

Interviewee: Annette Rafferty
Interviewer: Felicia Tiberi and Katie Coderre
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Transcriber: Katie Coderre



Worcester Women's Oral History Project

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Abstract: Annette Rafferty was born in 1930 in Worcester MA. She attended school at Midland Street School, May Street School, Oxford Public Schools and high school, Our Lady of the Elms College and received two master's degrees from Assumption College and did graduate work at Boston College, St. John's University in New York, and Notre Dame in Indiana. After teaching as a nun for many years, she founded Abby's House, a shelter for homeless, abused and low-income women and children, in 1973. She reflects on her childhood, education, and career path.

FT: Okay. 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 Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with health, work, politics/community involvement. Thank you for your help with this important project! Can we have your permission to record your oral history using your name and date?

AR: Yes.

FT: Okay... Should I just do the ones we marked to start?

AR: You're gonna have to talk a little louder for me [laughs] with this competition in the background [Emmanuel D'alzon Library is noisy].

FT: Okay. What is your full maiden name, and if applicable, your married name?

AR: Oh, my full name.

FT: Yes.

AR: Annette A. Rafferty.

FT: Okay. When were you born?

AR: I was born in 1930.

FT: Okay. Have you ever married?

AR: No.

FT: Okay, so you do not have children... Tell me about your parents.

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AR: About my parents?

FT: Yes.

AR: My dad, Andrew, was a dentist, as his father was, and they practiced dentistry. First place in the old Park Building, which is at the corner of Franklin and Main, and I just recently learned the building was called “Park” because Franklin Street was once called Park Street. And then he moved to the Slater Building on Main Street, and we moved to Oxford in 1940, 1940 just before World War II, and he opened an office there [Oxford, Massachusetts] where he practiced two days a week but he kept his Worcester practice. He was educated at South High and Harvard Dental School, and my mother was a graduate of North High, which at that point was on Salisbury Street--the building with the tower just across the street from the art museum--and she went to the only teacher’s college they had in Worcester called the Normal School that was on top of St. Anne’s Hill, which is now the site of City View Elementary, and she taught for ten years in Webster at a school street school and lived in a boarding house and travelled back and forth on weekends to Worcester by trolley. There was once upon a time a trolley track that ran from Worcester to Webster, and back. And in 1928 she had trouble with her teeth and they sent her to a dentist and she happened to go to Dr. Rafferty, and they met in the dental chair [laughs]. He was the dentist and she was the patient, and the next year they were married and in 1930 I was born. I’m the firstborn. They were quite a remarkable couple.

FT: That’s a cute story. Where have you lived during your life?

AR: During my lifetime I have, I think, five moves when we were in Worcester. I was born in City Hospital while living on Lancaster Street, which is off of Salisbury, and then we moved to Oliver Road which is off of Clement, and then to Hardwick Road, which is near the May Street School, and then to Morningside Road back again, and then after all those moves we bought a house in Oxford, and it was a house that was built circa, maybe 1780-something. It was a really old home that my father, as a dentist, found workmen in North Oxford and Oxford who needed dental work and he did what doesn’t happen today, he bartered. I’ll do your teeth if you take down this wall, and uncover the, the Dutch oven; it was all covered up, that women used to bake in. And so, that was how it went for ten years and then he just died suddenly, and we had to leave, sell the house, and move back to a small apartment in Main South, and after that I finished my – I went to college, I was graduated from college in Chicopee, Our Lady of the Elms, now called Elms College once it went co-ed they dropped off the “Our Lady” part, I think maybe because it was more enticing students to come if they didn’t have that religious overture – why, I don’t know why they changed it, but anyway they did, shortened it, and from there, after four years at the Elms I entered the Sisters of St. Joseph, and I went to Holyoke for my boot camp training, as I call it, and then I started 34 years of teaching, and I came back to Worcester to teach after living in Newport, Springfield, Holyoke, and the inner city, and then to Worcester at St. Fields/St. Peters High School. So I’ve had a lot, lot of journeying within a small radius... and after starting Abby’s House, which had become my life’s work I found that I had to make a choice of whether to continue as a, as a nun, or to leave and give full-time to this work which I ended up by doing at age 56. It was a huge decision, so since that time, I’ve been living in Worcester, I have not moved anywhere... it’s been... quite a bit of travelling [laughs].

