

Interviewee: Prof. Judith Savageau  
Interviewer: Kyle Gallivan & Lane Bennett  
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Transcribers: Kyle Gallivan & Lane Bennett



Overseen by Dr. Carl R. Keyes, Assumption College

**Abstract:** Judith Savageau, an Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health, was born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts. Through her experiences in Community Health, Judy devotes her life to her research, teaching, and community service. In a world that is ever changing, where people, but especially women, are faced with a fast paced lifestyle, where work, or school can erode relationships and replace the time once spent with family, Judy has been able to find a balance. A balance where she is able to volunteer at least some of her time for her community. She is also a Board Member for the Massachusetts Association for the Blind.

**KG:** Alright this is Kyle Gallivan with...

**LB:** Lane Bennett

**KG:** ... and we're with...

**JS:** Judy Savageau

**KG:** Whats your title here at the school [University of Massachusetts Medical School]?

**JS:** So I'm an epidemiologist and biostatistician—sometimes I use these titles because they relate to the research I do. I also teach a lot here at the medical school so sometimes I use my faculty title. I'm an Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health, so sometimes I use that.

**KG:** Now what's your full name?

**JS:** It's Judith.

**KG:** Judith.

**JS:** But I hardly ever go by it.

**KG:** And do you have a maiden name?

**JS:** Goldsmith.

**KG:** Goldsmith.

**JS:** But I never use it, so...

**LB:** Where were you born?

**JS:** I was born here in Worcester.

**KG:** Which hospital?

**JS:** The old City Hospital.

**KG:** I was born at St. Vincent's...the old St. Vincent's, up on the hill...with the blue.

**JS:** Yes, up on the hill. Yes, the old city hospital.

**KG:** Before the tore it down.

**LB:** Have you ever married?

**JS:** I was, yes.

**LB:** What was the name of your previous husband?

[Laughing: JS/KG/LB]

**JS:** Yeah, that shouldn't be on this record.

**LB:** [laughing] Okay.

**KG:** No comment, that's what that means.

**LB:** What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with.

**JS:** Basically, you know, I'm white. From a cultural standpoint, I'm half Russian, and half French. So I certainly have relatives on both ends of those spectrums, if you will. So I sort of relate to those and culturally, you know, I don't know how much religions [are] part of a culture to some people, but my father was Jewish and mother was Catholic. And there used to be a law in the church that if a Catholic married a non-Catholic you had to sign papers you were going to raise your kids Catholic. So my two sisters and I were both raised Catholic, so I certainly, you know, associated myself with that as a sort of culture, if you will, as opposed to growing up, I mean, we had sort of the pleasure of both Hanukkah and Christmas and Passover and Easter but

you know when we got to be more adults, it was really just sort of the Christian side of, you know, the Christian side of the family that I have much more contact with.

**LB:** So what about your parents – like – what were their names and where were they from?

**JS:** So my mom, Ellen, was born in Lynwood, Mass[achusetts] which, actually, I don't even know if it's an actual town, it's in the area that's close to sort of Grafton and Upton. She actually grew up on a turkey farm which, you know, sometimes when we were little kids, we used to get to drive by. She lived there for most of her childhood, in the Grafton Area, and would tell us these great stories where they would have to, you know, hold the turkeys by the wings, while, know her father, chopped off the head and then you see the turkeys running around. We actually hardly ever, in my house, except for Thanksgiving, we never had turkey, she would cook it for Thanksgiving because it was a tradition and we were begging for it, but she hated cooking turkey and I think it was just her own memories of childhood [laughing] growing up there. So she spent all of her life in the greater Worcester area. My father was born here and I think stayed here in Worcester 'til probably college age and then he went into the service and so he was out of the Worcester area. He served in World War II over in Europe and then came back and went to school, he went to BU [Boston University] and then I—I'm not exactly sure of the story of how he settled back. Some of his family was in Worcester, he had a lot of sisters – he had five or six sisters and they all settled more in the Boston area, so it's not like family was not that far away, but I'm not sure what it was that got him exactly to Worcester. Probably my grandparents were here, you know, it was a natural home for him and they stayed here.

**KG:** Being a serviceman, did he use that GI bill to go through school and help his family?

**JS:** I think he did but I don't know to what extent but I'm pretty sure that's why he went to school right when he got back from the service.

**KG:** And where have you lived, in any other place beside Worcester, during your life?

**JS:** So, I lived [in] Worcester 'til graduating high school, 'til I was 18, and then I went to Northeastern [University] in Boston as an undergraduate and went there for four years. Plus I worked for a year before I went to graduate school, so I was there for five years and then I went to graduate school at Yale, so I moved to New Haven, and I was there for two years, then I moved back to Boston and worked at BU [Boston University] School of Public Health for four years, and then at that point in time, I started having children and we moved to Rochester, New York, to upstate New York for a job and were there for seven or eight years and a lot of people at the University of Rochester—I used to work in the Department of Pediatrics and there's some connection, I'm not sure what the history is between primary care in Rochester and primary care here, in Worcester—and so a lot of faculty actually moved over the years. There was a recruitment—a lot of the original community health centers were started in Rochester and the Chair of the Department there came here. So a lot of the faculty came here at different points in time, so there was a sort of a natural move for me to come back to Worcester and I had family

here so, you know, there was a plus there that when one of my grants ended so that moving back to – I started here in the Department of Pediatrics was just a natural connections so, that's where I've lived.

**KG:** And, you said you lived in the Burncoat area. Have you – did you live there when you were a child or were you in another area in Worcester?

**JS:** We lived in the Main-South area, over near where Clark is now which was a very different environment than what it is today. So I basically went to school in the, sort of Main-South Elementary and High Schools.

**KG:** And you – which, like, which neighborhood do you feel you belonged more to the beginning or now?

**JS:** I certainly like where I live now, just because I think also when you have kids a lot of your life really revolves around your kids, a lot of the connections you have, the things you do socially, are very connected to what your kids do. And I just think my kids when we first moved here, used to go to Worcester—not Worcester Arts Magnet—Chandler Magnet, which is over across the street from Worcester State College. And I loved the school, because it was bilingual, and I thought it was, as I was thinking forward for my kids, I thought it would be great for them to go to a bilingual school but they used to get bussed from the Burncoat area, and one of the down—and while there are many great magnet schools in Worcester, one of the downsides is that you really never get to meet people in your neighborhood. So they went to Worcester—well I ended up moving them from Worcester Arts Magnet so they went to Chandler Magnet and they went there for a number of years. Then it became clear that even things like CCD at our church, I had to do on my own because it's right after school and it's a neighborhood kind of thing and so it became clear, while my kids went to Chandler Magnet and stayed after school cause I didn't get out of work 'til five – five thirty, there was the Y [YMCA] used to run an after school program, so it was easy for them to stay there. I'd go pick them up at five thirty, get home, have diner, homework, whatever—my kids never got to really know people in their community. So after a number of years it was really clear, as much as I like the Burncoat area they needed to go to Burncoat schools in order to just, you know, have friends that were close by, here in the neighborhood that we could participate more as a community, so I certainly like the Burncoat area for that regard.

**LB:** Do you have any other family members who live in the same neighborhood or area as you?

**JS:** So, I have two sisters. One of whom is a couple years older who lives out on the west coast. She's been on the west coast for more than 20 years. And I have a younger sister, whose just 2 years younger, who lives here in Worcester. But she lives over in the – I don't know what it's called – it used to be called Quinsig Village, the area – the 01607 zip code that's sort of on the Auburn/Millbury borderline. I think its called Quinsig Village because that's where Quinsig Community College used to be a million years ago, where it is now actually used to be

Assumption. It was Assumption Prep and then Assumption College for a very short period of time before it moved out to Salisbury Street. I live on Assumption Ave which was named that because there was Assumption College across the street. So she lives in the area that I think – maybe not still known as, but used to be known as Quinsig Village.

