

Interviewee: Anne Kruse
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Date of Interview: March 14, 2012
Location: DCU center
Transcriber: Emily Burkart, Kaitlyn Cardey, and Cortney Parece



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Abstract

Anne Kruse was born in 1952 to Grace and Daniel Sullivan. She grew up in the Greendale section of Worcester, Massachusetts with her mother, father, older sister, and four younger brothers. She lives in Worcester and went to school here, and has lived in Worcester, Massachusetts all her life. She never went to college, but worked hard and built her life up from there, even though she did encounter some obstacles along the way. Some of Anne's most defining characteristics are how optimistic and faithful she is. Even when she lived in the projects or did not have the exact life she knew she could have and wanted, Anne said that she knew God had a plan for her and that everything would work out. Her optimism and her faith are truly what make her strong and help her accomplish so much in her life. She now works at the DCU center and is married to Charles Kruse and has three children and five grandchildren.

KC: Okay is everyone ready?

EB, CP, AK: Yes

KC: 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 Right's Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics or community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with Worcester. Thank you for your help with this important project.

What is your full name?

AK: My full name is Anne Katherine Sullivan Kruse. Sullivan is my maiden name.

CP: So you were born in Worcester?

AK: I was, in Greendale, where I live now.

EB: Do you live in the same area?

AK: I do live about three or four streets away and I live in -- my husband and I own a house, the same house that my grandmother and grandfather owned.

EB: Oh that's really cool!

AK: [Laughs] It is, it's very cool.

CP: So you're married. Does that mean you have children?

AK: I do. I have three grown children. As a matter of fact my oldest is going to be forty on Friday. And I have another son and a daughter.

CP: Do you have grandchildren?

AK: I do. I have five grandchildren, yep.

KC: That's so cool. I like little kids!

CP: What do you think is easier boys or girls?

AK: Actually I think boys are easier than girls. I do yeah [laughs] they are rougher and tumble.

CP: So you live in your grandparent's house now? What is that? Why is that?

AK: Why is that? Well, my mother and my brother owned the house after my grandparents passed away; and my brother and his wife were moving to Atlanta—she was offered a really good job down in Atlanta. So my mother was single, and she couldn't afford to pay for the house on her own, so they were gonna sell the house. And at the time, my husband and I, my husband now [taps desk] and I had been married, oh I think it was five years, six years and we had three kids because I had been previously married and I had my two sons from my first husband and we didn't—we were living in an apartment, and they were gonna be selling my grandmother's house and we didn't—my husband and I didn't have any money, oh my goodness we had no money, but something just said to me, you really have to have this house. And we owned it within two weeks. So what happened was the bank mortgaged the house to us, or the deposit was wrapped into the house or it was wrapped into the mortgage somehow or another because we were buying from family, so alright. So therefore my husband and I and our three kids moved into house within two weeks, it was just awesome.

EB: That's really nice.

AK: Yeah, it really was.

EB: Do you have a lot of memories from being a child going there and growing up?

AK: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. As a matter of fact, the tough part was when I went to change the wallpaper, or you know, didn't put the mirror over here, I put it over there, [everyone laughs], and you know my mom would say, "Well you know, it was always over here," and "Ma, I think I like it over here!" [Everyone laughs]

EB: Do you know like all the hiding places in the backyard?

AK: Absolutely

EB: You can find your kids anywhere!

AK: That's right, that's right! Well, the tough part too was that it's an old house, it's a little over a hundred years now, and because you know the people who owned the whole time, the projects that they didn't do, and all the projects that they did do but didn't. You know they only did them halfway or something, you know. When it's anonymous, and you don't know who you bought the house from, you can always blame everything on those anonymous people, but when you know who it was, that's tougher.

EB: It's a little bit harder!

AK: [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

KC: Oh, my grandfather didn't do this!

AK: [laughs] Yeah.

CP: So where did you live when you were a child? Did you live in the same area?

AK: I did, as I told you on the paper there, there was a whole bunch of us, there was six of us kids and my mother and my father and, so we lived in an apartment and I had four younger brothers and an older sister. And my mother and father bought a house in Greendale and oh, that house was falling apart too, and but, we all you know, well jammed into this house and it was in a great neighborhood and we had a great time.