FT: Let's see...

AR: Before you ask that, one interesting thing is, the – I love teaching, and last year the class of 1961, 50 years out, all came to Worcester to say hello to me at Abby's. It was a very wonderful moment as I did love those kids, but I had to make a choice. This work was so all-encompassing that—so my life style hasn't changed at all, I'm still doing all of those things, but I have the freedom to come and go, and to spend more time in concentrating on developing programs.

FT: What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

AR: Oh my goodness [laughs], you know there's a section in the newspaper now called "Now and Then" or "Then and Now" and so much of downtown Worcester has changed; the trolleys are gone, we used to drive on those. Some of the wonderful stores along Main Street – it was always crowded downtown; they had the most marvelous stores, department stores, small stores, like (??) and Richard Healey and Marcus and Denholms and McGuiness' and all of those stores have just all gone and they opened the Auburn Mall, people felt it was more fashionable to drive out someplace and then, I think Worcester Center kind of killed all of the business downtown, so I've seen a lot of changes. Many, many changes in education, the way they educate now with kids – there are kids in fifth grade are doing work that I did maybe as a junior in high school. Very intense work in science and biology and math – the math is beyond – I was never good at math but I just, it's like trigonometry – I don't know how the kids do it, but anyway, big change in education. But for me the biggest change I think has been in the growth of women taking charge of a lot of things and doing things they never had. If you had known me 50, 50 years ago, I am a different person. You know, I went along with everything except it was authority always said to me, I had so many experiences in my life as a woman, finally I realized that... women were truly second-class citizens in every area, and I just began to do more and more in the women's movement and was very affected by that and became really, an advocate and an activist for women, and I literally found my voice. And one of the happiest moments I think of my life that I was able to recognize that, was [when] I was asked to speak at Mechanic's Hall... about I think it's almost ten years ago and I shared the stage with Anita Hill. Now Anita Hill was the woman who held up the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court based on her experience of having been sexually harassed by him in the workplace, and she's become a poster woman, so to speak, for advances in sexual harassment for women, and she spoke at, the, on the stage, and I spoke with her, and it was a defining moment for me because she had found her voice and she didn't want to concentrate on the bad treatment that she got. I don't know if you've ever watched – that better be something for history – to watch those hearings and to see how badly she was treated by the senators, and they—oh anyway, very sad story. But anyway, I had written my first book on *Wearing Smooth the Path* for women and I told the story of my experience starting Abby's and we connected, I mean, I did a little tiny thing and she did a great big thing, but the point was we were both advocates for women in different range of influence and in different spheres, but it was kind of like saying, yes I did become a girl who's quiet and afraid to raise her hand to [one] who was an activist for women. So I've got, that's kind of...

FT: So is she a really big influence on you?

AR: Oh, well, she wasn't, in that sense, but I think the biggest influence on me was the treatment that I got, or that I felt I experienced trying to get Abby's started for women, and also Marilyn French's book *The Women's Room* was a huge influence on me. I remember reading it and immediately joining the National Organization for Women, and I've had a membership in there for over 40 years because I think they stand up for women in the face of all kinds of, of oppression, so anyway, it was just a – her – my appearing with her was a confirmation that yes indeed, that something had happened to me, that there had been that “aha” moment when you know that something has happened to you and that you could never go back to where you were before. So that was it – it was just a confirmation of what had happened to me along the way, so I've had a very interesting life, and a wonderful life that had a lot of difficulties in it, but basically it's been rewarding...

[Recorder shut off to get better audio]

FT: Where did you attend school?

