

Interviewee: Gabriele M. Goszcz
Interviewers: Isabella Bolognese and Paula Gomez
Date: October 3, 2019
Location: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcribers: Isabella Bolognese and Paula Gomez



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Abstract: Born in 1947 in Germany, Gabriele Goszcz immigrated to Plainville, Connecticut, with her family when she was six years old and moved to the Worcester area as a grown woman after marriage. She earned her bachelor's degree and Master's in Social Work from Smith College, which prepared her for a career as a psychiatric social worker and later, an optometrist. Gabriele expresses her love of helping people as an optometrist. She is on the Board of Trustees of the Worcester Art Museum, and volunteers at Art Reach. She mentions the changes she has seen in Worcester and offers suggestions for improvement. Gabriele discusses how the issues that were challenged in the Women's Movement impacted her life. Being widowed twice, Gabriele recalls the struggles and strengths of her marriages and motherhood. Gabriele concludes by expressing that from all the things she has achieved, her greatest accomplishment in life is being a mother of two successful and independent sons.

IB: Okay, yes, that's fine. Okay so, we are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics, and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experience with education, health, work, and community involvement. Thank you so much for your time with helping us with this project and we have your consent, we have your permission. Just a reminder that all of this interview will be transcribed at a later date and will be made public.

GG: Okay.

IB: Okay. Great. Thank you so let's start.

GG: I've never been incarcerated so it's okay. I don't mind if people know. [She says this while laughing.]

IB: Let's start with your general questions, family about Worcester/general questions, family and Worcester. What is your full name including maiden name and married name, if applicable?

GG: My name is Gabriele Maria Goszcz and that is my maiden name. I went back to it after my first husband died, and I was recently widowed a second time. In fact on your form, you don't have one that says "widowed" it just says "single" which isn't the same you know, but anyway,

you may just want to update your form next time. But yeah so.. What else do you want me to tell you?

IB: Oh sorry, when were you born?

GG: In 1947, I was born in Germany. My mother was German, and my father was Polish, and he was in the Polish Allied Army. And they met at the end of the war [World War II] when I think his unit sort of like--- how they occupied towns --- you know, and that's how they met. And when I was ten months old, my parents moved to Belgium because that was neutral territory. And my mom didn't want to stay in Germany because the town she lived in was totally bombed out and she was an only child. So, she didn't have a lot of relatives. And my dad didn't want to go back to Poland because Poland at that point had become Communist. So, they went to Belgium and my dad worked in a coal mine until I was six years old. And they got a Displaced Person's Visa, which basically is a special visa for people that don't have a homeland to go back to. So, we came to this country in 1953 and my dad worked in a factory his whole life. My mom also actually worked in a factory for a while and then she did seamstress- type work.

I'm the first person on either side of my family to go to college. So, it is a country where you know there's opportunity that you wouldn't have had where you came from. So --and I went to-- well I, I wouldn't say grow up in Connecticut, in New Britain which has a big Polish population. In fact, the town is sort of nicknamed "New Britzky" because it does have so many Polish folks. And then my family moved to the next town over when they were able to buy a house in the town of Plainville. So that's where I graduated from high school. And my first two years of college I went to something called Hartford College for Women, and I commuted from home. And then between my sophomore and junior year, I got married because in those days, in light of what you did but I did end up finishing college. In fact, when I got married, I moved up to Amherst [Massachusetts] and I was going to attend UMass [University of Massachusetts] and I hated it. And so, it's kind of a little long story. I don't know if you want to hear it, but I hated it because it was so big. Hartford College for Women was actually very small, and it was a commuter college that actually had a lot of professors from other colleges moonlighting there. So, actually while I was there, I had a professor from Yale. I had two from Smith College, and so, and I was used to small classes and UMass was huge. There were like 250 kids in the class, and the very first thing that the professor says is, "Memorize your student ID because if you don't put the right number on the scan, you know, multiple choice test, you're not going to get credit for this course." And then he said, "Don't bother asking questions, I'll probably cover whatever it is you want to know. There's 250 of you, and I will only have time to do my lecture if people don't keep interrupting with questions." You know, my classes have been like 16 to 20 so I was like beside myself. So, UMass started a week before Smith College did, which was right in the next town over. [Northampton, MA] So, I went over there and say, "Is there any chance I can get in here?" And because I already had two professors that they had they---that was the days before you could fax things. They sent a carrier up from Hartford [Connecticut] with my transcript and I got in! And I got a full scholarship, so I was very proud of myself. It's funny because I went back to UMass because if you withdraw within a week, you can get your money back. So, I said, "I want to withdraw and get my money back." And the lady said, "What are you going to do?"

And I said, "I'm going to go to Smith." And she said, "Do they know this?" And she thought I was just having delusions or whatever, but I had already taken care of it.

IB: You mentioned how you moved to a Polish community in Connecticut.

GG: Yeah.

IB: What was it like for you there?

GG: Well, the whole....It wasn't just a Polish neighborhood. It was kind of mixed.

IB: Okay.