EB: Did you like having a lot of siblings?

AK: I really did. Yeah, I really did. I still do, every—knock on wood—everyone's still happy and healthy, and four of us still live in the area and two, one lives in Atlanta and one lives in

Florida, but we still all are very close. And my mom just passed away a couple years ago, so when she was eighty-six, so you know we've all been very close over all these years and we had no money, but my mother used to say, you know, we may not have very much money but we have a lot of love, and we did.

EB: That's very important, it's all that matters.

AK: Yep, absolutely.

CP: So throughout your childhood and teenage years you stayed in Worcester, right?

AK: I did.

CP: You said you didn't attend college?

AK: I didn't, no, I didn't. Back when I was getting out of and when I was in high school—and you probably read this in other interviews, you know, girls were expected to either be a nurse or be a teacher or be a mother, and that was about it. Now my sister did become a nurse and she graduated high school a couple years before I did and she went into nursing school, and you know that was fabulous. So you know, what's Anne going to do? Anne has no idea what's she wants to do. And so because there was so many of us, you were expected to go to work, and I did go to work right after high school. I had worked all the way through high school anyways from the time I was fourteen. I don't think I've ever not worked. And, so when I graduated from high school, I got a job at Thom McAn Company. Thom McAn Shoe Company was headquartered here in Worcester and I went to work for Thom McAn Shoe and that was the beginning of my, you know business career. And it was a good job, it was a very good job, and then I became pregnant and life changed as I knew it. [Laughs] So...

KC: So you said that your first two sons were from your previous marriage?

AK: Yes, my previous marriage.

KC: And your husband had a son?

AK: No, my husband and I, my husband now, Charlie, we got married and we had another child, and it turned out to be a girl, which was fabulous. So we had two boys and a girl.

KC: So you said you're the second oldest and you have an older sister and four younger brothers, and I'm the oldest in my family personally, so I don't know, like is it different being the second oldest? Like did you have, I mean...

AK: Yes, she was much more responsible than I was [everyone laughs]. Yeah ...

KC: She did everything she was supposed to, you know, become a nurse.

AK: Yes, exactly, exactly. And you know I was a little more of a wild child and free spirit, still am, you know. And so as I said here I was, you know, all of a sudden on my career at nineteen years old and all of a sudden I was pregnant, had no idea how that happened. Back in the day, back at that time, you know, it wasn't—girls didn't have access to birth control you know and in health class I think they talked about how penicillin came about and that kind of stuff.

KC: Yeah

AK: So here I was, out and about at nineteen years old, you know, having myself a grand old time out in the world and then boom I'm pregnant and, "Oh gosh, Anne caused a ruckus in the family again." [everyone laughs]. "What are we gonna do with this girl?" And so at that time as well you know, especially nice Catholic girls, you got married. You know if you found yourself pregnant you got married and so we did, we got married, and that—it didn't last very long at all. Which they never do when they force you to get married like that. And so we were divorced and, we got divorced, and I had to live in the projects which was horrible. But at the time your options were limited, there were no such things as section eight either, you know, so that's what you did. And of course because since there so many people at home, I couldn't very well bring one more person back into the house. Mom's working all the time and my father was working all the time of course. And so, it sort of is the way I started in the hospitality industry, because my mom at the time—the Sheraton Lincoln was a brand new hotel here in the city. The city was changing quite a bit at that point and they put up a brand new hotel off on the Lincoln street area. And all of a sudden that became the place to—and my mother had always been in the hospitality industry—so I started working coat rooms on Saturday night, and believe me there is a lot of money in hanging coats, and people throwing those dollars at you, all over the place to hang your coats! [Laughs] So that was a great job! And I stayed at the Sheraton Lincoln I think for seventeen years, and I just, that's how I started in the hospitality industry. But I was a single mom, then, for probably, I think, I think for about four years and then my ex-husband and I got back together again and it was sort of like you know the Cinderella story that you know he missed his, our, first son's growing up and all that, So we got back together again and had another baby. He said, "Okay let's have another baby--this is gonna be great," you know gonna be this nice family unit. And that lasted for about maybe a year, and then he disappeared one day and that took care of that. So here I was single again and decided that I'm a little tired of, you know, these guys, you know guys are really killing me here. So and I met my husband Charlie. I met him probably two or three years later, or something like that but in that time

