

Interviewee: Judith Pare

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Interviewers and transcribers: Caroline Critelli and Edward Ouano, Assumption College

Overseen by: Professors Leslie Choquette and Dona Kercher, Assumption College

**Abstract:**

Judith Pare is the Dean of Nursing at Becker College. She not only has experience in teaching the art of nursing but has firsthand experience as a nurse, having worked extensively in both standard hospital settings and in Alzheimer's clinics. Dr. Pare practiced nursing at Peter Bent Brigham as well as worked with numerous professionals in the area of Alzheimer's, a subject on which she also wrote two books. Following her divorce from her first husband, she worked four jobs in order to pay for her two daughters to get through college. During this time she was diagnosed with cancer in 2003 and underwent treatment. Dr. Pare talks about the importance of family, especially her father, in her life as well as how he influenced her decision to go into nursing. She has remarried and her daughters are now both married and each has a child of her own.

**Transcript:**

Caroline: Ok first question, very simple, what's your full name including your maiden name and married name if applicable?

Judith Pare: Its Judith, my middle name is Maria, and my maiden name was Agnes just like the first name, Agnes [spells out], and my last name is Pare, its Pare [spells out].

CC: When and where were you born?

JP: I was born in 1958, in Cambridge, MA

CC: [aside to Edward Ouano] I'll do mine first than you do yours. So what brought you to Worcester?

JP: At the time that I interviewed for the position here [Becker College], I was Associate Dean at Southern New Hampshire University. Although that was a wonderful experience, it became clear to me that as much as I enjoyed online I needed to see the faces of the students and I needed to be part of a physical community along with teaching online. I began to look for other positions and I noticed that Becker College was advertising for a Dean of Nursing and Health Sciences.

I read Dr. Johnson's blog and the blog that was up at that time was about a conversation that he had had with his son and I thought to myself, well, I need to meet this man, even if I don't get this job, I need to meet this man because I think this is someone that I could learn from and would really enjoy working for, so I applied for the position.

He was everything that I thought he was based upon his writing. I came home that night and I said to my husband, “I know we live in Southern New Hampshire, but Massachusetts has always been more of a home to me.” Up until the job at Southern New Hampshire I had always commuted, so commuting doesn’t really worry me. But one way or another I need to figure out how to make this work because I want this job, and I was very fortunate that it was offered to me so I started here on May 13<sup>th</sup>.

CC: Can you tell me a little bit about what your family life is right now and if it has ever been difficult to balance [Judith laughs] work with family?

JP: [Joking] What time is it? [Serious] It’s very interesting because I have two daughters. They each have a child, one granddaughter, one grandson and I have another grandchild on the way. When my girls were little it was a challenge because my husband at that time, worked a job with mandatory overtime, so his career always came first because at a moment’s notice he could be called into work and one of us needed to be home with the girls. I thought as my family grew and married that things would get simpler; they are now happily more complicated. I am on grandmother duty this afternoon with my granddaughter because my daughter is travelling. I have a daughter that lives in Manchester, New Hampshire and a daughter that lives in Southington, Connecticut, and I try to split my grandmother time between both houses. I am remarried and my husband also has two daughters and three grandchildren so our family is growing by leaps and bounds, but it’s wonderfully chaotic at this point and to me quite honestly I think family has always come first which makes it... [pause]. I think I am better at my job because I can be very organized and be very focused and be very driven because I have something even more important when I get home.

CC: What do you think women’s experiences in Worcester in particular have been? Like is there a difference when working in Worcester than other locations that you’ve worked in?

JP: Oh, absolutely, I have spent most of my career in Boston. The culture in Worcester is very different. Women in Boston are much more assertive, some would say aggressive. Worcester is very much, I guess for lack of a better word, a gigantic family in that everybody knows each other. Even the other Deans of Nursing very often sit on each other’s boards and participate in each other’s college experiences. It’s not like that in Boston. It is—it’s very different here, but very progressive and very, very committed to community.