GG: Because I know one of my girlfriends next door was Italian, so but I mean... I was six, I didn't know any English. So, I certainly had to learn to speak it and spell it and write it and read it all at the same time, and I sort of felt out of it a lot because I was very skinny [laughs] and I couldn't speak well. But I guess you just gotta do what you do. And it was funny because I didn't realize at the time, and kids don't, that we were quite poor. We lived in an apartment. It was a house that had two apartments, two on the top, two on the bottom. You walked in the front door and there was a hallway, and one door went to our apartment, another door went to the other apartment, and then the third door was actually almost like the size of the closet. That's where the toilet was. So, you had to share a toilet with the other family on that floor and you didn't have running hot water. But it wasn't until I was older that I realized that not the whole world was like that, but my parents did the best they could. Like I said, they saved up. My dad worked extra shifts in the factory and they were able to buy a house when I was in fifth grade.

IB: Was it just you and your parents? Did you have any siblings?

GG: I have a half-sister because my mom had been widowed during the war. You know, she had a German husband, so I have a half-sister that is seven years older than I am.

IB: Were the expectations that your family had on you and your half-sister in Germany different than the expectations that were placed on you two when you came to the States?

GG: Well, you know, it's hard to know. I know that it was always that you should study hard and get smarter, but I was only six when we left, so I hadn't gone to school much there. But at least for my mom, the expectation always was that you gotta find yourself a husband. If you're educated, you can find a better husband than if you're not. Whereas my dad, I had more of a sense that you study hard so you can be smart, you can do stuff, not so much that the husband had to be involved. You know what I mean, it was just sort of a different emphasis. My sister got married right out of high school so...

IB: Who's older?

GG: She is by seven years.

IB: Were there lessons that your parents taught her and didn't teach you being the younger child, or were things the same?

GG: Not that I can recall. My mom was always very strict German. You had to clean your room. You had to be neat and all of that sort of stuff. But I think that some of it might be what our interests were. My sister was more into getting married and wearing nice clothes and things like that whereas I was always sort of hands-on, mechanically inclined. So, I used to help my dad put together stuff so I think I was more, I shouldn't say tomboy because I wasn't big into sports, but I was more into fixing things, and how does something work. He was always very happy to show me.

IB: Sorry, we're trying to...

GG: So, you want me to finish telling you about going to school?

IB: Yes! I am so sorry, so with your education, were classes co-ed? Were they...?

GG: No, my undergraduate was all female. Hartford College for Women and Smith College, even to this day still all female. It's interesting because I think that that actually gives you an opportunity to kind of develop leadership skills without the male/female interactions that sometimes cloud things up. You know, guys have to feel like they're in charge so they're going to push ahead. Or sometimes women, I think, in front of men don't want to take leadership roles, because I think there's that kind of stigma to being a bossy dame. So, you know, I think at least for me, I thought it was good.

IB: Were there any challenges though being in an all-female college?

GG: Well, the big challenge being that my first two years I was living in home. My second year, because I had gotten married in between, I was not living on campus, so I didn't have sort of the built-in study groups that you have when you live in a dorm or sort of hanging out and, you know, sort of informal learning that happens so because I go to classes and then I go home. [laughing] So, I think that was the challenge, you know, not having the learning that happens outside of lecture. So after my undergraduate there, I actually went to graduate school and got a Masters in Social Work from Smith College.

IB: And what years and names of programs were...?

GG: I graduated with my bachelor's in 1970 and in '72, I got my MSW [Master of Social Work] and I was a psychiatric social worker a number of years.

PG: So, about work, what was your first job? You told me... [interruption].

GG: My first job out of school or my first job in life?

PG: In life.

GG: In life! Okay, I babysat and then I cleaned houses and then I was a waitress in a coffee shop, mom and pop type restaurant. I did that in high school and in my senior year in high school I got a job in a hospital working in medical records, so just filing and different things like that.

IB: Sorry, going back really quickly to education, when you graduated whether from your undergrad or your grad, did you see--- what kinds of opportunities did you see out there for job opportunities or life opportunities/

GG: As a social worker, you could go to work for the welfare system and certainly do public social work. But when I was doing one of my internships in graduate school, it was actually in a public school and there was a psychiatrist that they hired as a consultant. And we'd have staff meetings and so I met him that way. And then when I was looking for work, I just kind of sent him my resume and he remembered me, and they were, I guess, looking to expand, so I got hired. So, it was more like because I met him [laughs]. So, I did psychiatric social work and then I had kids, two kids. And after my second child was born, my first husband died. And, so then I did more social work for a number of years. My first husband committed suicide, so it was very...[inhales] very painful definitely. All death is complicated, but that sort of adds another layer and I kind of felt burned out. And with psychiatric social work, it's like you have to give so much of yourself and I wanted to have enough left over for my kids and me. So, I went back to school. I took a year of pre-med and I went to optometry school and the joke used to be, I went from helping people see the light figuratively to seeing it literally. But in the meantime--- actually what made me... I have always been interested in medicine and I was good at math, so there's a lot of optics in math and optometry. But in the ten years after my--- during the ten years between when my first husband died and I got remarried and I graduated from optometry school, I actually dated somebody that was an optometrist and I remember thinking I'm just as smart as he is. I know I can do that, and it seemed interesting, and I explored it some more and sure enough, I did.

PG: How old are your children?

GG: One is 40...44 I just had to do the math, and the other one is 41.