frame, you know I really developed to who I was as a woman. And you know I was a single mom with two little kids, two little boys and I knew that God had a plan for me, you know that was better than where I was or what I was doing, you know. I knew I would see business women driving down the street while I was pushing along my babies in carriages and I would think, “Geez I thought I was gonna be a business woman,” you know what I mean? And I would see you know people my age buying houses and I thought I was going to have a house and I thought I was gonna have a picket fence, you know and all that stuff [laughs]. And I always had faith in the fact that it would really happen. Then Charlie came along and things started happening.

EB: Well that’s really nice, that’s what everyone wants.

AK: Yeah! And we have been married thirty-two years now, so yeah. And he adopted my two sons so we were, well, they were young, they were like eight and four and we became—and Emily, my daughter was like five I think, no... Well he adopted my two sons and Emily was there as well so, I think she was just an infant. We were one big family at that point, yeah.

KC: That’s always nice.

AK: Yeah it’s nice, it’s very nice. I’ve been blessed that my life, my life is good you know. I didn’t get to go to college, but I don’t think I would have liked it anyways when I was there. [Everyone laughs]. So I’ve always worked, and work and the hospitality industry has always been good to me. So, yeah...

EB: What do you do here exactly?

AK: I’m convention sales; I sell the convention center side of the DCU [Convention] Center. It’s an absolutely fabulous job. It’s—I thank God every day and I thank our general manager every day for hiring me because it’s a terrific job. Yeah, I’m very lucky.

KC: So you finally get to do what you wanted to do?

AK: Yes, I’ve always been in the hotel business and hospitality one way or another, either waitressing or tending bar which is a great job as well. And then I also worked in sales at the Beechwood Hotel, which is a terrific hotel, and then I went to work for the Convention and Visitors Bureau here in the city and that, when I went to work for them it was at the time that this convention center was being built. And that was just a whole turnaround, within the city to have a, well, first to have an arena being built, and also to build the, well, that was considered many years before that, but then to build the convention center, was a real big deal for the city. And I’ve always been a real city, city of Worcester promoter, I’ve always—I love this city, and I’m

always rooting for it, you know? So when I went to work for the Convention and Visitor's Bureau it was my job to promote the city and that was pretty terrific.

CP: How long have you been here?

AK: About ten years now, I'm into my tenth year, which is great, get four weeks' vacation. [Everyone laughs] You know, stick around long enough.

EB: Can you tell us a little bit about your parents?

AK: My parents? My parents, sure. My mom was an absolutely terrific lady, great mom, again, in the hospitality business her whole life, also very city oriented. She waitressed and was a hostess, and also worked in sales offices in hotels in and around Worcester. Raised her six kids. My mom and dad divorced in their twenty fifth year together, which was tough, kind of difficult for everybody—even though some of us were adults but it was sort of, it was at the time the women's movement was really coming into effect and my mom had, you know, six kids and she didn't feel that my father was really contributing to help raise those six kids and in the meantime she was working real hard. And so their marriage was sort of a victim to that, which was okay because my mom was coming into her own, you know. I think she was in her forties, or early fifties or something and like I said she lived to be eighty-six, so she didn't necessarily want to have to be, you know, just a single parent, but have a husband at the same time. You know so, their marriage was a victim of that, which was okay, and my dad was a social worker here in the city—nice guy, and he passed away when he was in his sixties.

CP: So what challenges have you seen Worcester face over the years?

AK: Well you know Worcester's had a lot of challenges and we were sort of an industrial city and that had to change, you know? But we've always seemed to land on our feet, you girls aren't from Worcester right? I think you said that.