CC: Have you seen any changes throughout Worcester over the amount of time that you’ve been here?

JP: I will tell you that I sit on the Opioid Crisis Task Force and the opioid problems certainly are shifting priorities. There isn’t an area whether you’re in healthcare or not or what generation you work with that it hasn’t affected. So the opioid crisis is very serious right now in Worcester. Problems with violence, and children in school systems. Next week I’m travelling with my nursing students and some game design students. We’re doing an education and training for the Great American Smokeout at the Doherty High School up the street. It’s the first time we will

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have gone to Worcester Public School Systems, and they came to us and pretty much said, “We need you. Children are having a harder and harder time living in the city and managing and being safe, and whatever your college can do we would appreciate it.” So I think it’s becoming more and more challenging for a lot of reasons.

CC: And, where did you go to school, like your college?

JP: [Laughs] Which time? I went to Peter Bent Brigham Hospital School of Nursing. I graduated in 1979. I then received a Bachelor of Science degree from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences which is now MCPHS in 1988. I received a master’s degree in nursing from Salem State College [now Salem State University] in 1999 and a Ph.D in Nursing and Education from Capella University in 2014.

CC: Was nursing always what you wanted to do or did that transition to you wanting to be a Dean like you are doing now?

JP: Nursing has always been a part of who I am. My dad, who is in that picture, was and still is a huge influence in my life. He passed away about seven years ago and his mandate to myself and my three siblings was, “You need a college education.” I didn’t get mine until I was an adult. “And you need to be able to take care of yourself and your family, particularly if you’re alone.” My brother at the time was just finishing law school, my sister was an elementary school teacher and when I said to him, “I’m not sure, Dad, what I would like to do but I think I’d like to be a nurse,” he said, “I don’t have one of those, that sounds good, you can be a nurse.” So thus my nursing career was born. I always loved writing, I always loved what my dad did, criminal justice and forensics, I always liked helping people and nursing has allowed me to do all of those things.

CC: Speaking of that I did notice that you had written two books. One of them is in the field of Alzheimer’s...

JP: Yes

CC: And you’ve also done a lot of work with Alzheimer’s in general, so why is that particular disease important to you?

JP: When I went back for my bachelor’s degree in the mid ‘80s, believe it or not there was a surplus of nurses. It’s hard to believe a time that nurses were in surplus, but there was. So in order to finish my bachelor’s degree—my daughters were in diapers at the time—I left Brigham and Women’s Hospital and I got a job in a long-term care setting which I was convinced would only be temporary in order to finish my bachelor’s degree. I absolutely fell in love with a brilliant woman who was dressed in a gorgeous camel hair suit who came to the nurse’s station desk and couldn’t find her room, and her room was within eyesight. I later found out that she had been there six months, she was only 55 years old, and she had a Master’s in Education and she was newly diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

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So I became very interested in the field, I did lots of volunteering before I actually went on staff at the Alzheimer's Association and there were very few nurse specialists in the field. It's an area that I think needs nursing desperately. I also heard yesterday that an article I wrote on being a rural nurse is going to be published next month so that's another area that I am very interested in and very passionate about. I had a chance to travel to several rural hospitals both in New England and in Montana and I hope to do more of that.

CC: Just out of curiosity did you see this movie called "Still Alice" that came out last year?

JP: No.

CC: It's about a woman who was in the work force and she's very busy all the time and she has kids and everything and she gets diagnosed with Alzheimer's I am pretty sure, so Julianne Moore won the Oscar for it. So it's a good movie to check out if you're interested.

JP: I did hear that. The five years that I spent matriculating for my Ph.D are kind of a blur and I don't think I saw very many movies, my socks finally match; for a while they didn't towards the end but it's all good.

CC: What were some of the challenges that you faced in your education and getting your education?