PG: And do you have any grandkids?

GG: Yes. I have four grandkids, and so my older son has a girl and a boy, nine and seven and my younger son has two boys, eight and five. The younger one lives locally in Marlborough and he actually took over my practice, so I only work one day a week. And my other son lives in Texas, so I don't get to see them often.

IB: What's your current prac- work?

GG: I'm an optometrist.

IB: Okay.

GG: Eye doctor.

IB: Okay, sorry.

PG: Continuing with work, you told me you were a babysitter, waitress. I am going to talk about your recent work. What has this work meant to you?

GG: Optometry I love because it combines making a qualitative difference in people's lives and you get to talk to them and you kind of get to know them. I mean I've been doing it for 30 years and so there are people that started coming to me when they were in middle school, and now they're coming and they've got kids of their own that are in middle school. So, there's just that continuity of care. Makes me use my brain because you sometimes have kind of puzzle out what's going on because not every symptom has a clear reason for it or an easy answer. And [long pause] and I went into optometry also because... One of the things is before I met my second husband, I always felt that I never wanted to feel I wanted to get married to be financially stable. And on a social worker's salary it's hard to raise two kids and send them to college. So, I never wanted to feel---because I knew some people who they got into marriage because they wanted financial security and they were miserable. So, I always said, "No, I'm going to do it on my own and then if somebody comes along, okay that will be like just a little added benefit." So yeah it---you know, it was a good career, and it has a lot of flexibility. I work for myself and I can set my own hours. Once a week I would work late because it was like after-work hours. But when my kids were in high school and they were on the track team or whatever there was a meet, I could just block it out and go watch them run. Whereas if I had a regular employer, I would have to ask permission and I would have to use up my vacation time. So, if I took time off, I wasn't earning money, but at least it was a choice that I could make, that I wasn't dependent on someone else giving me permission to do it.

IB: Do you think your gender has helped you in the workplace?

GG: Yes and no, okay. I think a lot of people feel more comfortable with a woman. You know, I mean in optometry, people get to leave their clothes on so it's not... You know that part of it, [says while laughing] but especially little kids are more comfortable I think sometimes with a female that is going to be taking care of them. You know, I've had [laughs] one guy but he was, again a little flakey and I remember I came in and I introduced myself and I guess he didn't hear it and he kept calling me "nurse." And I said, "I'm not a nurse I'm the doctor," and he'd say, "When is the doctor coming in?" And so, I did the whole eye exam and at the end he said, "You do a darn good job for a nurse, but I wish I got the chance to meet the doctor."

IB: And how did you feel about being called "nurse"?

GG: You know, the thing is you pick your battles in life. To me I'm not going to change his mind, like I'm going to get sort of snotty whatever with him. I guess it was like--- it just kind of reminded me of sort of the leftover sort of stereotypes of what kinds of jobs women can do. You know, so it was sort of like oh yeah, here's another one of these people who hasn't quite caught on, but you know...

IB: And have you been seeing those stereotype references often?

GG: No, you know that was like 30 years ago, you know? Things have gotten a lot better. In fact, nowadays, optometry school I think there's more women enrolled than men. And just as a little tidbit of information, my son, the younger one, became an optometrist and I happened to cold call sometimes---I wanted to kind of like network with other women whose children had gone into the field. I am the very first mother-son, or even mother-daughter practice that they have in the United States. Because I had called the headquarters of the American Optometric Association and they said they don't know because it was traditionally a male-dominated field. So, if there was a parent-child practice, it was always the father and their son and then later a father and a daughter, but there was never a mother who had been there first, so that was kind of cool.

PG: Oh, that's good. That's really cool. Aww.

IB: And when did your practice start up?

GG: In...30 years ago, '89. It's in Auburn [Massachusetts] and like I said, my son took over and I just work one day a week and he's opened a couple of other offices.

IB: What were your primary responsibilities in terms of your work?

GG: Well, doing eye exams, running the office, I mean I only had someone, a receptionist to answer the phone. As it got busier, you hire more people, but I used to have people...So like there are glasses and I would make eyeglass repairs, and try to troubleshoot when insurance wouldn't pay, why weren't they paying, stuff like that. But most of it is doing eye exams and diagnosing and making treatment plans.

PG: Have you been able to balance them like your housework with your workplace?

GG: Yes, I feel like I have, partly because the office is right next to the house, [laughs] so that was easy.

IB: What were your responsibilities around the house?

GG: Cooking that's the main... My um my late husband, he just died last month--- but never cooked, which was okay, he was good at clean up. But so, cooking...I have to say, I--- because

for ten years, I wasn't married. I was a single parent. I taught my kids to be very self-sufficient, they would help cook. They did laundry. I feel like it was pretty balanced other than the cooking thing. My husband was very good at that, helping out.

IB: What was the name of your late husband?

GG: Douglas Crawford. [pause] Yeah, he died in August. He had Alzheimer's.

IB: I'm sorry to hear that.

GG: He had late stage Alzheimer's, but I was able to keep him at home. So...but it was a long, long decline. It is what it is, you know. Life is not a buffet, you can't pick and choose what you want to deal with. So, you just have to---you either have to pull up your big girl panties and keep going, or you just kind of give up and let the world run over you.

