

Interviewee: Edith Lichtenstein Morgan Froehlig
Interviewee's Guest: Guy Froehlig
Interviewers: Andrew Crawford and Mildred Collins
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Overseen by Dr. Carl Robert Keyes and Dr. Lucia Knoles, Assumption College

Abstract: Edith Lichtenstein Morgan Froehlig was born October 20th, 1930 to Jewish parents in Munich, Germany. Edith's life journey has taken her from Germany to Switzerland, France, Portugal, and across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. First living in the US Midwest, Edith eventually settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. During the past 51 years of her life, Edith has triumphed over many challenges. She was forced from her home at an early age to escape the Nazi occupation. Edith has had to adjust to life in America, while finding a job, establishing a career, and living her life to the fullest. Although never having her own biological children, Edith has taken in many foster children, showcasing her maternal abilities, as well as being an educator in several communities. Edith is also a public servant, serving on school committee boards and has been an active member of multiple political organizations during her residence in Worcester. Edith has learned from her own life experiences to put a heavy emphasis on education. She leads by example, as she has earned multiple certifications in the educational field, believing that education is the best way to make this country a better place. Edith is a woman of action, never content to wait in the wings for someone else to be an agent for change.

Key Quotation:

"It's the education system and that our biggest budget buster and the State has not come forth with anywhere near the amount of money or support that it should. We're always left behind, money and you know a whole rethinking what the curriculum is and getting rid of these tests. But the tests should be testing what the curriculum is actually teaching and not what the names of the Civil War generals were, but what the Civil War was about. It doesn't matter who the generals were, what matters is that an awful amount of our students cannot give you an intelligent appraisal of what were the causes of the Civil War because we are still fighting some of that stuff now."

AC: Are you ready to be interviewed and recorded?

EF: I'm all set.

AC: Alright, alright, ready to go. So, to start things off there's some general information, family background history and your time in Worcester, so first question, what is your full name, including both your maiden name and your married name?

EF: Okay, my maiden name Edith Lichtenstein L-I-C-H-T-E-N-S-T-E-I-N is the maiden name, and then, I was married once and my name was Morgan and now it is Froehlig and so that's all. Edith Lichtenstein Morgan Froehlig. I can write it all out for you if you want.

AC: No, no, I appreciate that. When were you born?

EF: In October 1930.

AC: So, you have a birthday coming up that's great.

EF: Yes, 88th birthday is coming up.

AC: Congratulations on that. Have you ever been married?

EF: Yes, I was married originally for 26 years. When I was in college I got married in my senior year and that lasted 26 years and I got divorced in 1976. And then I was single for a long time and five years ago I married Guy. So, we got married when we were in our 80s.

AC: So, what is the name of your current husband?

EF: Guy Froehlig. This is Guy Froehlig.

AC: Pleasure to meet you sir.

GF: Nice to meet you.

AC: Yeah. Do you have any children?

EF: Not biological children. I was a foster parent for a long time starting in 1957, I think, yes 1957, but I was teaching all the time so I usually just took in adolescents because they would be in school when I was teaching. Just once I think I did a newborn baby for a few days because the baby foster parents were not available, but ordinarily I had kids anywhere from, say, ten, 11 years old, to 17.

AC: So, I am assuming no grandchildren?

EF: I'll have to explain, the last few years I was with the First Lutheran—no, it was Catholic Charities and then Lutheran Social Services had the unaccompanied minor program that meant that they were finding homes here in America for kids who came to America without family all alone. So, I had Cambodian and Vietnamese kids it just depended on where the war was, and, I think I had one Ethiopian one for a short time, but I was his third and last foster parent. So, they've married and since some of them no longer have families over there, I'm sort of their grandparent, but since they aged out of the system although some of them have stayed with me after that, I did not legally adopt any of them because we didn't know for sure with the upheavals in their countries they didn't really know whether their parents were alive or not and so I didn't go into the adoption process. But they call me grandma, and so I am grandma to two Vietnamese

with Cindy and one Vietnamese grandson with Fung(sp), and two Cambodian grandchildren with my Cambodian kids that live in Shrewsbury. They live mostly around here, Shrewsbury, and Worcester and I think Auburn,

AC: Very impressive.

EF: Yeah, they're around.