**LB:** What significant challenges do you think the city still faces?

**JS:** That's a great question. I think it faces lots of challenges. I think it certainly faces the kinds of things that any large urban area faces. You know, not only are there issues around unemployment, like there are nationally, I think when you have an urban population, you certainly have the whole range of socio-demographic characteristics. This is not Westborough. This is not Boylston. You know, it's not meant in any disrespectful way, but you've got every social class, you know, you have zip codes in Worcester take 01602 or 01609 the poorest and the most affluent families live in those same zip codes just because of the way zip codes are structured in Worcester so you have people from the poorest of poor to pretty affluent, you know, multi-million dollar homes. So I like that it has that characteristic but you've got every nationality here, you've got every race, you've got all the ethnicities and I think those are challenges. Also from a school standpoint I think it's hard to educate kids where English isn't your first language or your primary language. And again, I chose to send my kids to a bilingual school thinking that was something for them to do. I can't imagine how hard it must be for teachers who have kids coming in who really have very, very limited English skills. I think healthcare is also really hard because not everybody has access to healthcare. We have, because of healthcare reform, that happened in 2006, here in the state, everybody pretty much has access to universal health insurance but that doesn't mean you have access to healthcare. And I think the poorest of the poor, you know, Community Health Centers, we have a number of great Community Health Centers, here in Worcester. But because a lot of private doctors closed their doors when healthcare reform came into play because they – now all of a sudden you had hundreds of thousands of people here in Massachusetts who had access to Healthcare insurance they were getting bombarded. So now the Community Health Centers were taking the burden of this influx of people with Health Insurance. So waiting lines are tremendous and again you're coming to an area where social factors are just as important as the medical things that you need and I think it's hard to provide those kinds of services to the variety of people we have here in Worcester. So I think there is health challenges, financial challenges, there's educational challenges, and I imagine I would not want to be the City Manager whose trying to keep up with maintaining roads, and maintaining, you know, structures, and yet still offering things like, you know, a recreation programs for kids, you know, arts education in schools is really lacking, that's why I actually moved kids over to Worcester Arts Magnet in the Burncoat Area because they really had a curriculum that offered, because it was an extended day school, it offered arts stuff every day. One day you had music, you had creative writing, you had dance, you had theater, and you had – what am I forgetting.

**KG:** Painting

**JS:** Art. Right – physical art. And libraries are lacking, you know, schools no longer can maintain the kind of libraries that they used to have – and libraries – the Worcester Public Library is one of my favorite things in the city. I'm a huge library patron.

**LB:** If you were in a position of control over the city what would you change?

**JS:** I think there is a lot of healthcare. Again I work in the healthcare area. I think there is a lot of healthcare stuff. We're currently right now without—the person who used to be the Public Health – I don't know if it's called a director, here in the city—has recently stepped down from that position. So I don't even know if there is a sort of interim person in play. We don't have much of a health department here, in Worcester that's been part of the reduction in force. A lot of the layoffs, when the city manager really had to cut the budget – we don't have enough school nurses. So, you know, schools are really lacking when it comes to even providing some basic healthcare to kids whether it's on an acute basis or kids who are on chronic meds who need a school nurse and I think healthcare where certainly a lot of things need to happen.

**KG:** I know someone who's a Worcester nurse, and she had a discussion with the Superintendent. And the Superintendent – she would go to two different schools, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon--

**JS:** And lucky she only had two schools to go to.

**KG:** She said to the superintendent, “Well, what about these kids that need to have all these different medications in a day. What are you going to do to fix this?” And she said “Well some schools don't have librarians.” Do you think that can actually be connected? Librarians are important in their own right but so are Nurses, but can you really compare the two?

**JS:** [Takes a deep breathe] Probably not. I think, you know, healthcare certainly has an impact on, you know, could we survive without a library? Sure, I think it ultimately affects literacy and lots of things that, you know, that make you a better person and make you more productive. But you know, if we're not maintaining our health, coming to school, you know, for some kids, it's probably the easiest thing for them to do because their situation at home, they may not have anybody really overlooking or making sure that their getting whatever they need. Healthwise, at home, kids respite is probably what school provides them. You see many kids coming to school without winter coats, who come to school who are waiting at the door at six o'clock in the morning the doors open in the high school and the middle school to eat breakfast. You know, those are very health related but you're right, if you have a kid who is on chronic medication, and somebody not overseeing that and sometimes families don't have the capacity to do it. I can imagine for language issues for some families, helping somebody maintain compliance with some medication strategy if you're diabetic or you're asthmatic. You know, it might be really hard for a family to do and a lot of Health Centers have care managers and outreach workers but the school is a big part of that process. And I think that by having things like I'm also a huge proponent of having school based health clinics 'cause now you have kids who stay in school,

whose parents don't have to take time off of work because that's another thing that sort of provides for a lack of healthcare as the parents aren't even willing – they're not able to lose their job if they lose yet another day of work because their child is sick. So I think school-based health clinics which need nursing staff for them is just paramount to a kid's success.

**KG:** Now, you've been in Worcester for a long time. What kind changes have you seen in the city as it's progressed to its modern elements?

**JS:** I think the changes are probably all related to—just because society has changed because the economics of life have changed. I think it's just harder to maintain. I just remember growing up there were things, I don't think my parents ever really had to worry about, that there would always be x, y, and z available. I think now, again, I would not to be the City Manager. I would not want to be sitting on the city wide council or the school committee. I can't imagine how hard it must be to make decisions about choosing between things that used to be a given when we were growing up. I don't think we had to worry about that things were – and I grew up, I think, in a pretty non-affluent – I mean, I don't think we knew how poor we were. I grew up in one of the housing projects that was built for Veterans, coming out of the service, which today some people would say, “I don't even want to drive down that street cause I really worry for my safety.” I think safety is a bigger issue now and that's very much driven by the economy. The people now – it's becoming very acceptable – as I was telling you before we started this interview, my daughter had an opportunity since graduating college, three years ago, to do a lot of travel, teaching in different places, she worked in a healthcare clinic in Costa Rica for about six or eight months and when you're in those places and you see actually how thankful people are for the little they have. And yet here in this country, I think we, we take for granted so many things and we, we want so much more. I think it sometimes hard to see that people are having to make really tough choices and yet we're so much better off in this country than so many other places, it's amazing how little people can accept in other places. Here I think we're pretty spoiled about what we have, and I think in terms of today's world, people are having to make really tough choices that I don't think I worried about my safety the way people worry about their safety now. There's actually a great book – I know I won't get the title correct. Something about *The Last Child in the Woods*. We don't send out kids out to play anymore. That's another huge thing that's changed. Our kids don't go out and explore the woods. We don't take – my parents didn't think twice about, you know, going to a playground, about my taking a bus when I was like in middle school, downtown to go to the library and then you sort of hang out behind city hall and there's benches there or the – what used to be the galleria. You know, now we worry about our safety in our own neighborhood. And I think that's tremendously changed – that we don't even feel safe in our own area. That, I'd never have to worry about.

**LB:** Yeah, I know for a fact there are young children in my neighborhood and I never see them outside.

**JS:** That's right. We don't – parents don't let kids out and every kid has a cellphone – “By the time you get to Joey's house I need you to call me to make sure you've gotten there okay.” Kids –

you don't see kids biking in the neighborhood. We biked, we skated, I mean everybody had roller skates. We biked, you know, we lived not too far from what's Coes Pond. I don't even know if it's a functioning pond anymore, that's a swimming place. We would go there first thing in the morning, we would walk home for lunch, my mother would have grilled cheese sandwiches, soup or something ready, we'd go and spend the rest of the afternoon there and everybody was there. Your whole sort of neighborhood was there. You wouldn't see any of that now. So I think that's unfortunate, but I think it's just become just the area that we live in and again, part of that is living in an urban city, an inner city just has worries as any other urban city has. I don't think Worcester is any different than lots of other urban cities.

**KG:** For the next question, what – like you've been talking about all these different aspects of Worcester, but what makes Worcester, Worcester? What different characteristics does it have that separates it from say one of the towns like Leicester or Grafton or maybe even Boston or Springfield. What makes Worcester, Worcester?

**JS:** I think a plus of Worcester is so like any large city so what makes it different from Leicester is its volume. I mean the fact that it's a larger city offers more opportunities. There's different schools, there's different – you know, the fact that we have theater available to us. The fact that we have -- there's opportunities such as swimming to other kinds of recreational things that are available. Boston's just a much larger city. I've lived in Boston for nine years, I hardly knew my next door neighbors. I think it's because you live in Boston, you – my friends lived in Brookline, someone lived in Arlington, someone lived in Watertown, so I had a lot of close friends, but nobody lived in my neighborhood that I knew. Here I know my neighbors so Worcester is larger than what I think of the small towns, which you know have a different feel to them. I'm a city person. My kids all wanted only to go to big colleges and big cities because I think they see themselves as city people as well so it has the pluses of a big city that offer a lot of things, but it's not so overwhelmingly large, that you don't feel like you're part of a community. That's sort of the difference from a size wise. I don't – I know very little about Springfield, so even though Springfield is probably size wise closer to Worcester, I don't really have a good sense of what it would be like-- what Worcester brings that Springfield doesn't bring. But Worcester has a lot of things going for it. You know, in terms of things like the arts and sports. If you're a hockey fan, you can root for the Sharks. We now have a baseball team and they may be a AAA team, but I think that it's other things that brings families out into the community. I love the Hanover Theater, it's a great thing that we offer in Worcester.