IB: Well I admire your will in continuing living.

GG: Yeah, well I mean there's a lot of good stuff in life and so I feel like I've been very fortunate. I've been involved with the Worcester Art Museum. I'm on the Board of Trustees, so that's been a real positive thing in my life. And you get to meet interesting people and work on committees and stuff, so I feel like it's important to give back.

IB: What were your responsibilities on the Board of Trustees?

GG: Well, obviously on the Board, you have to approve certain decisions like the budget. And I also served on---and I was also chair of the Nominating Committee, and another committee that's called the Audience Engagement and then the Salisbury Committee. On the Board you usually serve on committees and have different projects and things.

IB: And how long have you been with the Worcester Art Museum?

GG: This is my ninth year. And this is my final year because they have terminal advance and each term is three years. And you can't serve more than three terms, so next month is the end for me.

[Long pause.]

GG: I'll do something else.

IB to PG: Is there anything you would like to add to what we've been going through so far?

PG: Yeah, I have some questions about health. Have health issues impacted your life and those in your family? You talked about Alzheimer's and...

GG: Well, Alzheimer's obviously made a big impact, but I've been relatively healthy. I had some arthritis in this joint and they reconstructed the joint which worked perfectly. But then I got scar tissue that formed out on the nerve, and they had to do five more surgeries to do that. So, I actually had to give up working for a couple of year. But I mean timing in life is everything because my son graduated from optometry school the month after I had my surgery---no, the month before, sorry. And so, I was just...They said, "Oh, you'll only need six weeks of recovery." Well, it took a couple of years. So, he [her son] was originally just going to work part-time at the office and get a part - time job elsewhere, but he ended up coming to work full- time and so but.... You know that.

IB: But will you able to... What are your experiences in accessing quality affordable healthcare? Have you had any issues with that?

GG: No, I haven't because my husband had a regular job, you know, and we had regular insurance you know.

PG: What did your husband do?

GG: He was a commercial insurance broker so it's insurance, not for like your car or your house. It's insurance for companies like workers' comp [worker's compensation] or product liability like Black and Decker or Gillette Corporation. That was one of his accounts. So, if somebody sued them for some kind of defect, it's that kind of insurance. So, we always had good health insurance through him. But when I was a kid, I remember after we came to this country, my mom was hospitalized with some issues, and we did not have any insurance. And I know it took my parents years to pay off the debt. So, as a kid, there were issues, but not since I've been an adult. [long pause]

GG: So how many of you are working on this project, like how many in your class?

PG: We are like 20, 20 something.

GG: Oh, so there are going to be 20 something people who have been interviewed?

IB: Let's go back to... Would it be alright if you tell us more about your married life?

GG: Okay.

IB: With your first husband, what's his name?

GG: Andrew DeToma. D-E-T-O-M-A with a capital T.

IB: D-E-T...

GG: ...O-M-A

IB: What did he do?

GG: Well, when I met him, he was a newspaper reporter and then he did...He worked for Amherst College doing writing for their development office, so like brochures. And he was also a grant writer.

IB: And what did you do at the time?

GG: I was a social worker and then I was a mom.

IB: And with him will you be able to...How did you go about household responsibilities?

GG: He was actually pretty good by helping cook, but he wasn't much help around the house. Though my second husband was better about helping around the house so yeah, I mean... I guess neither one of them was super chauvinistic, where, you know, it's not man's work or whatever. But my second husband was more (____??)... He helped more because he noticed when things were a mess and I think my first husband didn't notice quite as much. But if I said I needed help with something, in general he would. But I do have to say, when my kids were babies, he would play with them and kind of like you know like whooh-all of that. But he wasn't much of a help with diaper changes or things like that. So, once in a while he said, "Do you want me to help you change a diaper?" Like what, hold it while I, you know, but not do it so there was maybe a little bit of that.

IB: How did that make you feel?

GG: I was tired! I remember one time when he said, "Do you want me to help you?" I said. "No, I just want you to do it, so I can sit down." Yeah.

PG: How did you imagine your life together like after you got married? Did you feel like you imagined it to be that way or did you have other expectations together?

GG: I guess you have to think, I have two marriages to think about, you know? So, my first one I was a lot younger and I think I was more naïve. And I think---I probably didn't have a strong sense of who I was, but a lot of people that young don't. But I mean I always imagined that I would have children, so that was something from day one but I waited awhile, (____??) whereas my sister got married right after high school and had kids right away. So, I waited like seven years before I had kids because I did want to finish school and I did want to have a chance to work and earn some money.

IB: What did your sister do after?

GG: Actually, after her kids got older, she went to school, and she became a nurse. So, she did end up working eventually.

IB: What cultures or and ethna...ethnicities do you identify with?

GG: Well, German and Polish.

IB: Okay.

GG: So, I cook German food, I cook Polish food. I can speak German, that was my first language. When my parents met, my father could speak German and Polish, and actually also Russian, but my mother only could speak German, so they always spoke German together. And so, we always spoke German, until we came to this country. And like nowadays they have English as a second language classes and we didn't have any of that over 50 years ago. And my parents were also kind of--- the thing is we are in America now, we are Americans, we're going to speak English. So even though my father had a heavy Polish accent and my mother had a heavy German accent, they practice speaking English at home with us, you and... I think we thought them more English then ... [laughs] then they could teach us because being in school, you pick it up a lot quicker but a.... [silence]

IB: mmm... Has religion played a role in your life [GG exhales] ...Or faith?