AC: So, your family background like what cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

EF: Well, I was born in Germany, so I guess the basic culture would be German, but my father's side of the family were Jews coming from well, I guess they worked their way west. Probably, started out at one time or another in Russia and due to the pogroms and stuff in Russia moved. My dad was born in what was then East Prussia, but it has changed hands so much, I'm not sure what it is called now, but the family moved steadily west and ended up in West Germany. He went to school in Berlin, law school, and then got a judgeship in Lindbergh, Germany, which is in the very western part of Germany. And my dad married my mother there in 1926, I think, and she converted to Judaism before she married him. So, the culture was German, Jewish, and then when we fled Germany in 1933. We ended up in France for eight and a half years and so the French culture, I went to elementary school, finished elementary school in France. I went to preschool in Paris at the age of three, and went to the elementary school system in France. You can do it in anywhere from six to 12 years. It's different than here. You don't fail a year, if you don't quite make it in one year, there's the year where it would be like A and B, and if you don't quite make it and you need some more work you go to B session and then you move onto the second one, so I made it all the way through at the end of the six years, but we were in Paris or the outskirts of Paris and on June 12, 1940 the Germans occupied Paris and we marched, we moved, we walked out of Paris, and walked for about 11 days and covered about maybe 200 miles and ended up in south central France. The Germans, they declared an armistice sometime, I think it must've been August of 1940, and so we were in the unoccupied or what was left unoccupied part of France, but we knew we had to get out. So, I can fill some of that in, but I'm just going really quickly over all of it.

AC: Of course.

EF: We found my father who had been in a French camp. When the Germans attacked France, we were Germans, and they didn't know who were spies and who were real refugees, so they took all, what they call male enemy aliens, only the men in the family. They left my mother and my brother and me alone and so after we could find each other in south central France we had to get out. A Swiss family gave us their life savings so we could buy tickets out. There was no way out of Europe at the time because the Germans, well the Italians were not letting anyone through because they were part of the axis. We couldn't get to Israel because even though England had been granted a mandate to make a homeland there for Jews they were turning ships back either to Europe to be killed or to be interned in camps in Cyprus and we didn't want to do

that so with the money that our Swiss friends gave us, my mother was able to get tickets for us out of Lisbon, Portugal and we came to America Labor Day 1941. Two months before Pearl Harbor. We were in at the last minute because the American quotas were already filled and [President] Roosevelt created a special quota that we came in under called political refugees. So we got in here and we had to float around in New York Harbor for a few days because nobody works on Labor Day. And from New York the Quakers—I'm not sure how the Quakers got hold of us, but the Quakers picked us up in New York and brought us to Iowa to Scattergood hostel in Iowa and a we stayed there. It was a special project with the Quakers, an experiment to, rather than have refugees end up in one of the big city ghettos in America, New York or that, to get us out to the, I guess you call it the hinterland, or middle America, and we stayed there ten months We learned English and my parents learned American history and then the Quakers found us a sponsor in St. Paul, Minnesota. We were transported to St. Paul, Minnesota and my dad worked and we went to school and long story short I went to McCallister (sp). College where my dad taught and got my BA degree there and ah, I don't know, where do you want me to stop?

AC: No, this is all good. It covers everything.

EF: So we went to, a, we lived in, in Minnesota for some time and I went to Macalester College and my senior year I got married to an American from Kansas [laughs] who was born in Oklahoma. That was a whole different culture again. After I got my teaching certificate I started an almost 40-year career in public education. Some of it teaching and some of it in administration and then of, course, in Worcester I got on the school committee after I retired. And that's where I am now. Now I am retired again.

AC: That's all very impressive, so just to kind of pick up some of the more specific details of what you just talked about, where, what are all the places that you've lived during your life?

EF: Oh, God, we started out in Lindbergh, Germany, spent a month when we fled Germany, spent a month or two in Switzerland. Couldn't stay there because we didn't have any money and you don't just wander into Switzerland, they're pretty careful, but they directed us. They told us that if you go over the border into France, go to the nearest policeman and tell them you are a refugee and they will put you in touch with refugee committees and so we were brought to Paris and then we got moved to the outskirts of Paris, in one of the suburbs. Then we lived in __south central France and then we spent a couple of days in Lisbon and got on the boat over here It was an old freighter that the Portuguese had captured from the Germans in World War I so it wasn't overly comfortable, but at least we didn't get sunk in the Atlantic. We lived in New York for a maybe a month or two and we lived near Central Park West. I think I went to PS 92 for a short time, but I didn't learn any English because half the class was immigrants and so the teacher put a couple of German and French immigrants next to me and they translated so I didn't have to learn any English. And then the Quakers took us to Iowa near West Branch, Iowa. A little teeny, teeny town, there was an old Quaker farm and it had been converted and they had a number of refugee families there. Went to school there for about one year, ten months. Then went to St. Paul, Minnesota and then moved to Minneapolis and that's another place, but that

Twin Cities, it's almost the same place. Then when I got married I taught in Ida, Michigan. I got education credits at Kent State in Ohio, and then, let's see, lived in Ohio for a little while. Worked at an Achievement Center for Disturbed Children outside Cleveland, that was Ohio also. And different places in Michigan and then we came to Massachusetts because he got a grant at Clark University to do research in psychology, and so we lived in Shrewsbury, and then bought a house in Worcester. And that is the same house that I'm in now.

AC: You lived in that same house the last ...

EF: Since 1967.

AC: Since 1967.

EF: That's the longest time I've ever been in any one place.

AC: What part of Worcester is it specifically?

EF: You know where Hahnemann Hospital is?

AC: I do not personally.

EF: Okay, let me think. It's northeast Worcester.