AR: I attended school at Midland Street School, May Street School, Oxford Public Schools and high school, Lady of the Elms, I've got two masters degrees from Assumption and I did graduate work at BC (Boston College) and St. John's University in New York and Notre Dame in Indiana and I did a lot of workshops. I was very much influenced by the feminist theology that it was the (??) that taught out there so I went out to study community organizing and I took a side course with feminist theology and both of them influenced my life. They were probably two biggest academic influences in my life. The biggest influence was just my own personal experiences.

FT: What were your challenges in education?

AR: Well, to be honest with you, when I was a young nun, I was the rookie on the faculty and in those days, now this is 50s, in the 50s, when you were assigned to a school, anyone who was in religious community ahead of you, ranked ahead of you, could pick the subjects, and the usual rookie got what was left over. That's how it went on the first assignment that I got, so with a degree, a BA in French, a minor in Spanish and journalism I was assigned accordingly, U.S. History, World History, biology – that I was not very good at, the only thing I balked at was God could never help me do math, so I took all the – I never taught French or Spanish or journalism for the first thirteen years of my teaching career. So that was the difficulty I had and I had to stay one page ahead of the students because I had all these different subjects to prepare, plus in those days in a small high school, parochial high school, they needed a drama coach, they needed a debate coach, and they needed a librarian, so, in that order that's what I did when I wasn't staying one page ahead of the kids. So I worried all my life that the kids that I taught weren't going to succeed well, but they did... they did [laughs]. So that was my first, you know, in grammar school I was very shy and hesitant to raise my hand if I didn't understand something particularly in math, and I think that was typical female in those days, you know, that you were afraid one was gonna think that you didn't know anything if you raised your hand and asked for something, to go over something. So my early life, that was my problem; I was very afraid to speak up if I didn't understand something and that changed as I got older, was in my own teaching career, those were the difficulties I had. When I went to Newport, finally, at the end of

the 60s when the Vietnam War was at the height, the principal down there believed in marching so we used to get out and march for civil rights and equality in the streets of Newport. Nobody would ever know that now but that's what we did and I began to teach French... again, and I think I had one class of Spanish but that was a long, long time ago. And, in the meantime, while I was teaching all these things in my first assignment, I came to Assumption to get a Masters in French – I wasn't even teaching it! So you can imagine the difficulty, you know, and I loved my, we did it in five summers, got your degree after five summers. So I graduated finally, I think it was 19... whenever Ted Kennedy was the commencement speaker here (Assumption College), was the year I graduated, either '63 or '64 and... on his way back to where he was going his plane crashed and he ended up in Northampton Hospital for, I don't remember his back had an injury, but that's how I remember my graduation [laughs]. So it was very difficult my first years teaching.

FT: So you founded Abby's House, correct?

AR: With a group of women, I was kind of a catalyst.

FT: How did you come to do this work?

AR: Well I was invited to be on a committee in a city that was investigating the claims that there were women and children in the street and a couple of pastors were getting phone calls that could they pick up somebody that was thrown out the house, or was just wandering around the city. So I was asked to serve on this group, Urban Ministry Commission, and I took the work very seriously. I had a full-time job but I needed to explore this because I had always wanted sisters – and I was still a sister of St. Joseph at that time – I wanted the sisters to become more involved with other women because I thought other women had so much to teach us about life and about themselves and about ourselves that we needed to, we needed to know, and so I jumped at the opportunity to do that and I took the work seriously. I went to neighborhood centers, to family help centers, to women that I knew were social workers, and we, we finally gathered together enough documentation without having a woman center per se to go to that there was indeed a need for women to have a temporary emergency shelter and strange as it might seem, and for reasons that I now understand were probably legitimate because we had no experience and we didn't have any money, but they, the group decided not to proceed at that time with the shelter, but this is where I couldn't turn back. I knew they were out there and it was two years of documentation, which will be marked forty years next year [2013]. 1973 was the year I started to do all this work – in the meantime I hated to have all of these women and organizations that really said let's do it, so they needed someone to spearhead it, so I did, and in the fall of '75 we met and there were about 68 women that showed up and about four men and we divided up the work that we knew needed to be done and though we had all the money in the world to do it; we had a financial committee raising money, a committee to do publicity, a committee to look into spaces that we might be able to rent and we just went at it – and do you know that by the end of April 1976 we had enough money for maybe a couple months' rent, we had enough people willing to give a couple nights a month to staff the shelter which would be open at night and close in the morning we had to be small because they were all working women. So we opened – we found a place, and the landlord let us have two floors of this beautiful old home in a Crown