**LB:** For women specifically how do you think their experience in Worcester has been, generally?

**JS:** That's a great question too. I think [pauses] there's certainly a variety of different employers here in Worcester. And so, I would imagine whether somebody who's in say the math and sciences field like I'm in, there can't be a better place than working – say here at UMass or working – whether your part of the, you know, Reliant Group System, or the St. V's [St. Vincent's Hospital] System. I mean there's certainly a lots of opportunities in an academic environment for Worcester, and certainly UMass has also really been pushing for more diversity not only in terms



of women faculty or other diversity from racial and ethnic groups and so I think it's trying to bring women. There's a women's faculty committee here, that really is promoting women on the science side. I can't speak to too many of the other sort of the retail or the business end of things or the legal ends of things but I'll bet it's not much different than it is on the healthcare world that is just there's been a push over the past last couple of decades for women to be, you know, have many more opportunities to be productive in society, and to take on leadership roles. I mean there's a lot of people – look at the composition of like the City Council or the School Committee. I mean there's a lot of women who serve on those. I just don't know who sort of the leadership is on the business side of things but I can't imagine that there aren't also female judges here in Worcester and attorney's – so I think there's opportunities for women. So I think there are opportunities for women. Do we have to seek them out a little more? I think the reality is, and I don't mind mentioning this on tape, you know if you're a woman with children, you are the primary caregiver to them. So there are decisions I have had to make in my own life. Absolutely people who are my colleagues not just here in this department but at UMass or even at outside research places that are basically the same age as I am and probably are at least a step or a half step or a little bit ahead of me but, you know, I made a decision that having my kids and doing things, being available to my, to my kids and about working here in family medicine. I worked in pediatrics because if they don't understand that either kids get sick during the day or you want to go to the field hockey game at the end of the day or go to the school play. You know, I have the luxury in my particular job that I can flex my time,. So the sun rises and sets on my kids, so I never could sit at a place and look back and say, “Gosh, I wish I had written one more paper for a medical journal.” As many papers as I've written, I never wanted to say that but I would have hated if I – “I wish I had gone to that field hockey game.” I never had a choice knowing that people will probably leap a little bit ahead of me, but I think that's just how you balance family and work that I don't think a lot of men have to do.

**LB:** From grade school up to college, where did you go to school?

**JS:** Where?

**LB:** Yeah.

**JS:** So, I went to Columbus Park School on Lovell Street, as an elementary school, until sixth grade. I then went to – doesn't exist anymore but it was called Woodland Prep. There was a school in Worcester which took kids – you had to be, you know, you had to excel academically. And they took kids six grade from all over all the schools in Worcester Elementary Schools. So we got to go to this sort of a special school at the time for seventh and eighth grade. It was a half day program – an intense half day program. We kind of went like seven thirty to twelve thirty-one o'clock and we had the rest of the day but it was intense academically. And then I went to the old South High School which was in the Main-South area not the one that's up near the airport now. I don't know what year that came to be but – and then as I said I went to Northeastern for undergraduate and Yale for Graduate school. And here I am.

**LB:** What was the most challenging part of your education? [Pause] Like the work or your domestic life while going to school.

**JS:** I can't remember many challenges in terms of elementary school again as I said in middle school I think it was just a challenging academically environment. My father had a small business on the side. And so in high school, I – we weren't really give a choice. I had to work for the family business so to speak. And so there were certainly – while I very much excelled in school, as did my other two siblings -- there was a challenge of always, you know, my father had – he was very – it was very seasonal work was very busy seasonally and I was working every weekend, you know, it was basically a weekend sort of business he had on the side besides his regular work that he did. And so that was a challenge all throughout high school to try and balance work and maintain education was really important in my family. You know, my father just was – it just would not have been acceptable not to do really, really well but then to have to sort of have this burden of sort of, “Okay, you have this part time job.” I don't feel like I had a choice of – I could work at Friendly's or I could work at the movie theater this was the job you had, we were all expected to contribute to our family income. Again, I lived in a housing project, and so we didn't – my mother didn't work. My father was of the generation that, you know, the women stayed home, and so yes, I also went to an elementary school that didn't have a cafeteria. And we came home for lunch every single day, and then lined up and headed back to school, and then came home at three o'clock and my mother was there waiting. And dinner was on the table at six o'clock every evening and it was sort of I think maybe that was being in the army. It was a little regimented [laughing] but yes so I had to balance school and work and sort of not feeling like I had a lot of choices in that regard. Did it make me a better person? I think absolutely.

**KG:** Upon finishing your education did you see that you had many options or few options – like in your job right now, do you feel like this is the only thing you can do or do you think you can develop into something else?

**JS:** I certainly think that I have – I actually say this readily I think I am lucky in my job because I – when I went to graduate school, it was almost, again now seemed to in today's world everybody is likely a double major in college or a major and a minor. It's almost unheard of – having seen both my kids go through college it seems pretty unusual not to have so many other things going on. That wasn't the case, you know, when I was growing up and went to college. Again in graduate school, I took an opportunity because I'm a science and I love math unlike some people in this room. [laughing]

**LB:** I like science not math.

**JS:** Okay, see – [laughing] I couldn't think if my daughter loves math too. She actually, as a work study student used to tutor calculus. Now calculus is a different kind of world for math. But, I loved math and yet I knew I wanted to be an epidemiologist and sort of due public health research. I think because I was – maybe didn't realize I was being smart at that time, got skilled in both of them. So I've really had many opportunities to work in both the epidemiology on that

research design and methodology things to also being the biostatistician on many grants and projects so I have an opportunity, I usually get a lot choices – there are so many projects going on and I have different skills that I can bring to different projects that really allowed me an opportunity that I can do many more things than just going down that one path and also when I came here I had an opportunity to teach a couple of classes. I never thought – I never wanted to be like a college professor. I never saw myself instead of just being a teacher. I knew I wanted to be a researcher but I had an opportunity one semester to fill in for somebody teaching an epidemiology class and I absolutely loved it. That surprised me. I've really built up a lot of educational things. Teaching full courses here, being a course director, running educational programs that I never would have predicted I would have an opportunity to do, so there's a lot of choices here at UMass and because I now work on two campuses besides being here in Family Medicine, I'm down the street in Shrewsbury at the center for Health Policy and Research, I now get to do, very much health policy research which really has a lot of impact from a public health standpoint. So, I think I'm really lucky I think I have lots of choices and I'm never gonna complain about that. [laughing]

**KG:** You do work outside of the home here, correct?

**JS:** Yes.

**KG:** Like, do you do work from home? Do you, like, take this job and then bring it to other projects that are not specifically in this type of work? Like in a community development kind of way where you go volunteer.

**JS:** Sure.

**KG:** Okay. And why did you choose this line of work really?

**JS:** So that's a really good question. I – when I was in high school and for many of my early years in college, I thought I was going to be a doctor. I actually – my goal was to be a neurosurgeon. I loved the brain. To this day, I think the brain is fascinating. I think it's amazing how the brain works and how one day you can – you watch kids and watch how they develop and one day they get and they walk or they start talking and just our brain is fascinating. So I thought I was going to be a neurosurgeon. And I met somebody in my, sort of, junior/senior year and then definitely had an opportunity to work with somebody who was also an epidemiologist. And epidemiology – as you may or may not know is the study of diseases and the risk factors – it comes from the same word as like an epidemic comes from, but it's not necessarily just acute academic things. I mean there's research going on in all sorts of areas and I tend to be more in the preventive medicine side of things as opposed to the acute side of things like an outbreak that's going on that the CDC would be involved in investigating, though I do more stuff around preventive medicine looking at the risk factors – I'm very interested and I think it's because of my interest in brain – behavior epidemiology – why we make the decisions to do the things that we do that have outcomes. So I met someone who was an epidemiologist and it dawned on me

that, you know, as a physician you see one patient at a time and you sort of help fix them, if you will, you know, treat them, cure them, what have you, but from an epidemiology standpoint I could work with whole populations of people and there was sort of those kinds of “Ah ha!” moments or, you know, a light went on that I thought that's really what I want to do. I really wanted to be public health and population based and not individual person based and that's what made me decide to go to public health school as opposed to going to medical school.