AC: Okay. Nice, nice. So, what are the names of your parents?

EF: Julius is my dad's name, Julius Lichenstein. And my mother's name is - do you want the whole. she had two middle names. Elizabeth Clara Augusta Kellner was her maiden name. K-E-L-L-N-E-R. Then, then when she married she was Lichenstein. I've got one brother he is deceased, Louis - L-O-U-I-S, Louis F. Lichenstein.

AC: Nice

EF: That's it, we're a small family.

AC: Yes, of course. So now back to your current living situation in Worcester. What's the neighborhood like generally.

EF: Well, the house I'm in was built in 1890. It's a little, short street, only about two blocks long at the most. And it dead ends onto Green Hill Park, so I am two doors away from Worcester's biggest park. I tell everybody that I have the best of all possible worlds because I have all the amenities of a big city within a five-minute drive from where I am. I'm two doors away from Worcester's largest park which is 450 acres Green Hill and we're less than half a mile away from the expressway, from I-290, so that means we can get to Boston very quickly. And

the other way downtown, we're just off Lincoln Street which is one of the main thoroughfares in Worcester. The Morgan Funeral Home and the fire house are right there within a block of where we live so I tell everybody that I have the best of all possible worlds because I've got all the advantages of the big city and also all of the advantages of a little town out in the country. So, it is a perfect location. When I moved in, in 1957, that neighborhood was pretty much all Irish Catholics, with large families, so those homes all have umpteen bedrooms like our house does and they don't build them like that anymore. But, little by little Hahnemann Hospital started chewing up some of the neighborhood and making parking lots, and expanding, and a lot of those old families moved out. So now the neighborhood is, well let's see, we have Albanians across the street, we have a Dominican family kitty corner from us, a new, I don't know where they come from, middle Americans. [] is next to us and he still from the old Irish family that there are three generations living in that house. And we have a Peruvian family just down the block and so, it's a very, what shall I say, mixed culturally, very mixed neighborhood, but we all seem to get along alright. We know each other. Everybody maintains their place. We talk to each other. There's a new family renting, that I think, I'm not sure, I think their Iraqis or from some place in the Middle East, but still they're new and they kind of keep to themselves and the older folks don't speak English so it is hard. I know the people in the next block also. So years ago we established a neighborhood association and I was president for a long time and finally, when my vice president, first vice president, second vice president, treasurer and secretary all passed away and I was the only one left we kind of disbanded the association, but we did a lot of good things in the neighborhood for more than ten years anyway.

AC: Impressive. So, your connection to Worcester and how you came to it and eventually live here was through your husband, correct?

EF: Yes, because he got the research grant, he was working for a PhD and Clark gave him a research grant to work on his PhD. And at first I worked in Shrewsbury and we rented there and when this deal—I don't even know how this deal came up—the family owned the house was getting divorced and it had gone through a number of hands and we got it very cheaply when it needed a lot of work. So, we got a very good deal on it and basically living in the house cost us less than it cost us to rent in Shrewsbury so we moved here and bought the house.

AC: Nice, that's good. What challenges do you think Worcester faces or what do you think you would change if you had the power about Worcester, what would you change about it or what would you like to see improved?

EF: Well, my main interest of course has always been the school system. And Worcester is—you know the surrounding towns don't provide all the services that the city does and that city school does so our schools tend to get the all of the kids that nobody else around can deal with and so we have to have all special programs and so on. So, that looks like we have lower scores and so on which is not really a fair comparison. I guess one of my biggest challenges would be to get rid of the MCAS test because of the really miserable unfair way of assessing what kids know and what kids can do and substitute a testing program that actually comes back to the

school so that you can teach them what it is that—you know, you teach to the test but the test has to be valid and it has to be a test that you can teach to and that tests the things that they really supposed to know. I'd like to see the curriculum changed around a whole lot. I'm appalled at how little most people know about how the government functions. They don't vote, they don't understand what primaries do, and I think that needs to start in the schools. Now years ago we what I guess you call it social studies for a lack of a better word, but it was started in kindergarten at a curriculum where first you became aware of who you are and all the things about you, and then it went to family, and then it went to neighborhood, and then it went to city, and then it went to state, and finally federal government and eventually, hopefully by the time you got out of high school, you got to the global community, other countries and it was a well-articulated sequence. Somehow or other all of that stuff got lost. And, American history was not properly taught either and we learned a lot more about that and I'd like to see that really done. Also, when people ask what the best educational system is, the old answer was it's Mark Hopkins on one end of the log and a student on the other end because a well-rounded renaissance person who knew a lot about everything concentrating on the kid fully, probably can teach him more than you could learn in a classroom of 30, 40 or 50 kids. You know where everyone is going, and the teacher can't keep track of where everybody is, so I would like to see every student that enters with an individual education plan which you are getting if you are in special needs. So that we know where you are when you come in and the school, instead of the kids being ready for school, it's the school should be ready for kids.

AC: Right.