JP: I was very young. I started nursing school at 17. My birthday as I said is in December so I was always the youngest and starting off in a hospital-based setting is very intense. At that time, students at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, which is now Brigham and Women's, did 500 more hours than the state required of clinical, so we basically went right into the hospital and that's kind of a daunting task when you're standing behind the head of surgery in a major teaching hospital and you're 18-19 years old. I passed the boards for the first time in 1979. I was 20 and I worked as an RN [registered nurse] for six months before I turned 21, so I think that that was a challenge and I led, I have to be honest, a very sheltered life. My dad was a very strict loving Italian homicide detective and we lived by the rules and there were streets we couldn't go down and parties we couldn't go to. I grew up in Somerville, Massachusetts so getting out into the city was a huge culture shock for me.

CC: Has there... you did talk about your father and what a huge influence he was. Were there any other mentors or support systems that really helped you or have been important to you throughout your...?

JP: Well, you know where my father is, my mother was always the, and still is, the woman who allowed my father to be the force larger than life. My mother is in the background but my father couldn't do what he did without her. There were two people in the Alzheimer field that really helped to shape my career; one of them is Joanne Koenig Coste. Joanne started the first Alzheimer unit in the world at Newton-Wellesley Alzheimer Center at a time that the state of Massachusetts said, "You can't do that". She did it anyway and she proved that you really could create a quality of life for people even in a long-term care setting. The other person just retired

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about two weeks ago from the Alzheimer's Association and that is Dr. Paul Raia. He was the Vice-President for patient care. He is a behavioral psychologist and was at the Alzheimer's Association 29 years. When we became concerned as an association that people with mental retardation were being affected by Alzheimer's disease it was Paul that sent me to DMR to work with them. It's because of the work that he sort of pushed me to do that I ended up having the privilege to write the book and work with consumers for years who had both Alzheimer's and mental retardation.

CC: What do you think are there any, like, the pros and cons of the, basically just like the life journey that you've chosen.

JP: Could I have taken a longer route to a bachelor's degree? Probably not. It took me seven and a half years to get a BSN. When I went back to school, at that time, you had to repeat all your clinical courses so it's very odd when I tell my nursing students here that I was the charge nurse on a medical surgical unit at Brigham and Women's and I was repeating fundamentals clinical at Beth Israel because that's what you had to do in the 80s to get a BSN. When I look back on it, I don't know that at 17 I was ready for four straight years. I think part of the reason why I'm a very good clinical nurse, and I still am, is because I was thrown into the clinical setting and I was there for so many years. It's interesting, I was talking to my daughter last night who's pregnant; she's due with my third grandchild in March, and she was saying "You know, Mum, when I was in diapers like Grayson," that's her son, "you were getting your bachelor's degree." And I said, "Yup." "And when I got my driver's license you were getting your master's degree." I said, "Yup." She said, "And the year that Christine and I got married you were getting your Ph.D." And that's exactly what happened. I don't think I would be who I am had I not had the experiences that I did, but it is a long road.

EO: Now you talked about growing up in Somerville. How was your life growing up were there? Any events that stick clearly in your mind?

JP: I went to parochial school. I went to St. Catherine of Genoa in Somerville for eight years and then I went to Arlington Catholic, and then I went to Peter Bent Brigham's, so very, very sheltered life, a lovely life but very sheltered. I mean I remember being in the kitchen and hearing my mother sobbing when Martin Luther King was killed and when Robert Kennedy was killed. I remember my mother and father pacing for the Vietnam War draft waiting to see if my older brother's number would be called. The very first time the Brigham closed was for the Blizzard of '78. In 84 years of a school it had never closed and it just so happened that that was supposed to be my first day in the operating room as a student. The school closed for a week and the storm happened Sunday night to Monday. Monday night at 11, we were living in the dorms at Emmanuel College, the National Guard came and picked up all the nursing students and dropped us off at the front door of Peter Bent Brigham and we staffed the hospital every night until the next relief crew could get in, so that the day nurses could get a few hours of sleep and that's how we learned, so that was for a lot of reasons a very historic time.