**KG:** Now you said you used to work for your father, did you work for anyone else besides him and now, this UMass?

**JS:** Growing up?

**KG:** Yeah, like any other work experience say, like a summer job or...

**JS:** So, the only other – again, you know, we had to work for him. [laughing] So anytime there was an opportunity, I worked one summer job at a rest home which is like a nursing home, exception patients don't, you know, they're not on opioid or, you know, the lower levels of care – what you'd see today as assisted living facilities.

**LB:** I work in assisted living.

**JS:** Right, we used to call them a rest home as opposed to a nursing home. So one of my summers in college – so all through high school I only worked for my father, so in college I had an opportunity to do summer job. I didn't do the co-op program at Northeastern. I knew I was ultimately go to graduate school, at the time I thought it was going to be medical school so I didn't want to do the five year co-op program, I just wanted to go straight through for four years. So, I worked that summer, and then as – I was a work study student for four years in college and the National Braille Press actually produces a lot of stuff and Braille, you know, for the nation, a lot of publications individual Braille things for say a blind college student, they'll do exams and what have you, was literally across the street from Northeastern and they had a posting for a work study job, and so I thought it's across the street from where I'm living, this couldn't be easier, and yet I didn't want to work in a lab even though I was a biology major. I knew I didn't want to do laboratory types of things, so I thought, “I'll take that job.” Well, I had that job for four years and I could work any time, if there was a school break or a summer break, if I was gonna stay in Boston. And I ended up working there for a year, it actually merged with what is now the Massachusetts Association for the Blind. And so I worked there for a whole year before going to graduate school, cause when I had made my decision to go to public health school versus medical school it was too late for me to apply for like that fall semester and I had an opportunity. I could work there for a full year and then get in my applications for graduate school, and so that actually resulted – that was a major change in my life because most of the volunteer work that that I do was all around people who were blind and visually impaired. I now sit on the board on the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and so it's kind of come full circle from a job that I had thirty years ago. So I do a lot of state-wide things for people who are

blind and visually impaired.

**KG:** Now, it seems like it had a lot of fun (??) for you. What did that work mean for you then and looking back does that show, like, the kind of person you have become?

**JS:** I definitely saw a part of life, of people, who people who – we live in a visual world and so for people who have absolutely no vision because they were born without any vision or maybe through some accident lost their vision or for people who losing their vision, I've come to really appreciate how different life is, and I think I saw that early on so that is something early on that – I volunteer, I used to read books onto tape recordings for the blind, which I did on my own time. I figured if I was already reading books for – and the recordings for the Blind, as a national organization does a lot of school based – now you can get books electronically but you couldn't years ago, you could get them on tape and they always had a need for people to read books that were in the maths and sciences which are not easy reads – can you imagine reading a math book outloud? It's hard enough to read to yourself. So I figured if I was already reading these books for college. I remember reading a neuroanatomy book onto tape and reading an embryology book onto tape because I figured if I was reading it anyways and they have this whole studio setup for me to do this, they produced a lot of books for recordings for the blind. I read for a college student for many, many years 'cause I couldn't imagine what it would be like not to have that ability. And I'm an avid reader so if for that it was trying to help somebody keep up with college but just reading general stuff. I thought, "Boy, missing that opportunity to do that," and so now, full disclosure on tape here, I think fate is – I'm not somebody who believes in fate, we have most control over our lives but if there's any sort of fate to life, having spent all that time working at, you know, National Braille Press and Mass Association for the Blind, I became a braille transcriber for the Library of Congress. I used to braille things for people. My first born child is visually impaired, he was born with a very, very rare eye disorder and now has very limited vision. So, I think it's really kind of odd that [laughing] sort of investing all your time, and that's certainly what kept me very involved in the vision community, and the blindness community is more because of, you know, him than anything else, it's something I could bring a history of a knowledge and skills to all of a sudden my personal had this issue that would have ever expected that would happen.

**LB:** Do you have children who live with you still?

**JS:** No.

[Laughing]

**LB:** How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life? What is most important?

**JS:** Well, most important to me is community service. I'm an avid believer. The woman who founded, I believe it's Save the Children, Marian Wright Edelman has this great quote that

“Service is the rent we pay for living here on this planet.” And I am an avid believer. I do five to ten hours a week of community service. A lot of it is related to vision. A lot of it is things – you know, projects that my church related to Hope for Housing Project that the Massachusetts Housing Alliance does. I do a lot of work with food pantries here in Worcester because I think hunger is very much related to health. And so I'm a firm believer that there's no reason that—I admit I get up on a high horse about this—I think that if you can't find an hour a week to volunteer then you're really not looking. And I think even when you're busy and when my kids were little, and so I volunteered at their school, you know, I helped with projects, I helped with the school news – I did things I obviously could at night, I was happy to write a school newsletter or help coordinate a book sale at school. I think you can find things to do, you know, if you look, there are a million things you can do out there. And I got my kids engaged probably from the minute they hit elementary school. And they both do now lots of community service as well and yes, I truly believe I have to work to live, I don't live to work. I live to serve I think that's the only reason, you know, it sounds really hokie, but I think that's why we're here: is to help somebody else. I'm pretty lucky and yet I don't think of myself as affluent at all but I think I'm pretty lucky that when I see people come to – I work at this food pantry every Thursday night and I know I don't want to be on the other side of the door that they have to come to pick up free groceries and so, you know, I can't at all complain when my daughter worked at a clinic in Costa Rica and these are people – families – mostly women and children who had crossed the border from Nicaragua and were living in a really horrible place outside of the capital in Costa Rica, very slum like conditions and yet felt like they were the luckiest on earth, and I can't imagine what they must have been like in Nicaragua and only had a meal a day it was literally a tin shack, every little house with the dirt floor and the light bulb from the ceiling and these people thought they were really lucky and then I thought, “Then you come back here and you see, you know, we throw out everything, we waste stuff, you know, I think we're a pretty spoiled society, here in the United States.

**LB:** It's like another world.

**JS:** It is like another world. My daughter now, where she is in Somaliland, they ration water, you basically – if you get to take two showers a week, they ration electricity today, because that's how they have to survive. Washing is literally in a bucket of water on a board and somebody rings it out in another bucket of water, and I don't even want to know how infrequent that water is probably changed. And then hangs it up on a line, or hangs it on a tree 'til it dries. And yet here, you know, if we don't have every little appliance in the world, and every electronic. I like that you're, you know, you're not living in the world where you have to have every electronic there is. My home –you know here I have to have certain technology, I have very little low key house, I learned how to say collect all this stuff – I truly believe we are here on this planet to serve and I know that sounds really hokie but, that's just what it is.

**KG:** I know at my high school, we had a community service requirement to graduate you had to have..

**JS:** To graduate?! So it's not just National Honor Society. That's great.

**KG:** So do you think that should be implemented in every single school?

**JS:** Absolutely! Every elementary school! I think my kids learned a lot by just helping another kid. I just think – and not just helping in a way that I'm better than you, but I mean, I think there are buddy programs you can set up at school. I think my son, cause he has very little vision, missed out on a lot because we live in a visual world. And think about walking into a cafeteria. You and I see where our friends are sitting immediately, And you know by someone's body language whether they're welcoming people or sort of turn like not welcoming someone, at my table and so imagine walking into a place and not knowing what your environments like – I think that's great that your high school had that, absolutely.

**LB:** Your chosen path, like your career, what kinds of effects has it had on you professional and personally? Both good and bad?