EF: Because their variations are so wide at five years of age you get—I had kids in kindergarten, everything from a vocabulary of 500 words who couldn't put together a real sentence to kids that you could sit in a corner and they could read books there and they would come and ask you once in a while what's this word. So, the range is a whole lot wider than we want to admit, so I'd like to see that individualized. Also, when I first came to Worcester, the old school buildings looked like prisons. They were dark, the dark brick, there's no planting around it, there was some black top maybe, but there, there were no colorful playgrounds, no indication that human beings could survive in there, but since then you now we've done a lot to ah, to improve the schools, we've got a lot of new schools, but I don't think the building is nearly as important as the staffing you put in there and you know what you're teaching. So that's what I would work on because Worcester spends about 57 percent of its total income on. Its education system and that our biggest budget buster and the state has not come forth with anywhere near the amount of money or support that it should. It is supposed to fund any mandated programs at 100 percent and they have not done that and so we're always left behind. So, money and a whole rethinking what the curriculum is and getting rid of these tests. National Association of Educational Progress tests a sample of kids constantly, so we have a kind of comparison, but the tests should be testing what the curriculum is actually teaching and not what the names of the Civil War generals were, but what the Civil War was about. It doesn't matter who the generals were, what matters is that an awful amount of our students cannot give you an intelligent

appraisal of what were the causes of the Civil War because we are still fighting some of that stuff now. And so, it needs to be, in-depth understanding of what our real history is.

AC: Well, my bias is showing because I'm an elementary education myself.

EF: Oh, wonderful. Good, so where are you going to teach?

AC: Wherever I can. I'd like to be in Worcester to be honest with you.

EF: Well, you know, especially at the elementary level there's usually a shortage of male teachers because that tends to be the province of the females, but I think it's always good when there's one or two or three, or four or more. We don't get a lot of them so that'd be good if you come into the elementary school.

AC: I appreciate that. So, what distinct characteristics makes Worcester the place it is that you see?

EF: Well, for me, the reason that I stayed and the reason I like Worcester is that Worcester has all the amenities of a big city, but it doesn't have the high rises and the kind of anonymity that big cities provide. Worcester is a bunch of little ethnic enclaves, but it's also got in a miniature kind of way all of the cultural, and all of the recreational, and so on things that are good for raising a family and it's not a high crime area, but we do have our little gangs here and there, but generally I've always felt safe in Worcester. We don't lock our doors and people wander in and out, but we don't have a problem, so I think having all the advantages of a small town and all of the advantages of the big city I think is what is predominantly attractive I think about Worcester. For a long time, Worcester was kind of stuck in one place on a level, it had the impression, the smell, the feel, and the look of an old mill town, which it was. But then when the industrial revolution stopped and now we have, I don't know what revolution we are in now, but when the industrial revolution was over and a lot of factories closed or left, Worcester had to reinvent itself. And now, I think, we're in probably one of the greatest medical centers around, the, you know, if you really can access it, the medical care in this city is probably among the best in the country and as you get older that matters because things start to things start to kind a go wrong and fail. So we have had very good experiences, I think, we have certainly availed ourselves of that, because he was a runner and he had to have a hip replacement after so many marathons and then he's got stents in his heart, and they've got a new prostate cancer treatment that they are trying and seems to work very well because it brought his numbers way down. So, we've had good experiences. It's a huge bureaucracy and you have to learn how to get through it, but the benefits in this state top most of the ones that I know.

AC: So, what do you think a general experience for a woman is like in Worcester would you feel?

EF: Well, we've had a lot of revolting [by] women in Worcester. A lot of things started here, aside from the fact that historically the American Revolution really started here, but we've had suffragettes here. I think women can make it here. I don't think there is anything really stopping us. Well, we always, like everywhere else in the country, we have to battle for those things, but I think it is a good place for women and girls to develop here. In a microcosm we have some of the same problems. We have to battle, but we haven't had to battle to get female teachers, we haven't—well, I think female policemen are a new thing, female firemen are probably a ways down the line, but by and large—and the colleges here, the ten or 11 colleges in or on the outskirts of Worcester have always provided a lot of really well educated women. And of course, Esther Howland developed the Valentine card, the the commercial card business so we've developed a lot of things you wouldn't have expected to be developed here.

AC: Nice. Did you attend college at all?

EF: Yes. I got my bachelor's degree at Macalester College and wherever we were I always went to whatever college was near us. I took some courses and taught a couple of courses in Ann Arbor, Michigan State and I took a lot of courses. While I was teaching my superintendent said that on the salary schedule if I have a degree that's more money because I had all these credits, but if I don't have the credits in a degree program then I don't get paid extra for that. So, I took a few courses and got my master's degree in reading at Worcester State [College] in 1977 and then I got a bunch of credits after that. But I just never could afford the time or the money to go on beyond that and there wasn't really that much in it for me. I did okay without it. So yes, I got a bachelor's, master's, plus.

AC: Alright. That's amazing. What do you think your challenges were in your whole educational life would you say? As a student.