Hill neighborhood this is now historic neighborhood. And he gave us the two floors for 360 – 325 [dollars] a month including heat and light and I guess that was the beginning of it. We kept fundraising, we kept at it, and we opened the doors on June seventh 1976 and the shelter doors have never closed since. And in addition to the one building we now have three others for permanent housing. So we have four buildings under the umbrella of one house, so it was the work of the community; it was the work of a lot of individuals, a lot of civil groups, a lot of church groups, a lot of schools, so I just happened to be the one that pushed it to get it done and it got done and they made me the founder but I think the whole community were actually founders; they all founded. That's how we got started... 40 years next year, I mean for me, and it will be 37 for Abby's.

FT: I have a question about the name, Abby's.

AR: Oh, alright. When we were thinking about naming the shelter it was the year of the bicentennial in Massachusetts and they were doing the newspaper called the Worcester Spy – had a young writer, Amy (L.??) and she unearthed the history of Abby Kelly Foster, who was Worcester's most famous abolitionist and women's rights activist and she wrote this marvelous article about Abby Kelly Foster who lived and died in Worcester – her whole life – and was known all over the country as an abolitionist and in women's circles as a women's rights advocate. But she'd fallen into anonymity and her history was kind of lost, like a lot of women's histories, and so, we read about her life, we got the books that were written about her and discovered that because she was speaking against slavery at a time when slave holding was a big deal for individual people including presidents from the 1700s on who owned plantations and consequently had slaves – Washington, Jefferson, Madison – they all had slaves. When she began to talk anti-slavery, people came to hear her because she was a tremendous speaker and a beautiful looking Irish – she had the Irish beauty, the dark Irish beauty – but they didn't want her in their homes because she was too controversial so she often had to sleep out in very dangerous circumstances, so when we read that – Worcester woman, women's rights activist, an abolitionist, and we were trying to do away with homelessness for women and prevent violence, and she was a women's rights activist and we were trying to name a place that would be, you know, appropriate for someone like that, so our shelter for women was named Abby Kelly Foster, and that's how we are... recorded at the state house for our papers, but we shortened it to Abby's House, A-B-B-Y-apostrophe-S because when we opened, people began to call to place kids there; they thought it was a foster home, because no one much recognized her name, so anyway, now – how many years later? – the year 2000 – this was 1976 – in the year 2000 the Worcester Women's History Project with the help of Mary, oh what's her name, Mary Melville and Shirley Siff, gathered enough money granted from the industry to have four woman portraits painted and hung in Mechanic's Hall – so the next time you're going to Mechanic's Hall, on the right hand side is Abby Kelly Foster – a gorgeous painting done by Charlotte Horton. So Abby has come full circle, she's now claimed, reclaimed herself and that was the reason I wrote the two books I wrote because I didn't want anyone to forget what went into founding Abby's House, you know, and to recognize as many of the volunteers by name and the groups by name. So... that's what happened [laughs].

FT: What are the two books you wrote?