**JS:** What affect has it had on me?

**LB:** Yes.

**JS:** So, professionally I think I've been, again, because I chose to really balance work and home, I'm probably – there are people my age who have my degree who might be a half step ahead of me. I certainly think I've had many opportunities, to grow in this job. You know I have many opportunities, whether it be to teach things, or, I do a lot of research, I publish a lot of papers, with many of my colleagues, and because I work on so many different projects, I probably have an opportunity to publish more than other people who might, say, just do tobacco research, so I work with that person, but I also work with this person doing trauma, and this person doing cancer screening and it's the nature of my job that I'm really helping more of the junior faculty plus doing some residents. So I have many opportunities to grow professionally to really contribute to scientific knowledge. What has that meant to me personally. I work a gazillion hours. I think it's really hard to survive in today's world of publish or perish be sure to get the next grant out or trying to meet all your teaching things, plus your research things. My life is certainly different since my kids have gone off to college and then since graduated because I, now am not trying to do the bake sale at school or go to the field hockey game. So yeah, you substitute things, personally in your life, when you have other free time. I did make the mistake that everybody warned me when your kids go off to college, don't substitute those hours with more work and it's really easy to get sucked into that. Like my teaching stuff, I take that home because I need more quiet time to do that than people – I never close my door, so people who are always stopping in who have a question about something. I find it hard – I know you had sort of started asking me about working at home, I know some people are advocates of that. I'd get too distracted, except for my teaching stuff cause I'd say, “Oh, there's a load of laundry. Let me just throw in that load of laundry.” Or I don't see my house during the day or week so if I saw it I'd be like “Oh, let me just quickly do that.” So I need the structure of coming to work, but it is to

bring things home and it is easy to have work impede on your social life unless you consciously make an effort not to do that. So me being part of different groups, whether you're a part of – there are great singing groups here in Worcester. I love that there are Salisbury Singers. And all kinds of things and the arts stuff or reading or whatever your hobbies are. I think you have to – it's hard to consciously get yourself to separate work and life.

**KG:** Now, I see a Kate Toomey for School Committee bumper sticker over there [JS: *laughs*], are you politically active?

**JS:** In certain areas, so I think I'm...yeah our daughters are, you, know, were best friends in middle school and high school and actually at Worcester Art's Magnet. I did a lot of campaigning for Kate when she first ran for School Committee for her first couple of terms. I haven't really done much in the way of that when she's been running for City Council. I've certainly been a big supporter of the local sort of state reps and state, you know, congressmen and the people who serve the (???) area because clearly, you know, I'm one of their constituents and there are things happening in our environment that I think it's important to – it's amazing when they tell you like, they never hear from their constituents. You know, they don't get the letters and the calls that, you know, they would love to get. I think it's hard for people to feel comfortable reaching out, so I certainly am politically active in – if there's a cause. Clearly, since I worked in the disability world especially for blindness and vision for many, many years. You know, I'll write any letter that needs to be written, whether it's to the governor or, you know, the state's, you know, reps and state senators. I do a lot of advocacy stuff for the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, which is a state agency under our Health and Human Service structure, and so, politically that, you know, is just where my heart is. So, if I have limited energy to spend, I'm clearly gonna put it on a focus – a focused area. So, otherwise I'm not one to...I don't go to city council meetings and...yeah. There are many things –

**KG:** I'm one of those volunteers that goes out there [JS: Do you? *laughs*] – everywhere; Martha Coakly, Deval Patrick, there's a whole list of all the –

**JS:** Well my son was a political science major in college, and so out of college his first year he worked for a state rep in Phila – went to school in Philadelphia for a state rep, and then he got very involved in the last presidential election. So, he lived in New Hampshire, he lived in Kentucky, he lived in Ohio, he lived in Pennsylvania; He worked on the presidential campaign, he worked for a state senate race, he worked for a U.S. congressman's race, and he worked on a mayoral race in Philadelphia, and he wanted the exposure of working on these kinds of campaigns. And he was comfortable, which I would never be. I'm just amazed that I have a child who will live and sell apartments off of Craigslist. You know, as he's had to, you know, be in Kentucky for the next three months, so he'd sell everything in his current apartment – 'cause again he's blind and doesn't drive – so he'd move to Kentucky on, you know, their version of Craigslist. He'd buy stuff, sell it to move to Ohio and, and now he's a law student. So he's in his third year of law school. He's on the board of the Young Democrats of Massachusetts.



**KG:** I'm a political director for the Worcester County Young Democrats.

**JS:** See, you guys should talk to each other.

**KG:** What's his name?

**JS:** Jason Savageau.

**KG:** I know that name. [*all laugh*]

**JS:** I also believe that there's like, six degrees of separation. I think everybody knows everybody, who knows everybody. That's really how –

**KG:** Like Ashley Coloumbe, I know –

**JS:** Oh, I know that name, yes we've mentioned that name, yep.

**KG:** Small world.

**JS:** It is a small world. I think, you know, you can live in a really big city here, you know, areas in Boston he's lived in, Philadelphia – he interned last summer in DC. Those are the wants kinds of sized cities that he wants to, you know, be in poli – and he's very - the reason he's in Suffolk's [University] Law School is because they're very politically minded, so that was why he chose Suffolk, 'cause he wants to be in public policy and not sort of work for a big corporation firm as an attorney so...yeah so again, you know I hear all about politics [*laughs*] in that regard.

**KG:** And what – I know you said that, you're in that Christian religion: what role did it play in your life?

**JS:** Well my mother was pretty devout as a Catholic, so we were raised; even though my father was Jewish he was very reformed and he didn't mind and I think he knew that they were gonna raise their kids Catholic. And so he didn't impose, you know, anything about his religion that I sort of had exposure to or was interested in and was certainly, you know, more through family function kinds of things. You know, Bar Mitzvahs and the like, and Passovers and Hanukahs as opposed to...it wasn't, you know, there was nothing about our day-to-day life that was, you know, on the Jewish side of things as opposed to on the Catholic side of things that were part of our day-to-day life. And so when it's still very important to me today, I think that just it's, you know, there's something to having faith in things happening and sort of having that ability to reflect to my kids all the time. I know that they think I'm crazy about reflection and how important it is to sort of just have quiet time. And even if it is just that one hour on Sunday that you're in church, and whether you're listening to the guy lecture about something or you're sort of just sitting there and reflecting on sort of, you know, what's happened this week: things that went well, things that didn't go well and, you know I just think it's important to sort of think

about how faith just helps you through – think about what you’re gonna do, and interact with people. So I don’t wanna get up on a high horse again. *[laughs]*

**LB:** You said your son was vision impaired?

**JS:** Yep.

**LB:** Do you have any other family members with health issues that have impacted you in your life, and what was it like taking care of a visually impaired person?

**JS:** Certainly my parents didn’t have, you know, anything that I think had a major impact on me from – you know, as we grew older, you know, and as an adult and when I moved back here, clearly also the attractions to being back in Worcester besides having an opportunity to work here at UMASS in pediatrics was...you know my parents were getting older, and we had now spent many years in upstate New York and just saw them, you know, very (???) kinds of things. My kids didn’t really get to know their grandparents very well, so that was another attraction to moving back here. But then they started having their own health issues, you know, just as you’re getting older so, you know did that really personally affect my life? Probably not as much, until it got to the point where there were enough health issues that you were part of what people now call now that “sandwich generation”. You know, here I am raising children and then taking care of parents on the other end of things. So, you know, I think that’s where it has had some impact on, just sort of how your life progresses and what you can get done in any given day and thinking about their mortality. And that at some point your parents aren’t going to be here and that’s, you know, what happened, and my kids don’t have any grandparents now. And I think it’s unfortunate that they haven’t gotten to see their grandkids really, you know, achieve the things they did. You know, from Jason’s standpoint, you know, it’s a huge amount of work to have a child with any kind of a disability. I mean it’s hard enough raising kids, and some day you’ll be there and, you know, I’m sure if you asked your parents they would tell you it’s, you know, a lot of work. But then if you couple on top of that somebody who has any kind of disabling condition or any kind of special need, it’s a huge amount of work. And so you, you know, some days it’s exhausting to think about, you know, especially when you’re trying – I was trying to think more from a large – not only meeting his needs around school and whether is was learning Braille, or getting things in large tape, or using new equipment that no one else in the classroom had – you know, thinking from an advocacy standpoint. So I was a founder, with two other parents, of (????), a non-profit called the Massachusetts Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired, to really be a resource for other parents. I mean, I needed to learn from parents who’s kids were a few years always ahead of my kids, so I knew: what is eighth grade like, you know, if you don’t have any vision? And what’s it like—I mean it’s one thing in elementary school when you have one teacher, who at the end of the day, you can sort of figure out what you need to make up if you had to go out of class for say, Braille lessons. In middle school and high school, you know, if you don’t see your math teacher that day, you’re not gonna see your math teacher ‘till tomorrow. So, sort of getting caught up and just being on top of all of that stuff is really a lot of just extra legwork you have to do. And so sometimes it gets to be a real burden that you don’t get to spend your time doing fun

stuff with your kids because, you know, you're sort of at home tutoring them afterschool, you know, helping them catch up with the math stuff that they might have missed that day so...but it really gave me an opportunity – from an advocacy standpoint – to just, you know... think, make a big impact.