EF: Well, it was always pretty easy. I took a lot of extra credits when I was at Macalester and I graduated cum laude anyway and I did it in three and a half years instead of four. So, I always loved it. I enjoyed it. I'm not a party animal and Macalester College fortunately didn't have fraternities or sororities either, and the student body at that time, I think, was under 2,000 students, so everybody knew each other. And my dad was on the faculty, so I was a faculty brat so I didn't have to pay tuition, which was nice. I always enjoyed the college environment and that's one of the reasons I came here to WISE [Worcester Institute for Senior Education at Assumption College] even when I was in my, almost my 80s because I just like being able to explore ideas and learn new things. I think it keeps your brain alive.

AC: Of course. What's your job history been like? You said you been involved in education.

EF: Well, when I got out of college, I had a liberal arts B.A. and that doesn't really equip you to do anything [laughs]. I was expecting to go on, but I got married and, he fell off a freight dock and injured his back, and so I had to go to work right out of college and that was in the summer. So, I started out working for Montgomery Ward—they don't exist anymore, but

they're like Sears—as a complaint adjuster. Started out, at I think it was at 82 cents an hour and then I got up to a \$1.02 an hour. And then, well, my work history was we got a job as cottage parents in Cleveland in a treatment center for disturbed kids and we were the cottage parents to six girls, adolescent girls aged, between the ages of 11 and 16. We stayed there two years and then I got a teaching job. In those days there was a big teacher shortage and so people with a B.A. could start teaching and take some courses, supervision on Saturdays, and it involves a story, but we ended up spending the summers at Kent State. Then, at that time, it was, I think, \$29 a credit or something, so I took a bunch of education credits in the summer and enough to become certified. Michigan and Ohio at that time had agreements that certificates in those states would also be valid here so I didn't have to start all over when I came, they were transferable. So, I taught in Ida, Michigan in a little bitty, almost rural school system, where my first husband who's passed away, was the school psychologist for a whole region there and I taught elementary school there. And then he got a job college teaching at Alma, Michigan, and then from there we came down to—well in the summers we were at Kent State [University], and then we came down to Massachusetts. I taught in Shrewsbury for three or four years and [laughs] I left there and taught at Quabbin Regional School System. I don't know if you know where it is, it is five little towns, Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, Oakham, and New Braintree, that are regionalized and they have one high school, but each of the towns has its own elementary school. Started out teaching elementary school in Oakham, then a job for a reading coordinator and reading director opened up in Barre at the central office. I took that and I stayed there quite a number of years and directed the Title 1, Chapter 1, Title 1 again, federal programs for remedial reading. So, let's see, then I retired from there.

AC: Then you said you had positions on the School Committee in Worcester?

EF: Yes, I ran—well, it was funny, I decided I could do something since I, as a teacher, they don't listen to you, the last ones they ask about anything you could do to improve the schools. So, I thought maybe if I'm in the administration I might have a little more say. That didn't really turn out that way, and I didn't want to be in administration like the superintendent and so on. I liked doing curriculum and ranking the teachers and so on. So, when I retired and I don't even remember know who talked me into it, I hadn't been in politics, I ran for the School Committee and there are six positions and I came in sixth, seventh, but luckily Harriet Chandler was on the School Committee then. I don't know if you know who she is, she was the president of the Massachusetts Senate, she worked her way up, she lives around, near here somewhere. She's a west-side Worcesterite. So, she left early and since I was seventh I was moved into her position. So I had that position. The next time I ran again I was seventh again and this time Eddie Augustus who is now the City Manager moved out of that position on the School Committee and he took a job with the Education Department in Washington, D.C. so I moved into his position. I did a part of one term and then I did a part of another term and then I ran again and I finally got in, squeaked in and did an entire term. And after that term, I ran again and I lost by 200 and some votes. So, I stopped running. Enough was enough. I've been retired doing various things like community stuff. Right now, he and I are active in the Worcester Democratic Ward Three. He's the treasurer and I'm the secretary. And so that's where we are at now.

AC: So what drove you to a career in education?

EF: Oh, boy, [laughs]. Well, I don't come from a long line of teachers because my dad was a judge and my mother was a homemaker. She did have two years of college, but in her side of the family there were the psychiatrists, and doctors, and my father's brother was a neurosurgeon. I think I sort of just fell into it because there was a shortage of teachers and it turned out I liked it. I really enjoyed it. I had good experiences in school. We always went to public schools, and so I started and continued.

AC: Interesting. Kind of your home life. What were your primary responsibilities in terms of housework or child care?

EF: Well, this house that we're in now has three floors with ten or 11 rooms with the living space all on the first floor and I do all of that. Although recently I had someone come once a month to wash all of the floors because I just can't, oh God, it's just too much. I do the gardening and he has an engineering degree, so he fixes the electrical stuff and over the years we have figured out we have people that fix the various things in the house, but generally I do the cooking.

GF: Yeah, you do a lot of cooking.

EF: I do the cooking. I do the entertaining. I do what cleaning is done. I take care of the cat. I've always had cats over the years and I took care of the kids.