GG: Yes and no. You know, my father was Catholic, my mother was Lutheran and... When they got married, they got married by a Catholic priest, and I don't know if the Catholics still do this, but the priest wouldn't marry them if my mother didn't agree to raise children Catholic. So, she honored her promise, and I went to catechism and I got my first communion and I was confirmed. But she always just kept going to her Lutheran Church, but not... You know, it was more important to go together, so we would alternate. Sometimes we would all go together to the Lutheran church, sometimes we would all go together to the Catholic church and... When I was a teenager, I remember that---I mean, you are not supposed to go to a non-Catholic church because you are going...It's a sin! And that you know, like you are going to go to hell, you know. [satiric mimic gesture] I was like, "Naaah, you know the people they are [laughs talking] just as nice as the ones in the Catholic church and..." So actually, after I got married the first time, I had my kids baptized in a Lutheran church instead of a Catholic church, partly, too, because I... I didn't want to pick and choose what, what I believed in a religion. So, I think women should have birth control if they want it. And I think there are times that divorce is necessary. And the Catholic Church, to be a good Catholic, you have got to believe that, and you have to support that. And the Lutherans didn't expect that [laughs] you know. So, for me it was like I just... I just felt more comfortable with that. But I have to say over the years I've become...less involved with organized religion. I feel like I am spiritual and sort of...I believe in the teachings, but I also don't think that you have to be sitting in church to be a good person. And it's more important to live the message than to just sit and listen to the message. When you go to church so...[interruption]

IB: Is very wise.

GG: But... [silence and sound of moving pages]. I just made that quote up. I never had said that [laughs] before [interruption].

IB: Very good.

PG: Very wise.

IB: Glad we have it.

GG: [laughs]

PG: Have you seen any changes in Worcester over time?

GG: [interrupts] In Worcester?

IB: [interrupts] Worcester area.

PG: Oh, Worcester area, yeah.

GG: Oh heck yeah! You know years ago, not even those many years ago, there was nothing going on. Everything felt like it was falling apart, and you'd have to look around for something to do. If you wanted to do something fun on the weekend it was like, "Oh my God! What, what is there to do?" Now there is like three, four things happening at the same time. You actually have to decide between things, instead of scrounging around for something, so... Oh, I think is great! You know it's just much more vibrant, you have a lot more interesting foods you can eat, there is more (___?) ethnic foods and... a very vibrant arts community, and I am sort of into the arts, so you know, but a...

IB: You mentioned how you've been in other areas, what makes the Worcester area unique? What distinct characteristics?

GG: I think it's a combination of... You got a lot of immigrants, and so you have a lot of diverse cultures, have a lot of young people, and a lot of art that helps to kind of build the community up. And mixed in with that, you have sort of the traditional New England older money, you know, professional, sophisticated, and highly educated and mixed in with all that people who don't have education, but are working hard and are trying to better themselves.

IB: And what do you think of the women spiri---experience in Worcester has generally been like?

GG: I don't, you know.

IB: In the Worcester area.

GG: Yeah, I--I haven't [long pause] I don't know if it is considerably different from other places. I don't know, that is a good question. You know, I guess if I compared-- because I did live before moving here—because---we move here after I got married the second time, because he was working in Boston and I was living in Amherst, and that was a long commute. So, we met in the middle. Amherst is a college town, so there was a lot more kind of like women's lib [women's liberation] and all kinds of peace vigils during the Vietnam War. So, there was more of a sort of hippie vibe. And here it's more of a blue-collar vibe so I guess ...But I don't know if I've noticed like an alarming [small pause] bad treatment of women. At least I haven't experienced it.

PG: So, you talked--after you took... you talked about that you were pro with birth control...

GG: Mhm.

PG: So that relates to the Women's Movement.

GG: Mhm.

PG: Did like the movement make a great impact in your life?

GG: Oh sure! Because I--the women's, the Women's Liberation Movement of the late '60's happened like a couple of months after I have---I had gotten married. You know, [laughs] and it was like wow! So yeah, I think a lot of, a lot of a sort of consciousness raising about the value of women and.... And it's funny because I feel like the pendulum swings back and forth because you went from---I never did, but the bra burning and sort of back to natural and then it is like--now it is---I sometimes feel like there is more becoming glamorous again, like it was in the '50s, and early '60's. It is like, you know---we fought to have women not be treated as objects and I sometimes think with this celebrity culture... Women, some of the young women, don't hear that message and let themselves be made into objects or making themselves into objects.

IB: And what would you say...What would your advice be to young women today?

GG: Make sure that you can take care of yourself, that you don't depend on someone else, that any relationship you have whether it's going to be you know...If you are a lesbian or if you are heterosexual, your partner isn't [exhales deeply] there to take care of you... Nor should you take care of them exclusively either, that each person should be able to stand on their own. And then have something that, interests and values that binds you together, but not out of necessity, that you should be able to take care of yourself.

IB: That's good advice.