EB, KC, CP: Nope

AK: Well, I've always been way [?] to pay attention a lot even when I was young to what was happening in Worcester. My mom, in the restaurant she worked in, there was—it was called Russell's on Lincoln and it was a restaurant that a lot of the city politicians used to go to. Buddy Russell was a [College of the]Holy Cross graduate and knew a lot of the city politicians who were also Irish, and a lot them came from Holy Cross, so it was a fun restaurant and my mother would always talk about the mayor and the city counselors and all that kind of stuff. I was always very involved in what Worcester politics and Worcester, the growth of Worcester was doing and going on. And anytime anybody had any ideas or anything that was gonna change in

Worcester I was always one to say, “Yeah this is gonna be great, and we will see that happen in our lifetime.” And I have, you know? I was just looking out and sitting outside yesterday and I noticed the roof to the galleria is down. That’s gonna open up the City Square Project over here by—bring this major boulevard right over to the back of city hall and that goes back into the seventies. I think it was the seventies, or early eighties or something that they put that up, and they just completely blocked off that area. And so over these years, within the past fifteen or twenty years I think, they’ve been talking about tearing that thing down, and everybody’s saying, “Oh it’s never gonna happen.” Well, I always knew it was gonna happen and then I saw it happen yesterday! You know? So, Worcester is a great place to live and it’s a great place to work and it’s a great place for a woman to be a business person and all the colleges that we have in the city, it’s really a terrific place, I think.

EB: Is there anything that you love about Worcester, most specifically?

AK: I do love the neighborhoods. I love the fact that people identify with the neighborhoods and they still do. I mean Greendale, you can always tell when somebody young has bought a house, in any neighborhood, I suppose—but especially in Greendale because that’s where I live. But you know the old folks die off and the next thing you know, there’s a new wreath on the front door or something like that, you know? But a lot of people that live in Worcester want to move back into the same neighborhoods and I think that’s pretty terrific. Well, they identify as coming from a particular neighborhood. As a matter of fact, I travel a lot or between the Convention and Visitors Bureau and now, I have traveled a lot, and folks always say, “Oh you’re from Worcester, I know Worcester,” and I love the fact that they can say it correctly, you know? [Laughs] And then the first thing you say is how come you know Worcester? And they say, I mean it doesn’t matter where in the country you go, or even in the world, I bet, and you say, “How do you know Worcester?” And they say, “Oh my grandmother grew up in Worcester,” or, “My sister went to school in Worcester,” or “I used to live in Worcester.” And I say whereabouts and they say, “Oh, on the west side or by Shrewsbury Street or Grafton Hill, or something like that, you know, and that pretty—no matter where you go, it happens.

KC: So you really like the close-knit neighborhood, and how you can have lifelong friends?

AK: Yeah, yep. You can go into the grocery store and run into someone you know from you know, wherever. I like that I’m kind of a homebody kind of person myself anyways, you know? So that’s, you know, and Worcester promotes that. It doesn’t change a lot, it doesn’t change quickly, let’s put it that way [everyone laughs]. It doesn’t change quickly.

CP: Are you active in any politics or anything within the city?

AK: I don't—the short answer is no, but the long answer is sort of. I know about them, I don't tend to campaign for people, although, you know, every once I let people put signs on my front yard, if I like them, and I believe in their cause and I do always know what is going on. I do tend to—if things are happening in my neighborhood I do tend to email my congress, my city councilperson and things like that. If I think that there is an inequity happening in the city, something that I don't necessarily agree with then I do tend to speak up. I—but I don't run, I'm not on any boards or anything like that.

CP: Can you give us an example of one of the causes that you didn't agree with?

AK: That I did not agree with?

CP: Yes.

AK: I don't tend to like the fact that they just kind of blacktopped Greendale and didn't put any streetscapes or anything along the trees or any new trees or anything new against West Boylston Street when they did it recently. That makes me angry, but that's you know—if there is graffiti in my neighborhood I'm always right on top of that. That's about it at the moment.

KC: How did you like the school systems for your kids?

AK: [Sighs] Well that's not something that I'm all that thrilled about. I'm glad my kids are no longer in the school. When my kids, well they are, as I said 40, 35, and 32 or something like that 37 and 32, I don't know, something like that [laughs]. They were always, you know we were a middle class family and they were always in college level courses. They were not honor students, but they weren't problems either and so they so they were just nice little white middle class kids. And I tend to think that the Worcester school system, at the time, and I don't know if it's still true, but at the time the Worcester school system tended to kind of skate those kids along a little bit, you know. I don't think they were challenged tremendously in school, and I sort of wish my husband and I could have afforded better schools at the time. I don't know if my kids would have agreed with that or not but they've done very well. My kids, you know, and they are good kids, they are social, just like we are [laughs], and they've done very well in life, so yeah.