**LB:** Have you been able to get good quality and affordable healthcare?

**JS:** Yes. You know, I can say that pretty easily. I have access to health insurance here. You know, I certainly have the education, and I work with a lot of people in healthcare. So I have an opportunity to kind of sort of know what is happening behind the scenes, so I probably get to pick and choose in a way that maybe some people don't get to do. And certainly in terms of vision care for my son, you know, UMASS recently did just reopen a department of optomology. At one point they didn't have one, but growing up there was a pediatric optomologist here who maybe didn't know my son's very specific condition really well, 'cause it's not the kind of thing that most optomologists would ever see in their lifetime. But there were resources in Boston that we had access to at UMass. So yeah, we've been fine – and again, I think lucky, 'cause there were many people who just don't have this opportunity.

**LB:** Yeah. We should ask these before these, right? Okay.

**JS:** Oh, what's coming next? [LB *laughs*]

**LB:** What major historical events have occurred during your time here, and have they impacted you personally?

**JS:** Wow...

**LB:** Does anything really happen around here? [*all laugh*]

**JS:** Well, there was that tornado of 1953. Now, I wasn't born yet, but I do remember the area – the street I live on was totally decimated. So, all of our houses are like mirror images of each other – they were all built I think like in 1955 or '56 or something after the tornado hit. So you certainly hear a lot of stories, and I remember, as I said, I used to go to Coe's Pond. You know, we used to swim a lot; we would be there all day long, five days a week. And there was a girl who was there who had one leg and had lost her other – like at the knee – had had an amputation. And the story was...and she used to talk a little bit about it. I mean she didn't shy away from it, but it wasn't like she, you know, wore this as a badge of courage, but had lost her leg – a refrigerator had fallen on her leg in the tornado. And so I think that caused us to really think about boy, you sort of heard about this and I've seen pictures of it, but to sort of meet people who lived through that tornado I think is...you know. Otherwise I think I've been lucky that there weren't any other major disasters here in Worcester. You know, we had that horrible fire in '99, but that didn't really affect me personally. And yet there was a period of time...so for...you know, from 19...mid '70s to 1990, you know there was fifteen, sixteen years I didn't live here in

Worcester at all. So I had a connection to Worcester because my parents were her and I had a younger sister who was here but...you know, there are certainly parts of Worcester that, you know, I think coming back here, you know, was a different place than when I grew up, you know. So, I can't think of any other major historical things that happened in Worcester...what else happened?

**KG:** Well, I'm just thinking of like, JFK's assassination, since he was from Massachusetts. Did you ever feel anything, like in that kind of way? Or maybe even his brother's death or anything like that?

**JS:** No, I think I was too – I mean, I can remember where I was when they announced over the school PA that JFK had been shot. But I think when you're young, unless there's something that keeps it part of your life...yeah there was an event there but I don't think it's like – you know I can remember sitting in the living room when, you know, they walked on the moon for the first time. But...you know, that was kind of interesting, but...no. [*all laugh*] I guess I haven't been influenced by many of those great things in life or horrible things in life. Darn...I've missed an opportunity.

**KG:** What did your parent's education consist of? I know your father went to college.

**JS:** So my father went to college – didn't really do much with his degree afterwards – actually worked for the Worcester Public Schools Department more on the...I don't know what it's called these days...but he worked more for the people who did, you know, he worked with the plumbers and the glaziers and the...not maintenance but the sort of behind-the-scenes, sort of keeping schools running and aspect of things. My mother didn't go to college. She worked all of her life: used to be a dance teacher...teaching dance.

**LB:** Like ballet, or...what kind of dance?

**JS:** Oh no – foxtrot, jive... you know if you wanted a dance lesson my mother would give you one. She used to teach little kids in the neighborhood. You know, you wanted to learn how to Charleston? My mother would teach you how to Charleston.

**LB:** That's cool.

**JS:** In this tiny little apartment that we were in. [*laughs*] Really tiny little apartment. But yeah, we used to think it was very...so we had a record player with you know, the 78 records before even the 33 albums came out and, you know they put a rec...my mother would put a record on and she'd be, you know, showing you how to do the foxtrot. And you know, to us that was like wow, isn't that cool? And I don't think it mattered to me...I don't think thought that she didn't go, you know, she didn't have any education past high school. That's what she did.

**LB:** Did you go through any difficult transitions in moving from childhood to adulthood?

**JS:** Difficult transitions...going away to college. I had never, in my life, been away from home overnight. Again, we grew up pretty poor. My father took a week of vacation-- we did five-day trips. You know, we went to an amusement park for a day and you went like, Whalom Park, which I don't even think is open anymore. And you went to you know, there was some zoo up in New Hampshire we used to go. We used to go to the beach -- we used to go to Point Judith, which I thought was named after me when I was growing up in Rhode Island, that had the biggest waves so we would go there for a day. I had never spent a day -- a night away from home. So I remember my first day of college I didn't...I would not go down to the cafeteria. I made my parents take me out to dinner. I just...just the thought of having to, you know...I was meeting my roommate for the first time. It wasn't like now, where you can meet your roommates ahead of time and stuff, and I was petrified. I think being in Boston, though, was a lot of fun. I mean it didn't take me too long to transition, but I remember just sort of and...and my parents basically picked my college. It was not where I thought I was gonna go, it's not where I had planned to go, it wasn't my top choice; it was actually the only school in Massachusetts I had applied to. 'Cause I just decided that I sort of wanted to...you know my sister went to the West Coast, I thought hey, I could go to the West Coast too, and I thought I was gonna go to USC [University of Southern California]. I had a huge scholarship to USC, and really at the eleventh hour, my mother sent in the acceptance letter because it was only an hour away. And she had already lost one daughter to the West Coast, and that wasn't gonna happen again. And so I just took that as my opportunity. As petrified as I was to leave home and not have that comfort of home the next morning when I got up...you know, it didn't take me too long to transition, to sort of say okay, this is my time away. [*laughs*] But I wasn't that far away, so my father could come and you know, pick me up for a weekend if I wanted to go home or...again I worked through college that first year, you know during his busy season [*laughs*]. Used to work a lot of weekends as well. But yeah...you know, that's the only sort of transition that I can remember: that I just really had never...really had never been away from home. Kind of odd, you know, 'cause today kids have a thousand opportunities to do stuff that we never had.

**LB:** When you were in school, how were girls typically treated by peers and by society?

**JS:** You know, I don't remember many differences. I think that there were certainly elementary. I do remember reflecting on this sort of as a high school, 'cause somebody had mentioned it to me. I didn't know that in -- now I don't know if this was Worcester specific, or if it was a Massachusetts sort of state teachers kind of thing: you could not teach school if you were married as a woman. And there used to be a faculty member here in this department who's wife was, and he was...he was the only person I think in Worcester's history who was a principal of an elementary school, a middle school, a junior high school -- when we used to have junior high schools before they became middle schools -- and a high school. And he said his wife used to be a teacher and when they got married, she couldn't teach anymore. It used to be...so I think back to, you know, all my teachers were you know, "Ms." this and "Ms." that. Nobody was a "Mrs." And I think when I was in elementary school there was still that feeling like, you could be a teacher, you could be a nurse, you could be a secretary, you could be a nun. I mean I think those

were the things people sort of chose from. And I remember in high school though, feeling like well that's the most ridiculous thing that I ever heard of. I was class president, the first person at South High School – the first girl at South High School to ever be the class president. I was also president of the French Club, and I...so again I think I took on some opportunities to do things like that. But...but I remember in elementary school thinking there weren't many options for Worcester, and I think that – or women – and I think that was just typical of...again I don't think Worcester is any different than anything else, but I think it took a while before I realized like, you know you can tell kids now that you can be anything you want to be. You know, nothing's stopping you from you know, being president of the United States other than, you know, the electoral college. *[laughs]* So...yeah, but I think elementary school definitely felt different about opportunities for me as a girl than I did once I got to high school.

**LB:** You have a lot of extracurricular activities. What do you think was the most significant one? Like, which mattered to you the most?