PG: That's very good advice.

IB: And so....[sound of moving pages] Well, you have told us a lot, which is [GG laughs] wonderful! Because we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women than has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include?

GG: Oh, goodness. [pause] I think celebrating the strength of women, those that do get out there and make things happen and do take care of themselves and take care of their kids and raise the children to be self-sufficient.

IB: I, I think, I think that is great and wise, too. [sound of pages in the background] Sorry. So let's go back to the general... questions. How old were you when you were allowed to date?

GG: You know, I think I was allowed to go to a school dance with someone when I was a junior in high school, and my mom was super strict. Okay, and even in high school in--I mean--in my senior year, I had an 11 o'clock curfew no matter what. I remember going to the movies, and the movie didn't get out till 11. And it took 15 minutes to get home, I mean I was grounded because I was 15 minutes late, I said, "But the movie didn't end." She said "I don't care 11 is 11." I mean she was like... [laughs] so...yeah, so she was very strict. (_____) [interruption]

IB: Was there a reason?

GG: Because she could. Yeah, it was a control issue.

PG: Umm..[laughs]

GG: And I think that is actually quite honestly one of the reasons I got married, was partly to kind of feel like I can control my own life, so...

PG: I would like to get another question about...

GG: Sure.

PG: What difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood since you had a mother that was strict?

GG: Yes, yeah. I mean that was, you know, ways to assert my independence without getting her so angry that she would come down even [laughs] harder, so yeah. But some of the things that I was able to do, like I got a job and that helped giving me some money. You know my mom insisted that I save half of it, which is good. It is good to learn how to save money, but, so I think getting a job is one of the things that helped me to transition from feeling like a dependent child to being more the master of my own destiny. I remember I bought--I saved money and I bought myself a desk for when I started college because I was living in home. And I thought this because when I was in high school, I used to do my homework on the kitchen table. So, it was sort of like my little of property, as--I now have a desk and that's where I would do my studying.

IB: Was studying challenging for you and your education? Were you taught a different way than your classmates, then your male classmates?

GG: I don't, I don't think so, I don't think so. [said in a thoughtful tone] I was a good student. I worked hard and I, I was good at math, and that was funny because my high school had three tracks. They called it the college track, the business, and the general track, that's probably the kids that end up working at the gas station [laughs] or in retail. And the business one was for people that wanted to become secretaries (___?) and they taught you typing and bookkeeping. And then the college. And I didn't like having a study hall, because I have to study in the evening. So, I ask the guidance counselor, I said, "I know there is a typing class during my study hall, can I sign up for that?" And she said, "No, you are in the college track, you can't cross over." "I said, "Really?" And she said, "Listen honey, if an employer ever knows that you know how to type, you'll only ever be a secretary." So, she refused to let me take the typing class. So, and I am looking around, and so what I did was, I took a second math class. So, that was my sophomore year. And then I took another math, extra math class, the next year which means I qualified for the calculus in my senior year, which--- I was the first girl in the history of my high school to take calculus. Because you have to you know---is only the nerdy boys, you know with the pocket protectors. [laughs] Yeah, really the geeky ones that would do that. So, Mr. Kesler was my calculus teacher. He was so excited to have a girl in his class, finally! But the drawback [says laughing] was that he called on me every single day. [says while hitting the table in time with the words] So, I always had to do every homework problem because he'd always makes somebody do it out and then he'd ask, "Did anyone else do it a different way?" So, he either had me go up there do it or if someone else did, he'd always---he used to called me Princess of the Pea Patch. I don't know why, but probably [laughs] nowadays someone would call it sexist. But, but he would say, "Okay, Princess of the Pea Patch. Is this the way you did it?" Yeah, I guess I was treated differently in that class because I was almost like a celebrity, but a celebrity that couldn't get away with not doing it. [laughter in the background]

IB: Would you consider that a challenge? or like umm...

GG: Yeah, it was [everybody laughs] [interruption].

IB: And then...like it—did— it helped you?

GG: Yeah, yes.

IB: Yes.

GG: Yeah, yeah. Most challenges if you, if you stick with it, actually teaches you something. No education is ever wasted, even if all you learned is not to make the same mistake again, you know, still something you learned.

PG: So you said you had--you love art... [interruption].

GG: Yes.

PG: And that you're part of the trustees?

GG: Yes.

PG: So what other um...activities or hobbies you have...? [Interruption]

GG: Well, I am a quilter and [interruption].

PG: What is that? [whispered softly]

GG: A quilter you sew fabric together to make blankets.

PG: Oh! Yeah!

GG: Yep, yep. And actually, when I was a stay-at-home mom, I used to do a pull string and I used to make custom drapes for people as a way to kind of make a little of extra money on the side. I love to dance. Every opportunity I get, I love to dance. I'm always dancing in the kitchen while I'm cooking, playing music. The other hobby that I had that I loved, I did it for 18 years was--I was a beekeeper. And unfortunately, I had to give it up when---after my second husband's health went downhill and...and the trouble with my hand, I couldn't lift, and the boxes of honey are like 80 pounds. So, he used to lift them for me. So, he--- his decline so...But I did that for 18 years. That's like one of my real fun things, and I like to cook. And I make bread, a lot of bread. [saying softly]

IB: I love bread.