EB: Did you send your kids to the same schools that you went to?

AK: They, well, yeah we all lived in the same neighborhood. So yes they went to the same schools, and, that was fun. You know some of the same teachers were still there, you know, so yeah.

CP: Are you involved in any community or volunteer work within Worcester?

AK: Yes. I'm very active with the Chamber of Commerce here in the city. I'm chairperson of a couple of different committees, and that's good for my business here, you know in sales. That's what we tend to do. I'm also very active in my church, Greendale Peoples Church, and I'm on a lot of committees there. It's a non-denominational, private, well not private church, but it's led by the people. It doesn't have a hierarchy so you know you have to have a lot of committees involved with that and so I'm involved with that. Then when our kids were growing up, you know I was involved with cheerleading and that kind of stuff, so. My husband was always involved in sports and that kind of stuff, of course [laughs]. And now with grandkids, a little bit of scouting, you know, we are at the events with them and things like that.

EB: How old are your grandkids?

AK: Okay. [Everyone laughs] Let's see. They are thirteen, nine, seven, and two two-year olds. Yeah.

EB: Are they twins?

AK: [laughs]) No, actually they are not, they are cousins. Two little girls, both my sons and their wives realized that they were gonna have a baby right about the same time and both of them turned out to be girls and, yeah, that was kind of fun. There were two little babies at the same time. So now there are those two little girls, they are a lot of fun.

KC: So they play with each other all the time I bet!

AK: Sort of, one lives in Gardner, and the other one lives here in Worcester, so they don't live that close but when they do, yeah, they are right there with each other. Yeah, two year olds are fun. [Everyone laughs]

KC: It's a good age.

AK: Yeah, it is. Every age is a good age for kids as far as I'm concerned. Yeah.

EB: I think most of the questions we went over!

AK: Really?

KC: Yeah.

AK: That's it? [Laughs]

KC: Hm. Oh, well what type of work does your husband do?

AK: Oh sure. My husband is, well runs a trucking terminal for a wholesale bakery, breads and rolls and bulky rolls and all that kind of good stuff. It's a company called Calise Bakery, it's out of Providence, and you'll see it at the deli. And so he, when he and I got together he was moving down the Cape and he had given up his apartment and his job and everything else and then he decided he didn't want to go so he stayed [laughs]. And then we got married, and so he went to work for a bread company called Polini's Bakery at the time and Polini's sold to Calise's and he's been with them ever since. It's a privately held, family company out of Rhode Island, and he runs the trucking terminal and he's got about fourteen trucks on the road, and yeah. It's a good job, my husband's a good man, good hardworking man. So...

EB: How did you meet him?

AK: We met through, I was working at the Sheraton Lincoln, and I was friends with some folks that were in a band there. And the band was out of, had come from the Framingham area and the band was friends with my husband. And so the band said to me one time, a woman in the band, and she said—some friends we're all going down to the Cape for, I don't know say some weekend, and they said, "Do you want to go? And I had the two little boys you know, and I said, "Oh you know, I don't think I can go down to the Cape for two days." I mean where did I ever go? I never went anywhere [laughs] and my mother said, "Sure, go ahead!" And I said—I won a gift certificate through my work for I don't know some employee of the month or something and I said, "I won an overnight at that, this particular hotel on the Cape and do you want to do it?" And they said, "Sure!" So there were a whole bunch of people that went down at the same time and Charlie was with them. And so he asked me out the following week, and that was in, now get this, that was in August, as a matter of fact it was his birthday, so it was August 15th and, we were living together in October and we were married in April. Married that April. Imagine that? Imagine that?

EB, CP: Wow!

KC: Wow, that's a fast wedding!

AK: I know. We've been married thirty-two years ever since!

EB: So that works out!