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I didn't drive until I was 22, because I lived in the city. I took public transportation and that's pretty much unheard of now unless you're in Manhattan. When I was Executive Director of an Alzheimer's Assisted Living in Concord, New Hampshire in 2011, 9/11 happened and I remember hearing people screaming. I had a rule at that time that televisions were not to be on for our residents because televisions are very often confusing for people with Alzheimer's Disease. They don't know if the events are happening in front of them or if it's only a movie.

The one show that I used to allow was "The Price is Right" because the residents loved Bob Barker and they loved the clapping and they loved the happiness. The staff put the TV on and I heard people screaming and I can remember running and the poor residents thought that the chaos and the destruction was happening in our building. So those kinds of things really, really stood out.

I mean the thing that I would like to be remembered most of all is, is in being a mother and raising two incredibly kind, very smart women and I think from my generation my father used to say, "You need to be able to take care of yourself and you need to be safe." And for my daughters I would say the same, but I also used to say you need to have the career that you choose, and you need to let people know what an intelligent, powerful force you are, and I think that's the difference in the generations.

EO: Now, did you have any other jobs that you, well I wrote, did you have any other jobs other than your current one but I'm going to change that to do you have any other jobs that you wanted to be or go into other than nursing?

JP: I love to write and I said to my dad when he asked me what I wanted to be, well I really like journalism, and he said, "How many female anchors can there be on the television, Judy? You can write and be a nurse." So I thought, well ok, and I have. Law enforcement fascinated me I think because we had dinner every night, my father was in his uniform and I said, "Well I like what you do Dad." And he said, "No daughter of mine is going to be a police woman. That's not safe." But I have been an expert witness in several trials. I have had the privilege of testifying and giving forensic testimony so in a way I've been able to fulfill that. And nursing is a very blessed career. There aren't many careers that allow you to use all your passions and I have been able to do that.

EO: [Pause] Sorry going through these now a lot of them were answered. Were there any moments in your life where people used your gender against you or affected anything that you did?

JP: [Sighs] there were jobs that I didn't get when I went up against men and I wondered. At the time I thought mainly because I was younger because up until this period of my life I've pretty much always been the youngest in the positions that I've had. Looking back on it I'm not sure that it was age. It may have been gender. My heart goes out to my daughters who both are in leadership positions, but they have had to take longer roads to get there than their male counterparts, so I know that very much exists. I'm a pretty assertive person, I hope I'm not

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aggressive, but looking back on it I'm not sure that it was ageism it may have been more sexism. Nursing is primarily a female profession. That's a good thing for me, but I've been very blessed in most positions that I wanted I've been able to get.

EO: You said you worked at Southern New Hampshire correct, were there any other colleges that you worked at or?

JP: I started teaching at Bunker Hill Community College in 2005 I think 2006, I loved it there, I loved the students, fabulous faculty but I wanted more from the curriculum. I wanted to look at all the levels of education; bachelor's, master's, and doctoral and I knew I couldn't get it done there. Teaching at Bunker Hill was proof to me that I needed to go back and get a Ph.D.

I also taught at Middlesex Community College oddly enough, similar setting but a different culture. I did not stay there beyond a year, and I taught at Mass College of Pharmacy which was my alma mater. I stayed there three years but as I got closer to doing my actual Ph.D. research the amount of time we were allowed out for scholarship was cut back and I left primarily because I knew I wouldn't have the time to finish my Ph.D. and the more involved I became the more assured I was that I needed to finish.