AC: Nice. In terms of your whole experience, what do you think are the pros and cons of the paths that you've chosen?

EF: I really don't think of anything else I would rather have done than teach because quite by accident that is what I wanted to do, but once I started it, it came out of four years of a liberal arts education with a lot of learning and a lot of things I could have done, but no specific skills for a particular career. I probably would do that again. I might make some different decisions about what grade levels I would teach, but I would do that again. As far as living, I think, my first marriage we moved 17 times and I don't like moving [laughs], but, you know, every time he got acclimated some place after three years he got tired of it and wanted to move. I did that and finally when I got to Worcester after the 17th time, I said I'm not doing it again, and I didn't. I stayed in Worcester and he went out to Greenfield. So, what are the disadvantages?

AC: Sure.

EF: Well, if I saw something that really was a disadvantage I didn't just sit there and take it and go on. I know in Shrewsbury the reason that I left was I was president of the Teachers Association and it was the year that the state passed the collective bargaining law and for the first

time public employees like teachers had a chance to bargain about our wages and conditions of work. I think teachers were inserted into the legislation as an after thought because I guess it was mainly for blue collar workers and so forth. So we ended up in court with the school committee because they were not terribly keen on giving up any power to the teachers and we insisted. We signed the first contract, but it took us 24 months, I think, to get it signed, but we finally got it signed. Then I decided I didn't really agree with the philosophy of the school committee so that's when I left and went out to Quabbin. I didn't need to do it in Quabbin because by that time the Teachers Associations were well organized. Women teachers got the same pay as men teachers. All teachers were in the same scale so we didn't have to fight that battle. And my mother was a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and when we were in Minnesota and that group was working, I think we were integrating counters. You wouldn't think a northern state like Minnesota would have that kind of problem, but I guess they were working for peace, they were working for human rights and all that stuff. So, I grew up in an environment where that was always done. So, I probably could have done a little more if I branched out and my mother always thought we should have taken in kids where there was a lot better chance of succeeding, always. But I think we succeeded as well as we could because we fell into taking foster care quite by accident. There was not a plan, but I think nowadays I would've planned it better and still would deal with adolescents because that's the group that nobody really deals with too much. They're more difficult, it's a little late, but I think we succeeded fairly well. And I would do that again. So, quite by accident I discovered things I really liked to do and I wouldn't want to do anything else. I had a major in art and I kind of wished I spent more time developing that, but I'm more comfortable doing a lot of different things than going down one path. I guess, different strokes for different folks, [laughs] more or less. I always enjoyed doing a lot of different things, being in a lot of different places, being in a lot of different groups. I've traveled some. Because we went to Kansas to visit his family just recently. I had hoped that we could take a train tour all around. Like a EuroRail pass where you get a pass and can go off and on, off and on the train, you can go all over and it is good for a certain period of time. And I thought you could do that in America, but I discovered that we don't have a train system that does that. We have a bunch of little companies here, here, and here and you have to transfer from one to the other and you know they don't connect and so it was a nightmare trying to figure out a way to get to see his sister in Arizona, to get to see those states that we hadn't seen before, and then to visit a fraternity brother of his in Santa Monica, California and to visit my niece's kids and her husband. She passed away, so my niece's kids in Sebastopol north of San Francisco in California and then to take a train all the way up north to Portland where we had to stay overnight because they don't connect and then take the train all the way across the north United States to Minnesota. That you can do. It is all one. And we got an appreciation of how far behind we are in this country with rail travel because we're on a passenger train you could sleep there, there's a little bathroom, little sink, and so on in the little cabin, but it so minuscule, and so cramped. And the train every so often had to pull over on the siding because freight trains have priority because there is only one track. I've never been in a place, in any civilized country, where they have one track. [Laughs]. So, we've got a long, long ways to go.

EF: I had envisioned a trip in a fast bullet train taking us through the country. Ah, that's not what it's like. So anyway, we went there a couple of years ago when we did that tour. And then we flew back from—well, we visited a fraternity brother of his in Wisconsin, but we rented a car, didn't we, and we flew back here. So, we flew from Boston to Arizona, then we took little train jaunts all the way to Minnesota. We are planning now, we hoping maybe we can take a Mississippi River cruise.

AC: So, politics, you mentioned that you were part of an organization here in Worcester?

EF: I was for a long, long time and I think you were [her husband] non-political or apolitical? Just ignored it.

GF: Apolitical

EF: Which is sort of typical for engineers and that sort thing. They're into things. But we were independent—well not independent, unenrolled for a long time. So that you could vote for individuals and work for individuals, and individual things. And then, after a while, I got the message that being unenrolled you're sort of a voice in the wilderness, all by yourself, and so I turned the Democratic Party, with the caveat to them that I would still be able to tell you what is wrong and criticize. So, I joined and I've been active in the ward, active in the city committee, and we're still doing that. And now, of course, I'm active with a lot of organizations that are protesting what is going on. I'm just appalled.

