition...

PR: Exactly

PJ: ...of what has transpired.

NC: Yes.

PR: I agree.

PR: Alright now, I'm going to ask you a little about your education. I know that you wrote it down on the paper but again...just a little...yep...Where did you attend school?

PJ: I had indicated that as a child I attended parochial schools here in Worcester and some of this is probably reflective of this neighborhood that I was brought up in. I mentioned that I had quit school when I was 16 and in this neighborhood that was not an uncommon occurrence. It was more common than not and it was at 16, or shortly thereafter, that I married for the first time. And [it wasn't] until after I had more children that I decided that I was going to need an education and started first to get my GED which was an easy accomplishment and then Quinsig [Quinsigamond Community College] part-time evenings to start to work at obtaining an education. Actually when I made reference to the value of the colleges, I think that Quinsigamond Community College has made a major contribution to allow a huge population to obtain education that wouldn't be available to them without Quinsig. But I had started at Quinsig to obtain my education and it was at that time that, right about that time, I was divorced and needed to get a job. So the education became paramount to me and I continued going to school part time at night, obtained my bachelor's degree and I would point out, at the time there was not even [the accounting] degree available in the county, in Worcester county, at the time and it was necessary for me to commute to Boston. And after obtaining the bachelor's degree, I actually then landed what was my first full time and decent paying job at a bank that was a high promoter of education and I obtained my graduate degree while working at the bank.

PR: Wow, that's very inspiring...you were very hard working, you really are ...

PJ: It was what needed to be done.

PR: And it was worth it? It was all worth it?

PJ: Well I am pleased with where I am now.

PR: That's nice [chuckling.]

PR: Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

PJ: I had, by the time I was going to graduate school, I had determined that accounting and what's associated with taxes was where my career was and so my options weren't changing. I had done some work in public accounting before I went to the bank and found the bank a tremendous opportunity but it was more narrow and I decided to go back to public accounting. And probably the career opportunity that came up was going out on my own and basically being a partner and then having more control over my – whatever opportunities would be available I had more control over that.

PR: Alright...

PJ: And also, actually ...and this might be....excuse me...

NC: that's alright

PJ: ...we attempt to have an environment in this office where, in particular, women can work in public accounting, one of the most difficult, difficult fields for females because of the schedule and the demands, and we attempt, as best we can, to have an environment where people can adjust their schedules. I'll give you an example. We, during the summer, we had a couple of individuals that were working for 10 hour days and because during the summer when you have four days of , four or five days of child care and you don't have children in school for a good part of it, it's very difficult. So, and I tell them advancement gives you the opportunity to control your schedules more. So that's the...that's the one thing that's a very, very limiting factor especially for women. In theory it should be equally the same for parents but the reality is that childcare responsibilities fall more to the female.

PR: Yeah, I agree...

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

PJ: I, I have mentioned... ooh, I'm sorry... [Bumps into phone]

NC: That's ok

PJ: the mentoring even in, in this program and it was a teacher that I had that encouraged me to basically do whatever I wanted to because I could if I worked at it and, and I would say that that mentoring was a major influence and there was one mentor of sorts while I was at the bank and that was one that allowed me to learn and develop and, and, and I guess encouraged, encouraged me to move on. [Doorbell rings]

PR: Ok

PJ: As far as a support network, the one thing that I would say is family. Years ago when [I had] small children, I still had my mother and even later on it was a sister and I would suggest even to this day I have tremendous family support.

PR: That's really nice, ...alright, so do you work? Do you typically work outside your home?

PJ: I [laughs], I consider this my home-away-from-home because I gave you some of the history of the building. The building has also become the home away from home and yes I work here and I would say probably 60 hours a week plus.

PR: Wow... how did you come to this, to work here?

PJ: I got into public accounting, became a partner, and looking for office space, came to this building that became a love affair with the building and that's how we, how I ended up here, my career had brought me back to public accounting so the two of them meshed.

PR: Alright...

PJ: And I have a, hopefully this recording will translate into better grammar when you're transcribing it because I can tell that my responses are not necessarily the, the best grammatical sentence structure.