AR: Well the first one was *Wearing Smooth the Path: The First 25 Years at Abby's* and the second title is *Still Wearing Smooth the Path: The Last Ten Years*. When we inherited this building for 55 additional units of housing and it was a leap of faith because... we raise our own money, we don't take state or federal funding for any of our programs, so this would mean increased fundraising, increased grant writing, and yet we knew that if we didn't take this building it would probably be torn down and there would be 55 more women without housing. So we got the house and the Sisters of Mercy, the St. Joseph's home for low-income women, and their mission and our mission blended together so besides homeless women with or without women, women who were abused in any shape or fashion, we extended it to low-income women so now that two missions are together, and the wording of the book "Wearing Smooth the Path" comes from a speech that Abby gave at the second National Women's Conference of Brinley Hall in Worcester in which she got up to give a speech, and she was a fiery woman, and she stood up and she said something like this: "bloody feet, sisters, have worn smooth the path by which you have come hither." In other words, it's been no easy journey to get from where I started to where I am now, and when the, what was her name, Margaret LaRue, was the editor, the proofreader and editor of the first book saw the phrase "have worn smooth the path" she said, "Well isn't Abby's House wearing smooth the path for women and children?" And hence, was born the title, and it came right out of that second National Woman's Conference here [Worcester]. So we're still wearing smooth the path and it's—and bloody feet, yes I said that, and bloody feet – it's been a hard journey to get from there to where we are now, but it's been even harder for the women who come through, but we have made it smoother for them to get from A to B and then from B to C. It's not a dead-end place; we encourage them to get educated, to find jobs, to get out, to put their names into Worcester housing so that eventually they can have their own place. So anyway, that's, that's it.

FT: Do you consider yourself active politically?

AR: Yes, I am very active politically but I no longer stand out on street corners like I used to do [laughs]. I found it too hard on my back but I have signs on my lawn and I am very – I love to talk politics. I am very liberal democrat and I do... I maintain interest, I can't afford to give to campaigns, but I will send cards, friendship cards, and I don't like phoning people because they usually go "book" on you – I don't blame them I do the same thing, but I'll send "Dear friend" cards, consider voting for so and so. I try to support all the women candidates because it's harder for women, a woman to get anywhere. Men have that network, women don't quite have that yet established; they're getting there though; this election (2012 presidential election) showed that it's improving.

FT: What role has religion played in your life?

AR: Religion has always played a big role in my life. I think that everything that I have done – I, I entered the convent out of, I think because I was so influenced by the talent and the, I don't know, just the wonderful Sisters of St. Joseph that I had in college. Excellent people, much like these early Assumptionists here [Assumption College]: very open, very international in their

thinking and under- very broad-minded people. So I think I entered the convent really to become a teacher like that and it was all, a teacher like they were, you know open-minded and everything, and the faith I have – I still have great faith in God and follow the gospel completely. The, the words of Jesus Christ are so meaningful to me but I have broadened my concept of religion just from a narrow concept of Catholicism, which is still an influence in my life, but I have been very disappointed in many of the – and I still am – in many of the church positions on many issues. I have a very hard time and cannot accept quite a few of them, and that does not mean that I am not a Catholic; I am, and I will always claim I am in a small sense of the word, universal, accepting of everybody, and faith, a leap of faith that I have taken in leaving the convent, not to, not to... do anything different, but to be more free, I think to exert the influence of the beatitudes and that has been it for me. I have... many atheist friends, very dear friends, and I think it's very important to engage people in conversation about their beliefs and your own belief. I have many Jewish friends, so I've become what I call a Universal Catholic and we all respect each others' viewpoints. I can't say that – oh, I have great faith in God and I have to say I believe in all the teachings of the, Jesus Christ. I find the packaging of the church very difficult for me accept as a woman and therefore I make my own decisions on many things, and somebody can call me unfaithful or a cafeteria Catholic, call me whatever you want – with me it's a conscience matter. But I still claim a conscientious Catholic, maybe I'm a conscientious objector, I kind of like that idea [small laugh].

FT: Okay. How have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

AR: I think I've been very healthy all my life and I think my family, we're all very healthy. My father died of a cerebral hemorrhage and it was not anticipated at all; he otherwise had good health and I've had very good health... I exercise forty minutes every day and I'm 82 years old, almost 83, and except for a few pains and aches here and there, I'm....

FT: That's great. Okay, so we have additional questions we can add now... How old were you when you were allowed to date?