AK: [laughs] Yeah, I know, I know! But I think back on it now, and I don't think I would have been thrilled if my daughter did that [everyone laughs]. But at the time it seemed right. I told you I was divorced and I was really being serious about, you know, the men I was seeing and I hadn't

seen anybody for a couple of years, you know? And here I was married so quickly. But it was right. It was the right thing to do. [Laughs]

EB: Did your husband like having your sons around?

AK: He did. He was very good about it. Yes he was a good stand in Dad. And we had it pretty easy because my ex-husband wasn't around and didn't see the boys, and that sort of is good because I know people, that when you are co-parenting, it's tough, you know, especially if there is another man in the picture or another woman in the picture. Well, there wasn't any in our case, and I always insisted that the boys respect Charlie, and vice versa. And he insisted that they respect me and so from the very beginning, we had mutual respect for everybody, you know? And they were little, which was also very easy. Joey, I think was eight, and Danny was—oh maybe they were younger than that. I think they were like six and two, or eight and four or something like that. And, so, and he's a good man, and he was a good dad, so. And then he adopted them probably about two years later, three years later, or something like that. So it actually it all worked. I told you it was being led by God! [Laughs] So, you know, and I firmly believe that. But it all meshed very well.

EB: It sounds like it actually really worked out. That's nice!

AK: Yeah, it really was. It really is! I mean I say was, it was nice then, of course we were dirt poor, but we've had a nice family life ever since, you know? It could've been awful, but it didn't turn out that way. It turned out great, yeah.

KC: Was it difficult before, being a single mother and having to raise two kids?

AK: Yes.

KC: Especially by yourself without any money?

AK: Yep, it is, I respect anybody that did it, but it well, I don't know, I look back on it and I don't feel bad about it. You know? I feel bad that I didn't enjoy it a little bit more while I was in the middle of it, you know? I felt bad. I feel bad now that I look back, and I think to myself, well I was telling you about walking down the street and pushing baby carriages and I felt bad for myself. You do feel bad for yourself you know?

EB: I'm sure it was very stressful though!

AK: Yeah, but, I don't regret any bit of it. It was tough, don't get me wrong, it was tough, and I didn't have a car and the whole deal, you know. But, I don't know, I just kind of always knew

that it was all gonna work out okay! I just kinda figured that it was all gonna work out okay. And it did! You know? It's, I don't know it's hard to explain. It's disturbing at the time that it's happening, but as far as I'm concerned as long as you maintain hope about your life and keep striving forward, then life is gonna be okay, you know? So...

CP: Do you have any regrets with anything?

AK: [Sighs] You know.... No I don't. I really don't. You know I mean maybe I could have changed a few things, but then if I changed it, it wouldn't have turned out the way it is know you know?

EB, KC, and CP: Right, yeah.

AK: So that's kind of [how] I always look at life, you know? So... yeah.

CP: So why did you want to participate in the Worcester Women's Oral History Project?

AK: Because I believe in the project, I think it's wonderful. I knew about it before—the first time I heard about it was a number of years ago and I remember looking it up and reading the stories about women and their history of Worcester. I thought it was just fascinating, and so I don't know how you found me, or why, but I think you know, I'm a great believer in grabbing life by both hands and taking advantage of anything that comes along. And I think this is just fabulous and like I said, just even having to think back on your life and what you plan on sharing, what you're going to share with people is, and why you're sharing it and the fact that it could be read you know, in another hundred and fifty years from now, you know? And then also too, you were talking about how part of that was how you, what your life was like and I mean I think about it and I'm gonna be sixty this year. And when I was a young woman I told you there was no birth control and you couldn't even wear pants to school for crying out loud, you know, which is crazy! And, you know, you couldn't take—I was thinking about it the other day and I wanted to take auto shop or wood working in school and you couldn't do that you know? And then, as I was saying, about when I was a single mom and I had—your only options at the time were to go on welfare—first of all get married, and that never worked out. And then you could only live in the projects. There were no other options, you know, and then at the time you couldn't share an apartment with anybody, you know? That was... so there are so many changes in just my life time and as far as I'm concerned, I'm still a young woman [laughs] you know? I mean so, you know, I think back on the changes and how my life was affected by them and it's just, well it fascinates me.