PR: No, no it's fine. It's completely ok. A lot of people actually say. Our professors warned us about this. Sometimes you talk, it doesn't come out the same on paper, and it, it happens all the time. Who did you work with or for? Like, how would you say this? On your way up, who did you work for or did you work with or who did you work for? Ok, it's a bit confusing....

PJ: I have been effectively on my own now for 30 plus years, so I haven't worked for anyone else for 30 something years. When I was at the bank, there was a senior individual that I would have worked for then and that was a short period, five or six years and prior to that I worked for an accountant for five or six years but that was so very long ago and I would suspect that, that my destiny was to be on my own and not to have a boss so thus the 30 something years I have been on my own.

PR: Ok...what has this job meant to you? What does it mean to you?

PJ: I enjoy what I do. I like accounting. I like taxes. I like public accounting. I wish that there were more women, particularly for younger women that are here and gaining their experience. I tell them that my job is to encourage them to stay in public accounting. What do I, what do I like, what does this mean? I like what I do. I don't consider it a job. There are major parts that are jobs and chores and two in particular, and both of them are items that, that surface this week

and are very often a part of business. One is doing the firm work and the billing and needing to do some necessary things, and I don't like doing that. And the other is human resources and dealing with personnel issues and I don't like doing that. But it comes with the territory. The rest of it, the accounting part of the work, I don't consider it a job. It's not such, even as I told you about the 60 hour schedule. I do that for choice, I don't...no one says I have to and I don't have a schedule that I need to meet or keep. I don't watch TV, and it's what I do.

PR: Why don't you watch TV?

PJ: It's brainless. [Doorbell rings]

PR: Alright...are we going to change the topic a little bit? Topics, I agree. What were or are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework?

PJ: Very little [all laugh]. For one thing there is only my husband and myself, and I have someone that comes in and cleans. I also have a limiting disability, a mobility disability. So a lot of things, for example, the shopping – my husband will take a lot of that responsibility. So, and again if we come back to what my schedule is, I really don't have a lot of household responsibilities. We sold the house and moved into a condominium development. So that also took a lot of the maintenance responsibilities away.

PR: Ok, how have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

PJ: Probably the balancing is spending, probably time with my husband and time with my family and actually even during the earlier parts of my career, I believe that the positions that I've been in, and again a lot of them on my own, I was able to control my schedule thus balancing family time and commitments. I mean how, how do I do it? I don't know; it's probably one that I should do a better job of and should give more thought to that. So I don't know as I do a good job of it, but I do think that the balancing with family time is an important element, and again I don't think I've been as successful perhaps as I would like.

PR: Ok.. how would you characterize the personal and professional cost of your chosen path? And how about the benefits?

PJ: I would say because my chosen path has brought me to be my own boss that I have a lot more control over my destiny than I think most people do. I have no concern about being laid off and I think about what I've seen with clients and what I've seen with families over the years. So I would say that a major benefit is just the control over your destiny. Again, I go back to, I like what I'm doing and it's not a major chore.

PR: Ok. Alright.. you answered that..

PJ: I should have asked for your questions in advance so I could have thought about them.

PR: You're doing a really good job!

PJ: A little bit..

PR: You're doing a really good job, I'm surprised. I thought. Honestly it feels like you already had the questions. You're doing a really good job. Do you consider yourself active politically?

PJ: Politically no. I am opinionated and.. but I keep it very low key and don't think that I should in my role voice my political opinions and I would have my client go from one spectrum to another and I would not want to offend clients with my political views. Sometimes there's.. I'm sure.. I know that there is enough insinuations that I would make that most clients would if asked would probably accurately guess where my affiliation would go but I just don't think that it is right in my role of serving diverse people that I would publicly make statements. I also do – we, as a firm, do an awful lot with governmental entities and in doing so I think that our position should be neutral and that we not be biased by political events.

PR: Ok

PJ: Although, I just an hour ago was hearing grief from a client because of our [government] shut down.

NC: Yeah, yeah

PR: I was actually going to say..