PG: Aww, yeah.

IB: You mentioned how the Women's Movement did impact your life. Do you consider yourself actively pol--active politically? Either in the past or present?

GG: Um, semi-active. Yeah, I mean, I always vote, I try to watch the debates and things like that. I sometimes send money to some candidates, [laughs] but, but I've never gotten involved with running for office or serving on a school committee or anything like that. [sound of turning pages]

PG: Oh, what time is it?

IB: Four twelve.

PG: Okay we are good.

GG: You have a class you have to go to?

PG: No, I was just like getting into the conversation was like--yeah this is good [GG laughs] and then I think, "What time is it"?

IB: How do you get through the tough times in life, like... what thoughts keep you going?

GG: This too shall pass. Probably that nothing lasts forever. You know the good time doesn't last forever so enjoy it, and the bad time doesn't last forever. Something always changes. There's always an opportunity to do something different or to focus on something different.

PG: I agree.

IB: You had quite a life.

GG: I,[laughs] it just is, you know.

IB: How do you define success in your life, and has it changed over time?

GG: Oh success, I guess is... for me [pondering] I guess my greatest accomplishment is I'm a mom and I'm very proud of my kids, and I know my kids love me. I guess that's, that's like--everything else comes after that. So, I guess being independent, being able to...Like I said, take care of myself. I have a roof of my head, I eat every day, I have healthcare. I mean that's pretty successful, and I feel like I help people in my practice. And I try to be involved in the community. There's a program called Art Reach that does after- school stuff with Worcester city kids, and they also run a summer day camp for art. I volunteer there and I do projects with the kids.

IB: And what led you to the Art Reach?

GG: I met the woman that runs it, and she just seem like a wonderful person and so devoted to what she's doing. And I like making things, I like doing things. So, and I like kids. In fact, when my kids were little, I was a cub scout leader, [laughs] so I felt---is funny because at that time there was a lot of sort of women's lib with protests and marches and stuff. And I remember a friend of mine saying, "Well, you should come to some of these rallies. You should do your part for the cause of women." I said, "I'm doing my part in helping to raise boys and other, other people's boys to appreciate women, and I mean in my cub scout stuff. [says softly] I taught them how to use power tools. We made stuff with a drill and, you know, nailing and doing guy stuff [using quotation gestures] that I taught them. [interruption].

IB and PG: That is so awesome!!

GG: So, they saw that a woman can do that. And, and we used to take nature hikes and I remember we would catch all kinds of frogs, and insects, and whatever. So...

IB: That's awesome.

PG: That's really awesome.

GG: Yeah so, I, I was a good mom to have boys because I wasn't afraid of any of that.

PG: You were a model, of like, [GG affirms] like a good model.

GG: Yeah. I always... It's funny, my grandkids every now and then they'll say, "'Uggh, it's a bug. It's a bug!!!" [imitating a kid's voice] I say, "You see the size of the bug? It's this big [draws with a finger a small circle on the table]. See how big you are? He's more afraid of you than what you should be of them, because most bugs will run away from you, very few of them come after you," And, so I was figuring out what's my size compared to what I have to deal with.

PG: True!

IB: Very true... So you mentioned about the ways in which ah... Worcester is unique.

GG: Mhm.

IB: Do you think that the city still faces some challenges?

GG: Oh, sure. Yeah, there's still large segments of the population who don't have access to the stuff that a lot of people do in terms of adequate housing. And you know there's still a lot of people that are--- that go hungry in this town. And people that have drug- related issues and maybe don't have the access to care. I mean there are wealthy people whose kids get addicted to opioids or whatever else, but they can afford to send them to a nice rehab facility. Whereas you know, families that are struggling and if one of their kids has an issue, they don't always have access to the same quality of care.

IB: How would you, if you could, how would you go about with changing?

GG: More funding and more education...

IB: And what would you say to the young girls who are struggling with education?

GG: Hang in there. Do your homework, [laughs and pauses] and find somebody that believes in you, that can encourage you and support you.

IB: Did you have support groups or mentoring groups when you were in school?

GG: No, but I did have that Mr. Kesler, my math teacher. He was kind of rooting for me. No, was mostly my parents. My mom cracking the whip. [laughs] I couldn't talk to my girlfriend on the phone until after my homework was done, it was that kind of stuff. So yeah, she was... she was very strict.

PG: But.. did it help you? [interruption]

GG: Oh yeah!

PG: She being like that?

GG: Oh sure, because you know, when the kids---I mean, I don't blame them you know--they want just to do as much as they need to to get by, and then they want to go hang out and have fun so...[turning pages starts to sound]

IB: I love hearing about this. This is wonderful.

PG: I know.

[silent pause]

IB: Umm, so what do you think are the pros and cons of the path that you've chosen in your life?

GG: [exhales]

IB: It's very open ended.

GG: [exhales] Yeah, I mean the pros are I feel very comfortable with who I am, and I have a very--I have a comfortable life. I also know I can make do with less if I have to, that I don't feel that my identity is wrapped up in having certain things, that sort of my spirit is what it is and no matter. So, I guess I [thinking] you, you get to---I'm going to be 72. Okay so when you get to this point in life, [slight pause] hopefully you're comfortable in your skin and you're comfortable with even choices that you made that weren't the best choices, as in you can always learn something from it and you can always change direction. You can always pull something out of it. But, I think it's holding on to your spirit, who you are, and caring about people...