I don't know if you know that about 49% of Ph.D. candidates never finish their program I was one of—I was two of ten that actually finished, the other eight dropped out and that's pretty typical, but I knew in order to do that I needed to step away from MCP. Southern New Hampshire, because it was an online university, gave me the [inaudible due to cough] in education that I had, I did not have a lot of online teaching experience and I got that there. It allowed me to write online curriculum, teach an online curriculum, lead an online curriculum, but it is not set up in an academic model, it is more set up in a business model and as I said we had 3,500 students when I left so we were incredibly successful, but I missed the faces. I wanted to the best of both worlds and that is what Becker offered me.

EO: Now you said you were married then you were remarried correct? How long have you been married for?

JP: I am a breast cancer survivor and the reason that I tell you that is on December 5<sup>th</sup> it will be 12 years since diagnosis so I am, on December 5<sup>th</sup> of this year, I'll be married seven years. It was my—I never thought I'd remarry. My current husband and I met—all four of our daughters were engaged oddly enough and our daughters are 33, 32, 31, 30 which is kind of interesting, we didn't plan it that way, and we were debating when to get married, and my husband said to me, "You know, your anniversary is December 5<sup>th</sup> your birthday is December 6<sup>th</sup>. What if we plan our wedding for December 5<sup>th</sup>?" So when I was officially five years a survivor that was my wedding day.

CC: Can I ask why you thought that you would never get remarried?

JP: It just seemed impossible to me. I'm not—I'm a workaholic if you haven't figured that out, I am not somebody that's out at social events a lot because I've spent most of my life either

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teaching school or being a student myself and my family is really the center of my world so I thought, well ok this is the way it's going to be, and then I happened to meet my husband, who pretty much—I said to him, “What is the most important thing in your life?” And he said, “My daughters.” And I thought, “Hmm, this man is very interesting and definitely the kindest man I've ever met.” Incredibly supportive of any job I've had and incredibly supportive through my five years for a PhD. For a spouse or a partner to support someone through a doctoral degree they have to be somebody special. I wanted my daughters to understand that I still believed in marriage. That I believed in the commitment it requires, and they were both seriously dating men who are now their husbands. So we married December 5<sup>th</sup> of 2008, and three of our four daughters married the following year.

CC: Out of curiosity, you don't have to answer this if you don't want to but I'm just curious as to what happened with your first marriage?

JP: My first husband had some... he had been in a very bad accident and had a lot of chronic pain and became very angry at what the accident had done to him, and decided that he didn't want to be married anymore, so we were married almost 20 years, but I saved the best for last I always say, I kid my husband, I always say my father is the most wonderful man who I ever met, but he's a close second.

EO: Ok look, I'm not sure if this one's been answered yet. So do you believe you've been treated as an equal throughout your life, like in all things, all respects?

JP: No, no. You know I've spoken a lot about my dad, but my dad always felt that, here's an example: my dad died of pancreatic cancer five days after we married on December 11<sup>th</sup>. The summer before he passed he just sort of off the cuff said, “Mom and I signed our healthcare proxies; your brother is our healthcare proxy.” Now my brother is a judge, I love him dearly but he knows nothing about healthcare, and I nearly fell off the chair, and I said, “Dad why? I'm the only nurse in the family, why would you do that?” And he said, “Oh honey, well your brother is the oldest and you know he's the boy and if need be you could never pull the plug.” and I said, “Dad I could, I would hide it if you wanted me too, I could do whatever it is you needed me to do, I would be your best advocate” and he said “Really?” and I said “Yup.” Well he changed his healthcare proxy and several months later he got quite ill, and my brother and I together were his healthcare proxy and he's, my brother is, very organized and very systematized, but I had the healthcare knowledge and we were a very good team. But I just thought to myself, if Peter hadn't been, if my sister Pam had been oldest, he still would have made Peter because he would have said, “Well he's the boy.” So I think part of that is generational, part of it is Italian-American culture. When I went into nursing I did witness younger nurses who would get up and give their seats to surgeons. It wasn't as prevalent in the '70s as it had been in the '60s but it was still going on. I did not do that. I think that there—I think we've made progress, but there's a long way to go in terms of equalizing the professional arena for women and men.