PJ: For the fourteen days and this particular client is a new client and I had not thought about the impact and it's an not for profit that's receiving federal funds for subsidized food programs for children. And it's not that there subsidy was cut, but it's the environment and what they've had to do to in order to have services to provide to the children in the past two weeks [that] has taken a tremendous amount of their effort. Again, some of the political activity does impact us and our clients, but that would be an example of why, for example, I would not be one that would say absolutely you need to increase the data at whatever cost in order to get funds to children where the other side might be you've got to dig your heels in and let the chips fall because this debt that has increased three hundred percent in twenty years has just, needs to decrease.

PR: (interested) Mmm

PJ: So I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna go either way.

PR: [slight giggle] alright we're gonna switch it to Nick and he's gonna take over the rest of the interview.

NC: Have you been involved in volunteer or community work?

PJ: I have always been involved and I actually was involved with the [Worcester Women's] History Project when it was doing the portraits at Mechanics Hall back whatever that was, ten fifteen years ago. I've always been involved in community fairs and it started with my children and their affiliations and I always felt that it was important, you had to, you couldn't just be a receiver, you had to be part of what was going on.

NC: What groups did you work with or for?

PJ: There's.. It's a numerous list..

NC: Can you tell us a few?

PJ: Actually, actually there's a lot of youth service ones: Boys Scouts, Girls Scouts, I have always been a proponent of Abby's [House]. I do work for the diocese. I am involved in the Greater Worcester Foundation.

NC:: What led you to join these organizations?

PJ: It, typically their purpose, their mission, that's what, and I still would say that I would be a proponent of youth serving organizations.

NC: What were some of the main goal of these organizations? The youth organizations?

PJ: Well, like I said, serving the youth obviously, and Abby's [House] is a promoter of assisting women in need. I mean the diocese of the Catholicism.

NC: What would you consider the groups major accomplishments?

PJ: I don't think that I can.. I don't think that that's a question that I can respond to.

NC: What role has religion played in your life?

PJ: It's always been important to me.

NC: What religion do you identify with?

PJ: Catholic

NC: Now we're gonna talk about health. How has.. how have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

PJ: I think that I am extremely fortunate that we have a very healthy and strong family. There are obviously as individuals – for example siblings and I said I had just lost a brother – as they age health issues are more prevalent. And for myself I have a mobility disability and.. but I kind of even say that that's a health issue what it has done is restricted me and slows me down and that's probably a good thing.

NC: [laughs] Ok.. what are your experiences in accessing quality/affordable health care?

PJ: [sarcastically] Political opinions aside?

NC: [laughs]

PJ: Because I am still attempting to stay neutral and given that a lot of the work that we do are with health serving organizations I, personally I believe that it is accessible. And affordable? It's just – it's a difficult one for me to judge. I am of the opinion that both the affordability and the accessibility can be overcome with someone that is prepared to work hard and dig their heels in and get to, get to the end results. Should an individual need to do that? That's probably a social/moral question and.. but I also have this opinion that too often individuals expect, without a great deal of effort on their part, to have some of these, for example, health care services provided and I think that they should be accessible and affordable but the individual also has to be willing to participate in their care.

NC: What role.. Who's health are you responsible for besides your own?

PJ: I'd like to think that my husband and I share responsibilities for each other at this point. Someone has to cook healthy and someone has to prod the other to exercise.

NC: [laughs]

PR: [to Nick] Is that it? [back to Patricia] I have a few more questions, these are a little different. How were the girls treated when you were in school? Like when you were, as a kid, how were the girls supposed to be like compared to today?

PJ: I don't know if I could compare to today because I'm probably not close enough to say what the responses were. I believe that there was defined – and actually I even remember that in grammar school there was the boys' entrance and the girls' entrance and you went different ways. And girls were expected to go into nursing and teaching and not, for example, finances and law. I would say that the expectations – and I actually, I say I don't have the experience, but I do believe that that has changed. That it's a much more gender neutral expectation of males and females in education now than when I was in school.

NC: So you've helped to break down those barriers that have held women back?

PJ: I'm not so sure. I have worked for myself and I think in that vein, but I'm not so sure how helpful it would be to others.

PR: What memories do you have of significant historical events that took place when you were growing up?