**JS:** What mattered to me the most...

**LB:** Or was...had the greatest impact on society as a whole that you contributed to?

**JS:** Well, I guess two things come to mind. I mean, one thing I definitely still, you know even in high school did a lot of – I don't think I...I can't remember doing much in the way of community service in elementary school. But I remember both my father and his mother, my paternal grandmother, were very active in their community. My father was very active from a veteran's reform war, the American Legion...kinds of things related to veterans he was very active in. My grandmother was very, very active in a local nursing home that was close to where she lived. She knit all the time, and so she would make afghans and, you know lap – you know blankets and what have you for people in the nursing home. And my younger sister and I...anytime she had extra yarn, she would make sets of mittens, and they were the lushest, the thickest mittens in the world. And I still, in my basement somewhere, still have the suitcase. My younger sister and I and my grandmother would sell these mittens in the neighborhood for a dollar a pair. And every winter, people would, like...couldn't wait 'till we came to their house, because it – colors galore. We had this big suitcase and they would buy, you know the new set of mittens. And my grandmother would give us a nickel for every – and she would use that money then to buy more yarn to make more afghans. And whenever she had, you know extra yarn leftover she would make the mittens, and I just remember sort of seeing her being sort of – I don't think...I didn't think of it as entrepreneurial. Not only was she doing community service, but then she was sort of, creating this tiny little sort of you know, business on the side for herself to do it, seeing my father being very active in sort of more military/veterans kinds of things. I mean I think, by the time I got to high school was much more interested in community service, and I think that's why when I got to college and this opportunity as this work study job, you know for an agency serving people who were blind and visually impaired came...you know to me that was – to me a natural place to go rather than sort of working in the cafeteria or working in a lab kinds of things. So I think, you know, community service has always been really important to me. But I think

I've digressed from your question...read your question again, 'cause I know I've digressed.

**LB:** I asked you what's the most significant extracurricular activity.

**JS:** Oh! Ah...thank you. I think, again, it's really what got me started in doing community service, and then to just be so involved in that to this day is really important. The other thing was Worcester used to have a lot of bowling alleys that they don't really have anymore, and candlepin bowling used to be really big – I think it started here in Worcester. You know, it's those tall, thin pins, not the ten-pin bowling with the big huge 14-pound ball...you know, these little candlepin balls. I was an avid bowler, and I was probably on about three or four bowling leagues in middle school and college. I won, actually, a lot of scholarship money bowling, believe it or not. I can't believe it to this day like, there were bowlers out there. I remember I was on TV many times...this was sort of my father's like, pride and joy that you know, that Judy was this bowler [*laughs*]. And I remember starting a bowling league in high school for students and faculty together, and it really opened up an opportunity to sort of get to know teachers at a very different level, and we would go bowling...you know we had a bowling league once a week, we had a big banquet at the end. And I really got to know teachers just quite differently; I mean I was a really good student, but I got to know them in a different way that also I think just caused me, like, not to be as afraid of – I think I remember when I got to college, sort of being afraid to you know, have a discussion with the teacher, or like to go...I didn't shy away from having an interaction where I thought it was...you know like a whole generation ahead of me. And I think that really made me much more comfortable around adults that I didn't...that I don't think I had before that time frame. A weird answer, I know. [*all laugh*] Good set of questions, who wrote these questions?

**KG:** Worcester Women's History [Project] created them.

**JS:** Do you get to kind of ad-lib them as you go along?

**LB and KG:** Yep.

**JS:** Excellent, I think it's a great set of questions.

**LB:** It better be recording. [*all laugh*]

**KG:** Based on your life experiences, what advice would give to women today and in the future?

**JS:** So, I think...I still think, unfortunately, we live in a time when women are treated differently than men, to a certain extent...expectation. I think there are times that there are also issues around you know, things like safety, that women have to watch out for. I know I worry about my daughter far more than I worry about my son, even as young adults. You know, her traveling to all these different worlds and you know, not knowing. I mean I think I would worry about anybody in general, but I think worry – you know women are just, I think more at risk. And so I

think that that hasn't really changed too much, and I think that 'cause of today's world and all the crappy stuff that happens, women have to be even more conscientious about their surroundings, about their healthcare. I think there are so many more things out there that women, you know, have risk for that men don't necessarily do that I think it's just something that's...that I still would advise say my daughter, you know, to be really careful about. For some reason I don't think about my son being at the same kind of risk. I think in terms of the work world there are certainly, education wise, you know, opportunities there that there's...I can't think of anything that's in school that a woman couldn't do as well as a man, you know, could do, or the same thing with a job. I still think, though, that if you want to balance work and life, there are decisions you have to make as a woman. I think, you know...I do work with a couple people here in the department – men who very specifically say, you know, they make a lot of conscious decisions about their work and the workload they take home based on wanting to be a 50/50, you know, provider for their children. And the fact that men sort of have to say that means they really have to work at that; it doesn't just...you know for women I think it's – but that's just sort of how we're wired, and I think it's just a natural thing that moms do things differently than dads do; the fact that the dad has to sort of carve out something to consciously, you know, make that decision, when a woman would do it – not that she's any better, but it's just a natural sort of part of who you are. But I think you have to have that conscious decision as you're making, you know, choices about what you're going to do and how much do you want to balance...or how much do you want to have a life outside of work, and how do you want to balance that? I think women have to make many more decisions than men do in terms of timing of having children – you know, and when that's gonna work well if you have a trajectory in place for yourself...you know the fact that we actually consciously think about that is really kind of odd [*laughs*] that women do that...that I don't think men ever think about that to the same degree that women do. So, I think advice is still about, you know, there's opportunities there that maybe never were there you know, decades ago. But if you really want to have a nice work/life balance, then you do have to consciously make decisions about that depending on where you sort of see yourself and those kind of weird questions: where do you think you're gonna be in ten years, or twenty years? Where do you want to be? And if you truly want to realistically be you know, something politically, you know, there's a lot of stuff you have to give up in order to get something else and so, I just think...you know, family first. I think we need to, you know, work to live, not live to work and so, that's just a conscious decision that I think women have to make.

**LB:** You should tell her about what that senator said...the one you posted on Facebook.

**KG:** Which one?

**LB:** The article you posted today? I liked it...

**KG:** Oh! There's a senator in Wisconsin who said that women shouldn't earn as much money because they don't understand the economy or something like that...like talking about how women are lesser than men. And it really surprised me that, in this society where we are right now [JS: It does, yeah.]...like, where they have that contraception debate, where should women



have access to this? Should people have abortions with ???, and all these women's rights that are being attacked. I'm sitting here and I'm like, why is there such an open war against women's rights? And I don't understand it. What is your take; do you think these things are groundless? Do you think that they have some kind of meaning? Do you think that it's just...babbling?

**JS:** I don't think it's babbling. I think that there definitely—I do think that women do bear the brunt of decisions of powers that be. I'll give you an example. So, I was telling somebody about this recently, 'cause we're coming upon the time of year where we're gonna be doing evaluations of our staff. And so you look at what were your goals last year that you sort of set forward for the year and have you been meeting those. And you know what things happen in a woman's life where maybe you didn't – I mean I – somebody who reports to me had a maternity leave last year. So clearly, you know, I can't say she wasn't productive – she was really productive, she had a baby! But in the work world, did she complete... I mean she completed what she was asked to do, but she missed out on some opportunities which perhaps, without consciously trying to carve out your maternity leave...you shouldn't have to work when you're on maternity leave. You shouldn't have to make up that stuff when you come back, but there are people who actually think that in order to get forward, you know, that was your choice to take off that time, even though it's a right that you have. And so I was telling her that I remember years ago when my second child was born, we were living in Rochester, New York. I didn't –you know, I had always gotten, you know, favorable and outstanding reviews, and I got sort of an average review one year and I was just really shocked. And I worked for a woman; she was my immediate supervisor and she'd had kids of her own, and she specifically said to me it was because I had been on maternity leave. And I thought well what's, you know, what do you mean? And she said well, you know, you weren't as produc – that was the term she used – you weren't as productive as your colleagues. And I said I was on maternity leave... I mean that's, you know, like I can't believe I'm being dinged for this. And she said well, when you think about the stuff that you've accomplished in volume, it was less than you know, x, y and z person. You know, in the offices next to me. And I said but I did everything that was asked, you know, to be done – I excelled at everything that I did. And she said, well, I made a choice not to give you certain projects because I was anticip – you know, I knew that you would be out for maternity leave, and so I had to reset deadlines and I said that that was a choice you made. You know, that here I was sort of being punished for taking that time off, and so in some ways, I don't think that's really changed in some regards, but do we have to own that ourselves? I think that is a societal issue, so for you know, a senator or anybody to sort of say that women just don't have the ability to do as much as men is just...you know...I think women should feel powerful that they get to give birth. *[laughs]* You know, that men can't do that. They have – they have the ability to do something that, you know, is far more important than any job here on this earth. It is, and so to think – but yes, to this day, do we still not have the same opportunities because we have to make choices in our life that men don't have to make? I mean a man who takes a paternity leave – I mean a great opportunity if your employer supports that, and why shouldn't an employer do that? – but still is not going to miss out on opportunities if what were marked on...if what we're credited for in our life are things related to our job and not how successful say, you know, we have been as parents. And that really is how you are evaluated in life: it's how money do you make? And what's your title