EB: It's definitely very interesting because you have a totally different perspective than we do, of Worcester, especially because we are not from here.

AK: Yeah, sure. Well, you know, I think all your mothers have stories as well, but—and your aunts and that kind of thing—but you wouldn't tend to ask them. You know? And maybe when you get to be my age and you see mortality a little bit in front of you—and they talk about how the people should write down their history, and I know my mother did, a little bit but my grandmother didn't, you know? And I wish there was more stories about, from her. And so that was another thing that I thought about, is that my grandkids are gonna be reading this too, and my great grandkids, and that kinda stuff you know? So I'd like for them to know a little bit about who I was, you know?

CP: Yeah! Do you have any advice to give to any woman of future generations?

AK: Sure! I would say just be true to yourself, have a great time, just have faith in the fact that your life is gonna turn out great if you just [have] faith and that you'll be a good person, strive forward all the time, you know? Enjoy life to the fullest, you know? That's about it as far as I'm concerned. For a young woman or a young man, just enjoy life. Here in Worcester or anywhere. And also with Worcester, have faith in the fact that Worcester is going to survive and that if somebody says they are gonna do something that it will eventually get done, you know? [Laughs.] Even across the street here at Saint Vincent's Hospital, you know for a long time that was this big open empty lot, because it was a brownfield and somebody here in the city decided they were gonna go after some federal money to clean out brownfields--and brownfields, at the time, now you talk about them all the time and everybody knows what that is but at the time it was relatively new term and it meant to clean all the crud out of the ground. I think this was part of a railroad. Oh, this was factories over there and so somebody said we are gonna knock down all those factories, and we are going to clean up that dirt and we are going to get some federal money and we are going to build this, have this great parcel of land right there. And meantime the Centrum was here and so that lot sat there empty for at least, I mean a number of years, whereas people would come to events here and say, "They didn't build anything on that spot yet?" And next thing you know there is Saint Vincent's Hospital and you know Uno's is going up right next door, And then they are gonna open up that whole street over there, and it's just visions people have had for this city and they come to fruition sooner or later. And you just gotta believe that it's really gonna happen, you know? So...

KC: Is there anything else that you would like to include? Like to say?

AK: I don't think so!

KC: Is there anything you would like to say that we didn't touch upon?

AK: I don't think so. Of course, I'll probably think of it after you go. [Everyone laughs]

EB: That's how it always works.

AK: I know, I know! Do you have any other questions on your list that you wanted to ask me? Do you want to look it over?

KC: We never touched upon health care. Let's see what are your experiences in accessing quality affordable health care?

AK: Well, that's an interesting subject as well. [Everyone laughs] Because, if you think about it, back when I was a single mom, that was, and I was working part time, we were all on Medicare are the time, or Medicaid, or whatever it was called, I think it was Medicare. So that was okay, you know. I had been very lucky [knocks on wood] that my children are very healthy and always have been, and so am I, so health care has never been a huge issue for us, or even Charlie now. Charlie is relatively healthy. So when I was growing up, my dad working for the state we always had Blue Cross and Blue Shield, I suppose that's what we all had, and we were all very healthy. And then when I started having kids, Medicare or Medicaid or whatever it was at the time, it was like public health, was always very good to us because we never really had to rely on it too much. Oh, we relied on it for well visits and things like that, you know colds and ear-infections and things like that, that babies have, but I've been lucky [knocks on wood]. We've all been lucky and now I have it through work here and we still don't need it all that badly but it's there, and we've always been able to afford it. And my husband and I have always worked and we have always been very [lucky] in the fact that, you know, neither one of us have either gotten laid off or anything like that. I remember when I had my first baby when I was working for Thom McAn we were in the union, in the Teamsters Union, for some reason or other. If I was an office worker at Thom McAn I had to be in the Teamsters Union, I don't know why. And at the time if you were pregnant and a Teamster you could only work up until like your fifth month or something like that. Imagine that?