PJ: I [laughs] actually just had this experience – we had done the trip to Texas and went to the book depository which is where the individual that had shot President Kennedy was. I came back and was telling everybody in the office [that] everybody remembers where they were on 9/11 and everybody remembers where they were when Kennedy was shot and [laughing] no one else in the building had any idea. They had no recollection because they weren't even born then. So I would say that that was a significant event and was comparable to 9/11. If you relate to 9/11 and knowing where you were I would say that that was the – it was pivotal. I would be short sighted if I didn't say the Vietnam War in the sixties. That was very dramatic and I think that at the time I was a teenager and didn't fully understand everything, but it just was very difficult because there was such extremes on the way people reacted and that might have been even the first time that I would have seen that type of exchange even with adults.

PR: Wow.. wow.. Alright.. so how do you get through tough times? What kinds of thoughts keep you going?

PJ: I probably – I'll get frustrated and – I think that the biggest thing is – and I say this no matter what happens in our business or at work, the business, work, the property. No one's gonna take us out and shoot us and, and we're not in a critical place where we can do harm. We're not a physician, and we're not going to harm someone else and so you just do what you have to do and then tomorrow's another day. So if it didn't work today, brush yourself off, and start again tomorrow. I think that's probably – in the meantime, again, you're not gonna be shot and you're not gonna harm somebody else so whatever needs to happen make it right tomorrow.

PR: Okay.. how do you feel about the choices you've made in your life and do you have any regrets?

PJ: In hindsight do I have regrets. I would not encourage anyone to quit school. I would not encourage anyone to get married when they're seventeen. I would [laughs] probably not encourage people to do a lot of things that I did. However, an individual is a composite and if I didn't have some of those experiences would I be the same? Would I change anything? Probably the major thing that I would change would be myself and not be as perhaps as demanding of other people.

PR: Ok.. besides those advices do you have any other advice you would like to give to the women of today and the future generation?

PJ: I recall that I had mentioned the teaching mentor that I had who always said if you go to school and work hard you can do anything. And I would say going to school means continuous education. It doesn't need to be a structured school, but it's important that people are always learning. And I do think that it's important for individuals in future generations to know that they need to contribute to their own destiny. It's not something – it's not an entitlement – and that they have to work for themselves to accomplish something. So that would be my advice – what was passed on to me. I would say continue your education, not necessarily that it needs to be in a formal setting and work hard by contributing to your own destiny.

PR: Wow.. thank you very much [to Nick] do you have any further questions?

NC: I have one more question? What did you do? What kind of extracurricular activities did you do growing up in Worcester?

PJ: A lot of – actually when I was in school, whatever activity was there I was involved in. Scouting, student council, sports, it just whatever was there I was involved in.

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

PJ: I think that Worcester is so, so rich in its heritage of women that have made contributions and I reference the portraits at Mechanics hall and there are so many of these women even today that make huge contribution. There are so many awards that are given out, but there are so many women that have done a tremendous amount and I would say that Worcester is really – perhaps because I don't know other cities – but Worcester just has a wealth of rich female heritage and in those that continue to contribute.

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

PJ: I don't know who you have so [laughs] I mean obviously lots of women that have made contributions. I mean every time I'm just getting more literature from the Women Initiative of the United Way where there's a whole list of women that are involved in trying to serve that cause. Obviously if you look at not for profit boards – actually let me just suggest one because I think that she has probably more quietly made contributions and it's another CPA. Our careers have passed over the years and we'll see each other more as a catch up probably every four or five years. Her name is Chris Judycki-Crepeault, if that's the way you pronounce her. She's the CFO at Ad Care Hospital and the way I just came across her she came on as a member of the finance committee at Abby's House. She's on the board of Abby's and this is an example of someone who has made contributions over the years. I have been affiliated with Abby's for I don't know twenty plus years or something and never knew that Chris was apparently serving as one of the house dorm keepers. They have someone that stays at night in their shelters and she had been doing it for years. Never knew it. So she might be a candidate that.. that you might want to interview. I think that she has made more contributions subtly than it's known.

NC: Thank you.

PR: Wow, thank you very much.

PJ: You're very welcome.