As I was driving here this morning I was listening to a news report that Jennifer Lawrence was calling for equal pay for women in Hollywood to men. It's not only in Hollywood that it's an

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issue. As I said, both my daughters have had to take the long roads to promotions I believe because they are women. So I feel very blessed, I hope to retire here at Becker. This has been the most exhausting and inspiring position I have had in 36 years of nursing. I absolutely leave here every day thinking I couldn't possibly be more tired or more happy. So here, yes, but along the last 35 years, no.

CC: So wasn't like that in, I'm just thinking of in terms of like marriage and there's kind of always that debate of like, oh who's like the head of the household. Was it ever just like equal between?

JP: I must admit my first marriage no, my second marriage absolutely. In fact if my husband were here he would probably say that I was the head of the house, which I think is kind of funny. I don't think we have a head of the house, but it was not the case in my first marriage. I was married at 21 so I was very young.

EO: Now are you still close with the rest of your family, with your brother and sister?

JP: Amazingly close which is why I put everything on vibrate because someone I'm sure has emailed me, texted me. We're having Thanksgiving dinner and there are about 35 of us that are going to be at the same table which is going to be interesting.

EO: I'm now going back on another point and you were talking about how much you love your experience at Becker here. What has been the most inspiring part of your job here what has been the...?

JP: I think the freedom to think outside of the box. Dr. Johnson believes in disruptive innovation and you know I'm one of these people that gets these sort of visionary ideas, and I'm almost afraid to talk about them because people say to me, "You're crazy, you know we have this and that" and I'll always say, "Yeah but if we did it this way." Dr. Johnson will say to me, "I need you to think outside the box and blow this up. Can you do that?" I'm just so excited by that! Because I trust now that I'm here six months when he says, "Don't worry about the details, come to me with your idea and we'll figure it out together." He means it, so it's very—I have gotten incredible support.

I just wrote a graduate program in nursing which has gone to the Board of Higher Education which he basically said to me, "Do what you got to do, create it and bring it to me," and I did and he loved it so that's pretty inspiring. I, Joanne Koenig and Paul Raia are probably the only other two professionals in my life that have had the vision that I see in Dr. Johnson. He is passionate about what he does and will support his faculty and staff to do it to the end.

CC: I just really wanted to ask because you brought up the fact that you are a breast cancer survivor but what was that like when you were diagnosed, what did you feel like? I feel like a lot of people when something like that happens they just feel like, because you are a very busy individual obviously did you ever feel like you have to slow down?

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JP: Well it was the day before my 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was just, I had just sort of survived a very difficult divorce and that probably sounds trite because I don't think there's any easy divorce, but I felt like I had just picked myself up. Both my daughters were in college, my daughter Christine was a middler at Northeastern, which is if you go five years the third year is called middler year. She was an economics major. My daughter Lisa had just started at Suffolk University she was a communications major and she played college basketball and Christine was a cheerleader for Northeastern.

My ex-husband, when we divorced, really just kind of disappeared. He had no contact with my girls or me and no child... minimal child support for Lisa, no child support for Christine, and no spousal support. So in order to help my girls I worked four jobs. I taught high school at Nashua High South, I taught health occupations until I went to Bunker Hill. I was a visiting nurse. I was a behavioral medical psychiatric nurse for a home care agency. I worked per diem for the Alzheimer's Association and I did some online lecturing for Hesser College in New Hampshire.

I went for a routine mammogram amidst the busyness and on that day the doctor said "I think I see something. I think you need a biopsy." I told him, "Do it now because you need to do it now." I actually had the biopsy done and then I signed the consent. He said "We'll let you know tomorrow." And I said, "Oh no I'm not leaving your office until you tell me today what you think," and he said, "Well I'm not, I need the biopsy." And I said, "Well you're older than I am you've been doing this for probably 30 years, you need to tell me if you think this is breast cancer because this is my life and I need to somehow absorb this and take control of it." And he said, "I think there is a 98% chance that the tumor is positive but its small and I'll let you know tomorrow," which is my birthday. So the biggest concern I had at that time was, believe it or not, is denial is a powerful thing. I went back to work bandaged. I actually drove to work.