IB: I love your wisdom.

PG: You can be my mentor?

GG: [Laughs] Sure! [laughs].

PG: I'd gladly have you.

IB: [talking to Paula] Is there anything else you would like to add?

PG: Well, I think we covered everything and a little bit more. [**IB** interrupts]

IB: I love it.

PG: [Continues] That's really good. Umm...

GG: Yeah, you know when my --this thing about your spirit. When my husband died, and he was a nice guy... [says softly] I..I felt very happy. and not because he made me happy, but he would let me be happy. Okay, because there were things that I was interested in that he had no interest in whatsoever, and he never made me feel like, "Oh! I shouldn't like this." I mean some relationships it's like, "Ahh if you don't like what I like..." Then they try to tear it down or try to make it hard. So, he was very---he was a good cheerleader like, "Yeah, I have no interest in that, but you go, girl!" I felt like I also didn't... I mean he was a runner, he was a marathon runner. People would say, "Oh! do you run?" And I said, "Yeah, I run the vacuum cleaner." I mean, there is no way in heck [PG and IB laughing] you're going to get me out there running. I'm not somebody who goes to the gym. My exercise is...I have two stories. I go run up and down the stairs and I dance. [laughs] But I think this whole thing of kind of being with somebody that gets you, that understands this is important to you, and they'll honor that. I think that's the message for young, young women to have.

IB: And what mess [interruption].

GG: [continues] that don't give up who you are to try to please somebody else.

IB: And what message would you send to men, to young men?

GG: Same thing. You know, like don't try changing [small clank on the table] the person and don't let them change you either because I think sometimes women can be guilty of trying to make a guy what he isn't, to meet their needs. Women can be as destructive to another person as a man can be. I think in general maybe men have more power and maybe do it more, but women can also interfere. But yeah, you know, respect women you know and a...

IB: That's wonderful.

GG: And this is nice, these are things I haven't thought about or haven't articulated in any sort of concise way but...[silence]

PG: Other questions?

IB: (___?)

PG: Yey! (___?)

IB: What are--what are your days generally.... What is your daily life looking like now with your family?

GG: Well, I try to...I go to Zumba class. And I also go to a class called "Move N' Groove" which is kind of like line dancing, but they kind of make you do little squats on some mat. But it doesn't feel like exercise, so I always pretend in my mind like I'm at a party and I'm dancing. [laughs] So, I do that. Since my husband died I----it's like I don't cook as much because cooking for yourself you don't... I try to once a week. I make a meal and I send it home with my son and for his family [says laughing] because I like cooking. I read, I like to go to movies, and I try to stay active in the community. So, between the art museum and then there's the Worcester Pop-Up, and I know--I've over the years--- I've met several artists in town, and that mural project, I know the fellow that got that started. So I... At least once a week I try to have either lunch or breakfast or coffee with one of my younger friends [laughs] because I don't want just to be around old people that just complain all the time, I so try to stay involved in the world.

IB: I really (____?) I love Worcester um..

GG: It's funny, I feel a little bit one---I mean my mom was very strict and she... The one thing about her, and she lived with us until she died and she was 97, and she was very spritely and when she was like around 90, I remember asking her, "What'd you do today?" She said, "Oh! I went to the senior center, and I helped the old people play bingo." She did not consider herself one of the old people, but she was the oldest one that went and they even gave her like a little plaque for being the oldest member. But she always saw herself as younger than the rest of them. And I sort of feel that way in my heart, that I'm not my age. I don't know what age I am, but I don't feel like... If you asked me 20 years ago what is somebody that's seven--I'm going to be 72---72, what is that person like, I don't--I think I felt that they would be older than what I am.

IB: Mhh.

GG: I don't know if that makes sense but...

PG: Yeah, it makes sense.

IB: It makes sense.

PG: I feel like that. Like I'm 19 and... [hand gesture]

GG: Yeah. [laughs].

PG: [continues] I don't feel like I'm 19.

GG: [laughs]

IB: Yeah, well we really appreciate... [Interruption]

GG: Sure.

IB: [continues] you taking the time out. [Interruption]

GG: [talking simultaneously] Oh yeah, no p-

IB: [continues] of your busy schedule to meet with us.

GG: You know, I'll tell you. I always like to support projects that students are doing because I know it's hard to get volunteers. When I was an undergraduate, I was helping with a research project. And that's what I was saying where in an all-girls school, you got to do that. It didn't go to one of the guys. So, I was asked by one of my professors to help with a research project and I had to get volunteers and it was so hard.[moaning tone] "Naw, I don't want to!!" So, whenever I can, I always say yes. Somebody is doing a project for school and I can help out.

IB: That's a great approach.

GG: Yep. But you know, you have to pay forward or backward or whatever direction.

IB: That's wonderful umm...before you go...(____?)[whispering in the background]

PG: Did we end all the questions? I think.

IB: I think we are done.

PG: Okay. So, we'll stop it?

IB: Yeah.

PG: Okay.