AR: Oh, probably 15... 15, 16. But I must add there, my father was, never really approved of any of the boys that I brought home [laughs]. I had a couple of boyfriends in high school but in those days, what was dating? It was so innocent. You go to the movies, you might hold hands, then you go home and that was the end of it, I mean, there was no – when you see things today on TV and dating it's quite sophisticated. We were very simple and innocent [laughs]. In fact, I must say, one of the things that happened to me that I remember, was going to my junior prom in high school with a fellow who was a senior who had asked me and in those days you had programs and you signed to dance with different people and you didn't stay with your partner during the evening; you changed dancing. It was, it was a dance program. So you go through the school and find out, are you going to the dance? Can I have the second dance with you? You know, you shifted. At the end of the night, I remember that Billy – he was the kid that brought me – was so engrossed with the woman that he was dancing with that he kept dancing with her, and I said to myself “Gee my father said to be home by 11:30” I said, “I think I'll walk home” – we weren't too far from the dance hall, and so I walked home down Main Street in my prom dress. I don't think Billy even knew I was gone. So that was it [laughs]. You didn't make

anything of it, I felt quite nice, I had a lovely gown on and I had some good dances, but anyway, that's an incidental story, but that's how innocent it was in those days in the country.

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

AR: What was the first...?

FT: What was considered fashionable?

AR: Oh, big hats with veils. Yes I remember buying one at the Upton Hat Factory and it was green and it was quite big and it had this gorgeous veil with the binding at the bottom of it and I wore it at Easter time. That was very, very fashionable; wearing hats in those days. Now, hats are a thing of the past. Let's see if I can think of anything else... you never wore slacks, ever, ever. You wore skirts or dresses or jumpers and we wore... saddle shoes; those were very fashionable – the white and the brown with bobby socks. I remember that. Even in college, I was in college from '48 to '52 just after World War II so you know, that was the style. The bobby socks and the saddle shoes... I can't think of anything else... but that's what I remember most.

FT: How were girls treated when you were in school?

AR: How were they treated?... I don't remember – I remember being – I was quite chunky when I was in school and I remember being bullied by one boy whose name I still remember and called me "fatso" every time I went through the door. Now today, if he would have done that I think I would've landed one right on his face. I would have never let that happen again, but girls were taught to be seen and not heard and I think that I – anyone inherited that, I did... I think by the teachers, I think that we all had wonderful, wonderful teachers and we were all treated well, I don't recall being overlooked, I know sometimes the boys dominated in those days, but when I was in Oxford and more conscience as a teenager of it I think we all got very good treatment from teachers. Recognition for our work... and applauded for good work and I don't know, sometimes they say in schools – I remember teaching with sisters that paid more attention to boys than they did to girls – girls were actually ignored – but I never felt ignored. I felt bullied, but that still goes on, that's nothing, that's nothing new. It still goes on in schools. Anyway...

FT: What difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood?

AR: Well, from childhood, the most difficult part for me was moving from one school to another before I was ten. Going from Midland Street to May Street, and then from May Street to (??) to Oxford, and being the shy person that I was I can see myself standing at the door, you know looking at everyone in the class, and that was the hardest thing. Who were these kids? How were you going to be accepted? Were they going to treat you well? You know, and they were all looking at you and you're standing at the door, you know the new kid on the block; that was the hardest part for me. But when we moved to Oxford, we stayed; we were settled for ten years so I didn't experience much of a difficulty in transitioning from grade eight to high school there. Had a hard time going from high school to college and I'll tell you why; I never had sisters before, I'd never been in a parochial school before, I'd all had public school education which I thought was excellent. But all the girls I was with were from, mostly from Catholic high schools and they