AC: Could you, could you name those organizations?

EF: Well, let's see, we contribute to Common Cause, you know Nader's bunch. There are a whole bunch of them, but they don't come to mind at the moment.

AC: Of course.

EF: We were very active in the Bernie Sanders campaign. And we also go to State Democratic Conventions every year. I've been going for years and he went with me the last couple of years. So I keep my..

MC: I'm sorry, I've got to get going. I have to meet with the tutor and then I have a class after that.

EF: Okay, well, nice to see you.

MC: You too.

EF: Hope you got the information that you need.

AC: Yup.

EF: They'll get it

MC: We've got a lot of information. You are really good at this.

EF: I'm around here, around in Worcester, so.

AC: Yes.

EF: Anything you still need.

AC: Of course. We appreciate that. Ah, so yeah, ah, what's the, when you said you were in a leadership position for a Democratic Ward? Correct, or did I.

EF: Well, yeah, I was, right now I'm secretary and he's treasurer of Ward Three, Democratic Ward Three, there are ten wards in the city.

AC: Yes,

EF: And our ward, you know, we have geographical area there, that we work in.

AC: That's good. What do you think some of the work that you've done there, anything that you are proud of? Or any accomplishments you've made would you say?

EF: I don't know, you're sort of part of the group, not sort of individual things you know. Ah, we worked on a lot of campaigns. I think, maybe we worked hardest for the Bernie Sanders campaign. We helped the rallies, we contribute money, we made phone calls, we sent out cards and, of course, vote every single election and I still work on Election Day as one of the poll workers. So, I work from six in the morning until nine or ten o'clock at night that day, it's coming up, November 6th.

AC: Of course.

EF: So, I keep my hand in that way and because I'm assigned to either Warden or the Clerk at my, Ward Three, Precinct One, I get to see who in my neighborhood is showing up to vote.

AC: That's good. What role do you think religion has played in your life?

EF: Well, I'm Jewish and it's fundamental. My dad took us aside and we're Reformed Jews. Judaism is divided Reformed, Conservative and Orthodox. The German Jews, by and large, were Reformed Jews, it's a more liberal branch of the Jewish faith. But both my parents, they

lived it. We're not congregation members, we keep some of the holidays, but we're not rabid about it. But the value system, you know, I stick pretty close to and the fact that my dad was a judge and we believe in the law and we believe in right and there are no excuses. So, it's very fundamental to how I live. You are [her husband] not so quite fundamental. [Laughs]. He grew up Catholic, but he doesn't go, participate and so on. So, we don't have any conflicts about it because basically there's not that much different between the very basic beliefs.

AC: Of course, now, the next couple of questions are about your health. Have any health issues impacted your life?

EF: Impacted. Being older has slowed me down some. I find it takes me a lot longer to do stuff. I've kind of cut back on some of the organizational work and running to meetings and being at rallies, and blah, blah. I don't stand on street corners holding signs anymore. I may one time this year, but I used to do a lot of that stuff. I avoid crowds. I used to be in the parades and we always support [U.S. Representative] Jim McGovern, but outside of that we go to rallies.

GF: Yeah.

EF: We went to the [Senator] Bernie Sanders rally at North High [School] we went to, when he opened up the campaign headquarters here on Park Avenue. We've been there a couple of times and we always have signs, but I don't do that much anymore. And then a few years ago, I started having, what they call A-fib—oh, no, I know what it was. I had been rear-ended about three times and I think I must have had whiplash each time and I didn't realize what it was doing and at one point, I couldn't, I mean my left arm was all painful and I could barely use it and I couldn't move it and it was constantly painful and I went to the Doctor and she prescribed Naproxen which is just a pain killer. I took it for a little while and I stopped taking it and it was still the same. Quite by accident, a friend of mine told me about a chiropractor who is opening a practice and said he is giving free consultations. So, I thought I can't lose anything, I've never been to one, why not. Anyway, we never solved this particular problem, but the chiropractor took an x-ray and he said my neck was all out of line, because you are supposed to have this curve in here. And the vertebrae were out of line anyway, so I went for several weeks. Well little by little he got them back in place and sure enough I regained the control over my arm and the pain was gone, but in the meantime, apparently what I didn't know and what my doctors did figure out is that my fifth vertebrae there, the nerves that go through to your arm are also the nerves that control your thyroid. So, my thyroid went completely—I won't go into all the things that the thyroid does, but I had through that radioactive iodine treatment and they just about killed my thyroid. I have to take thyroid pills for the rest of my life. And at the same time I think I started experiencing what they call A-fib, you know, irregular heartbeats.

AC: Yeah, irregular heartbeats.

EF: They didn't know what caused them and didn't know how to stop them, but they were worried because one time I went into one of the attacks and my heart stopped for about nine

seconds and that worried them so they decided I needed a pacemaker. So now I got a pacemaker, but I've had no problems since then. They said that the pace maker wouldn't cure the A-fib, but it would at least keep your heart from stopping, you know, gets it started again. But I haven't had any A-fib attacks since then. And my neck is okay now if I'm careful. So, I don't have any real health problems just that I've slowed down and that I have to take the thyroid tablets and I have to report on the pacemaker every three months.