EB: That's totally different from now! [Everyone laughs]

AK: I know! Can you imagine, I know! So I spent four months, my last four months of being pregnant not working, which was very cool. [Laughs] But, I remember I did not have health care, health insurance when, well I must have had it through Thom McAn... But I remember one of my babies, it must have been Joey, he only cost three hundred and fifty dollars at the hospital, which was crazy, you know? But it's never been a problem for us, which is terrific. Yeah. And

Worcester has always been a very—as far as I’m concerned I think it gives women in our area, I think it gives us, it offers a lot of opportunities for women to work. And I think, at least I always have anyways, and I think Worcester has always been very good to women in the working world, in my experience. So, and of course that translates into healthcare with work providing it and that kind of thing, at least in the fields that I’ve always been in. So what else is on there? You had health, work, and community, wasn’t there one other one? No?

EB: We had education, but we touched upon that...

AK: Oh we talked about that, yeah.

CP: What about your culture and ethnicity? You said you were Irish and what else?

AK: Scottish. Yeah, my grandparents, my mother’s grandparents came over from Glasgow, Scotland when they were in their twenties. And my grandfather went to work for Norton Company, which is Saint Gobain now in Greendale, and then he became a thirty-third degree Mason, so he was a terrific guy. And used to put on, Norton used to have a family day all time, in the summertime, what the hell, oh! [Everyone laughs] What did they call it? Norton Spiriters, Norton Outing, Family Outing, or something. And so my grandfather used to put that on and he used to get performers from New York, and they would be aerialists and horse rides and oh all kinds—it was a big to-do. And so he was very active with that. And my grandmother was this cute little old Scottish lady that stayed at home and you know, went to church. The church I go to now as a matter of fact! With her little brogue, she was, she was great. And then it was just my mother and her brother. And my father came from Worcester, they grew up in the Grafton Hill area, and, so they were the Scottish side and my father was the Irish side, and that was a big Irish family. And his dad died when he was young and that was, he had it tough. But my father had a nice family as well. So that’s where the Scottish—but of course you have a name like Sullivan and you’re Irish no matter what! You know?

EB: Very true!

AK: Yeah, so. The Scottish side I identify with tremendously as well though. Especially with Glasgow, Scotland and Glasgow is a lot like Worcester. It’s—in Scotland you have Edinburgh and Glasgow. And Edinburgh is a lot like Boston and Glasgow is a lot like Worcester. So, yeah.

KC: Have you been to Scotland?

AK: I have yeah.

KC: That’s awesome!

AK: It is cool, yeah. I visited the town that my grandmother's family was from. I didn't visit the town that my grandfather's family is from, but I did visit the town... I love it there; it is nice. I haven't been to Ireland yet, but I will! Sooner or later.

KC: You have a lot of time!

AK: Huh?

KC: You still have a lot of time to go!

AK: That's right, that's right! When I finally stop working, if I ever do. [Everyone laughs]

KC: Have you been anywhere else? Like have you traveled anywhere else?

AK: Only around the United States a little bit, yeah. As I told you my next trip is gonna be Italy, my husband is Italian and so that's the next place I want to be. When I turn sixty I hope to be in Italy! But we will see... I don't know.

EB: Hopefully that happens!

AK: [Laughs] That's right, that's right, I know! So...

CP: Is there anything else that you want to add?

AK: I don't think so, I don't think so. I appreciate the ability to do this, this is terrific!

EB: Thank you very much, it means a lot!

AK: Oh, my goodness, thank you very much! As I said it's great to think that my grandkids, my great grandkids and my great-great grandkids to have access to this. So yeah, I consider myself very lucky, so thank you!

EB, KC, and CP: You're welcome, and thank you!

AK: You're welcome.

CP: Is there anyone else we should be able to contact or talk to that you think would be interesting to interview?

AK: Sure, you know I actually did give it some thought. Let me think about that and I will definitely let you know because I imagine somebody probably recommended me to the group,

so, cause you wouldn't have just found me, just randomly, [everyone laughs] so somebody had so recommend me! So let me think about that, and I will definitely get back to you on that.

EB: Okay, thank you!

AK: Yeah, you know somebody who would be willing; I wouldn't want to give you someone that wouldn't necessarily be willing. Yeah, so thank you!

KC: Okay thank you!