and your promotions and things like that. Then women are always going to be, you know, for the most part on average, a step behind men because they're the ones who are making other decisions to, you know, to continue this population that we have, and to contribute in a way that men can't contribute. So it is unfortunate that people sort of feel that way, but there laws out there that – again, you know, think of what European countries do in terms of you know, men and women get like, three, six months off from work. Everybody has a vacation policy that you know, far exceeds what we have here in the United States: that we're only marked by exactly, you know, what we produce you know, from the work standpoint. And you know, we don't treat parenting in the same way that we treat anything else that we do in life – we're not judged on that at all. We're not evaluated on that, unless you do something illegal, of course, or negligent in some way and then you're judged poorly. But you know, you're not judged in...you know, nobody says to me oh, you did a great job with your kids, but how many papers did you publish? [laughs] So, yeah, I think there's a lot of discussion out there that's...who's making those laws? Is it predominately men? Until recently, did we have any women on the Supreme Court except for Sandra Day O'Connor? No. But I ramble. [all laugh]

**KG:** Now, do you feel that you have a legacy?

**JS:** Personally? Yes. I think I have done, you know, this is gonna sound terrible. I have done a lot in Massachusetts around vision, you know, for kids who are visually impaired around school issues. I've taken the Worcester School District to court and won. You know, I've done a lot of things on the state level, both with sort of state agencies and like, the Mass Commission as well as private non-profits, like the Massachusetts Association for the Blind. So, I mean there are people who haven't met me, but say oh, I know who Judy Savageau is around vision stuff. So I think that's, you know, am I proud of that? Absolutely. And I think anybody whose parented... has a, you know there's a legacy right there and you know, what you hope your kids are going to do and achieve, and things that they'll carry on that you've started. So, but I certainly think in the vision world, I know that I...have had an impact so, that's really good. That makes me feel good.

**KG:** Thank you, you're going to be remembered.

**JS:** Yeah.

**KG:** 'Cause people are gonna know that you're...who you are because of the work that you did. I think that concludes our interview for the day, so...

**LB:** You didn't ask about the hobbies. Do you want to?

**KG:** I think we've covered a lot.

**LB:** Okay.

**JS:** We did cover a lot-

**KG:** Oh yeah, we didn't go back to the magnets.

**LB:** That's what I meant by hobbies.

**JS:** Oh my magnets, yeah.

**KG:** So, what about all these magnets that seem to have traveled from around this globe?

**JS:** So, you know, I have not taken the opportunity personally to do a lot of travel. I'm not someone who likes airplanes, even though you know, they say they're safer than driving in your car. Flying over an ocean was like, a petrifying thing for me, even though I couldn't really see the ground when I'm above land. But there was something about knowing that I was crossing the entire Pacific Ocean that just flipped me out. My doctor actually gave me a prescription for it and said, just fill this, and have it with you in case you need it. And the minute I got on the plane I was fine; it was this anticipation, which I think is what a lot of fear is about – is just anticipating what's gonna happen rather than what happens.

**LB:** So you don't mind flying over land? Just ocean?

**JS:** I mean, I don't like flying in general, but flying over land is far safer to me than flying over an ocean...which is...intellectually makes no sense.

**LB:** Yeah. [*laughs*]

**JS:** I fully understand that, and I own that. [*laughs*] It makes no sense. So as I said before, my daughter's had an opportunity that she, you know, decided before she settles down, she wants to see the world. She wants to, you know, she decided to do some teaching, 'cause that's an easy way to get into countries and work in medical clinics. So I've certainly been to Costa Rica, where she was. I've been to South Korea, then we both went to Japan. She's now in Africa, which I didn't want to go to, so we went to Istanbul...probably have another trip coming up sometime soon before she comes home. But I have a lot of students: UMass has a great international medical education program. Probably fifty percent of our students either in the first and/or the fourth year. That first year, that summer between first and second year is the only summer their ever gonna have off for like, the next you know, at least medical school, and then three years of residency. So many students – we have this program we'll travel to, we've had students go to about 70 different countries. And then in the fourth year as one of their electives, often many of them will go back either for language emersion or to work in a global health environment – to work in a clinic somewhere. I have a student who just left and is in Nepal now for a month, and then is going to be working on a Navy ship somewhere in the South Pacific for a month, which is also a pretty cool experience. So I get my students not only to...you know, everybody knows I like to cover this file cabinet with magnets, which grew out of a huge collection I have at home. Yeah I get pretty interesting things that people bring me from all over

the world, so I get to go to a few places, but these are mostly from people who have traveled for more than I. So I try and think about, wouldn't it be great to go to all of these places? Not that I want to fly to most of them, but...yeah, I think it's kind of fun to think about. And it's really, you know, look at these magnets, they're all different. You know, some of them I know are from airports, and others are from...you know these two here from Kenya – actually one of my colleagues just got back from Kenya – I've three students now in Uganda and two students just went to Tanzania. But you can see the difference in, you know, these are probably kind of airport things...and he said there were just, you know, people who kind of will do little craftwork, and this is how they make you know, a few dollars here and there. These are definitely just, you know, homemade kinds of magnets, which are very different from these magnets. So yeah, they're all kind of different in many ways, and some of them are much more sophisticated than others. I think it's actually pretty cool and it's a great conversation piece for people who come in. I love this magnet from this cow that says, "Please eat chicken". [laughs] Some of these magnets actually make noise. I won't make noise here, but some of them – the file cabinets and the keyboards talk, the bagpipes...actually I think the battery's gone in that one. These bagpipes used to play, and some then do all different kinds of things.

**LB:** They're both four o'clock.

**JS:** Isn't that kind of interesting? Yes that's my little Swiss – I have four, you know, different people have brought me things from Switzerland. This one actually, if you tighten it up...but I don't wanna waste the batteries so I leave it loose in there. But here's my little Switzerland thing. See, some things are by country, some things are by who brings me things...but it is kind of a great – it's an interesting thing and the more, you know, UMASS also has...I don't know how new the program is or how...but it's a pretty established program in global health. We have a lot of people who do research in global settings, so it's not just that students and residents have an opportunity to train or to travel: there are many people doing research. You know, looking at how healthcare is delivered here in this country versus healthcare in other countries. And so, I think UMASS is really thinking—Massachusetts is actually, it's either seventh or eighth in the country in immigrant populations – that we have people coming in from a thousand different places. And so when you think about providing healthcare, in Worcester here, for example, or in any of the big cities and Lowell and Lawrence with the population they have, and in Springfield and in Boston and in, you know, Fitchburg, they have large, you know, contingents of various populations. You know there are language issues, which really affect people's healthcare...you know, people come with different cultural beliefs around healthcare, so trying to think about how you would provide say, general primary care, or you know as an example we had a resident who was having a lot of trouble with women in...at one of the health centers around just breast and cervical cancer screening, because in Albania you did not do pap exams in women. You know, you didn't do certain exams - it was just culturally, you know, not something that happens. So trying to train medical students and residents to provide healthcare to this very culturally diverse population we have here in Worcester. And for students it's that emersion is really where you learn it. I mean you can, you know, work with a certain here, but living among that population you really learn it a little differently when you fully immerse yourself in it. So that's why

UMASS has really kept up its medical education program, where students have lots of opportunities to travel and live among different cultures and communities...and I benefit from getting magnets. [*laughs*]

**KG:** All right, I think that concludes the interview.

**JS:** Well this has been a pleasure! Thank you for including me.