AC: Of course.

EF: But I have a gadget that phones it into the doctor's office and if they find anything they call. So I don't have any real problems.

AC: Nice. So, just a couple more questions to ask you to wrap everything up. Personally, how do you get through the tough times, what kind of keeps you motivated or keeps you going would you say?

EF: Well, you talked about religion before and I think that the Jewish religion is the religion of optimism. Remember we're still waiting for the Messiah. An according to our beliefs, you know, my dad discussed it with us at length. The predictions are that when the lion lies down with the lamb and when peace comes and so on, the Messiah will arrive and one of that has arrived and God doesn't make mistakes. So, we are optimistic because the best is still always ahead and even though twelve members of my dad's family were wiped out in concentration camps in World War II, you know, we survived and we're still going. The big thing is that we're in charge of our lives and even if sometimes things are tough, we know we can do something about it. So, as long as you have power over yourself and we don't have addictions, we're not subject to those kinds of cravings and so on. We can determine our own direction and, you know, now that we're retired, we even have more power over our own time so I think it's the optimism that my religious beliefs give me and friends. I have wonderful friends. I always have a network. I know when I got divorced, everybody thought it was going to be terrible, but it wasn't because my network of friends was still all there. And my profession was there and all of my interests were still all there. I still got all of that.

AC: Nice.

EF: And I'm appalled at what is happening in the country and I'm doing the best I can, but that's not impinging on my personal life. It doesn't depress me, it makes me annoyed and angry, but we determine what we have to do. And we had a Worcester's Inventor's Club for independent inventors and I was secretary, and president, and secretary again and one of the things I learned from the inventors was that some of them had done about 140 trials before they got something right. So, you don't give up the first time something doesn't work right and if you really want to achieve it you just keep going and eventually it'll straighten up and something will work. You do it and you keep at it. If it is worth doing then you keep at it and I'm a great believer in individual responsibility.

AC: Yes. So, final question we want to ask you, pretty important one. Based on your life experience what advice would you give women, not only today, but for future generations?

EF: Well, I see, I've never been assaulted, I've never been taken advantage of because you have to give a message that you can defend yourself. I can remember my mother [laughs], I don't think anybody would have [laughs] dared to get fresh with her and I think women have to learn to put out the kind of vibes that when they say no, here it stops and these are the parameters and learn to really defend yourself. Stand, remember the old westerns when the women stood in the corner and screamed while things were going on?

AC: Ah, huh.

EF: Nobody in my family was like that and I'm not like that either. I'm not about to stand in the corner and scream and expect somebody to come and rescue me. I don't go looking for any trouble because when we came to the country, we didn't have a cent. We lived in poor areas and then when we lived in St. Paul we lived in an area where there was a bar on the corner and we learned to deal with how you avoid the drunks because they're teetering up and down the street. And so we learned to deal with things. I guess it's what they teach in the Tae Kwon Do and Yoga classes and so on. To be aware of your surroundings and, I think, women need to be aware of their surroundings and not put themselves in situations where they are going to be in the minority. Women are getting more power, but one of the things I'm worried about now is that power corrupts and I'm hoping that women are not going to be corrupted. It doesn't look good around the world. I was not so in heat on Hillary Clinton as the first woman [president] because that's nothing new. Israel had Golda Meir years ago and India has had women heads, Pakistan has had women heads, just about everybody has already had women presidents. Just because we are backward is no reason for us to catch up now. The best person should be elected. So, I think women have to be careful not to be dragged into these sidelines here. An not to get, if you go to a frat party and you drink, u better be prepared to defend yourself. You better wear armor and be armed. If you don't, it's pretty predictable something is going to happen to you. So, I think women need to learn what the dangers are, where to protect themselves, but so do boys, you know, the whole bullying thing. That, I think, happens to boys as much as girls, maybe more. And girls should not clique and bully. I know when you get in sixth grade, I know the problem of being a group member, you have to stay an individual.

AC: Of course. Do you have any final thoughts you want to add, or anything to wrap up?

EF: My final thought is, looking at this country now, this too shall pass and I would not have stayed here if it were not for the fact that, unlike the Germans, in my experience in America since 1941, that somehow or other, there is something in the American psyche or the American culture or American public, where they will go to the edge of the cliff, but then before they run over like the Germans, they say, "Oh, no, I don't think this is what we want to do. Let's stop and think about this." I think we may be getting close to a moment now and I think this time we've

run closer to the edge than ever in my experience. The Germans were lemmings, you know, they started and they couldn't stop until they were utterly destroyed. There was no way to save them, but in this country, let's see what this next election brings. Even after that there is always another election.

AC: We just want to thank you again for taking time out of your day and joining us.

EF: If you have some other question, you know how to reach me.

AC: Of course.