Both my daughters had just started finals two days before so as close as I am to my family I couldn't tell them because I was afraid that someone would tell my girls before the finals were over. I finally told my brother who, he and I are very close and I knew he wouldn't tell my sisters if I asked him not too, and my parents were getting ready to go to Florida for the winter, I didn't want them to stay because the winters were hard on them, but I most of all didn't want anybody to let my girls know until the final exams were over. So I kept working all four jobs, I saw the surgeon on December 17<sup>th</sup> who booked the lumpectomy for December 19<sup>th</sup> and the night of December 17<sup>th</sup> my girls had finished their finals. I invited them and their boyfriends home for pizza to celebrate the finals were over and I told them that night, so that was... keeping my girls on track to me was my number one concern. I had surgery at Faulkner Hospital with an incredible team, all female, a female surgeon, female oncologist, female nurse practitioner, female radiation oncologist and—not on purpose but I just found that interesting, and I had the surgery done. I was fortunate that my nodes were negative so other than five years of Tamoxifen I got very good news. My oldest daughter Christine was going to leave Northeastern's dorm and move in with me and I wouldn't let her do that because once you get out of the dorms at Northeastern you never get back in. So I said to her if you come home you're going to come home to an empty house because I'm not going to be here. I took a week off for surgery, and, as

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tired as I was from radiation, I dragged myself to work every day so that my girls would know that I was working and that I was healthy enough to work, and there were days where I probably shouldn't have been there but that's what got me through.

But it was—I'm somebody who grew up very close to her father, obviously very—finding it easier to work with men I think because my father had been such a strong influence in my life, but breast cancer gave me an incredible appreciation for the strength of women. In fact, the first day I went for radiation, it's like this out of body experience. I walked into the waiting room and out the hospital gown, and, you know, denial is a powerful thing, and I remember thinking I should be taking care of these poor people I shouldn't be one of them. I mean how crazy is that; and I remember looking at this one woman who had a wig on whose very frail, clearly had been through chemotherapy, and she turned to me and said, "Is this your first day?" And I said, "Yes." She said, "Well then I'm going to take care of you." And that has stayed with me and I remember thinking, "Oh my god, these fragile, sick, women want to take care of me" and I really think that was—that was a very powerful experience I don't think that I understood the strength of women, or my own strength until I went through that.

EO: Now you said you worked four jobs that one time and you were doing so much work for your family and for everything to you ever feel overwhelmed, like you couldn't get past it?

JP: Did I ever feel overwhelmed. [Pause] The thought that I'd die of breast cancer. Honestly, whether it was denial or faith, I could not believe that God would take me at that point. My girls really needed me. I didn't think I was finished yet. I would—I had four duffle bags in my car and I never quite honestly knew which job I was going too until the morning, but I had packed every duffle bag as if I was doing all four jobs that day. I'm very organized and I think that that saved me. The Ph.D. was overwhelming, trying to—both my girls got married in four weeks and I defended three months later. That was a little overwhelming, but no I feel like it's all about the journey and each step backwards for me has really helped to push me forward. And breast cancer was a big one and I take far less for granted now than I did before.

CC: I think what we're going to end on is what does the word feminism mean to you?

JP: Strength, strength. I think women are by far incredibly strong powerful forces. We don't always do a very good job at communicating or displaying that strength, but I wouldn't have an appreciation of that strength if I hadn't had the journey that I had, so for that I will forever be grateful.

CC: Awesome, do you have anything else you would like to add?

JP: Nope, if there's anything I could do for you please feel free and I can't wait to see your project come to life

EO: Thank you so much!