seemed to know exactly how to answer the teachers. “Sister, sister, sister!” [Laughs] It’s hysterical. I thought, what is going on here, I felt inundated with all these kids and one of them, a couple of them, said, “Well you’re having a hard time because you’re a pub,” meaning you’re from a public school. So I had a really difficult time until one of the teachers took me aside and gave me a poem to analyze and it, I remember the poem was called *The Pulley* by George Hebert, and stand up in class tomorrow and tell us all what it meant to you. So I got up, I read it, I was scared to death, but I analyzed the poem and what I thought it meant, it had a deep spiritual message in it and I thought I really found the message. When I got through the teacher said “Isn’t that amazing class? Didn’t she do a spectacular job?” and everybody kind of had to say yes, so I felt at that moment I knew I was part of the group. I think that’s – I was 18 years old, probably that was my chronological age but maybe emotionally still about 14 or 15, needing that kind of affirmation. Now I look at the college women that come to Abby’s House and staff the shelter... they’re so confident, I think women today are so confident, so sure of themselves, it’s just amazing. You know you should really thank your educational system for that [laughs] they didn’t do it for me until I got to college so, anyway, that was the big difficulty: being accepted as a public school graduate in a very parochial school.

FT: How do you get through tough times? What types of thoughts keep you going?

AR: How do I get through tough times? I, I am a great prayer. I pray all the time, not maybe formal prayers, I talk to myself, I pray, I have a great, a great devotion to Mary and I pray every night to her and I look at the lives of the women around me at Abby’s House, women who for the grace of God are alive and I don’t know how I could survive the way some of them survived. So I get through the tough times through pushing ahead, wearing smooth the path for myself, you know, asking Mary who in my mind was just a very ordinary Jewish woman who did an extraordinary thing in probably very difficult times. I have that devotion to her. But I think mostly I get my inspiration along with that from the women I work with at Abby’s and the staff, and the volunteers continue to come, so we always – I’m more of a half-full person, glass half-full than half-empty so that comes from being with those women.

FT: How do you feel about the choices you’ve made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

AR: You know what, I don’t. I don’t have any regrets at all. I’ve often thought of like, redoing my life, would it have been any different? I think it might have been very different but I never [would] have ended up with this, where I am today. I loved the time I taught; I still have many friends from the Sisters of St. Joseph. I still love them all, particularly the older and the deceased sisters that were so courageous, and my family; I have marvelous models in my aunts. We had five aunts who were all strong women and made their way in a, you know, very difficult times, and my mother and father, and I love the kids I taught, no question, with no exceptions I loved the years I taught. But these past years at Abby’s have been probably the best years of my life so I have no regrets at all.

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

AR: What advice would I give? Follow your heart, you know, follow your conscience... follow the beatitudes, be good to each other, support each other when they need help, stand by one another... take care of one another, raise the generation, the new generation of people to understand acceptance and tolerance and empowerment. I guess I would say, that life, live a good life and don't spend more than you need. Share what you've got. And... live fully. And love one another I guess, you know the old adage still goes "faith, hope, and charity" but the greatest of these is charity. And I think that's advice I would give and that would go for anybody, you know. Love one another, accept one another, be a sister to everyone, including the men in your life. Stand up for yourself. And there's a lot of, you don't have to put this down but one of the things, I had no children, actually I've had four children but they're not birth children. I've helped raise two young daughters of friends of mine and I was their godmother, and I was at the birth of the first and the second, Kendra and Alexandra and one of them is 31; she's a nurse in Manhattan, and Alexandra works at Abby's, she graduated from... what is it? Out in, out in Chicago, the big Catholic college, DePaul and worked in Chicago for two years and then her job was downsized and we had an opening in communications, so she's working, she's 28. I'm still, they call me aunty but I worry about them like I'm their mother. Their mother died five years ago of ovarian cancer. When she died, I felt the responsibility shift to me, and in my spare time, where I live, I help raise two little boys that live next door and they're eleven and eight and we've taken care of them since they were born. Their mother is, works and the father works and so we do homework with them after school and keep them until their parents come home and they also call me aunty and they're adorable. And so my only regret about that is that I wish the boys had come before the girls because the boys require so much more energy than the girls [laughs] and I had the girls when I was much younger and now we have the boys, but they're very thoughtful. So I feel like I have a family, an extended family with the kids, not birth kids. So anyway, they brought a lot of joy to me. That's... I've had a wonderful life and I have no regrets, wonderful people, and then the... and thank you for interviewing me, and I don't know how any of that will fit into what you're going to say but...

FT: It's all perfect.