

Interviewee: Germaine Lambergs
Interviewers: Krysta Cabral and Olivia Solitro
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Overseen by Professor Carl Robert Keyes and Professor Lucia Knoles, Assumption College

Abstract: Germaine Miller Lambergs is a Canadian woman born in 1945. Germaine moved to the United States at a young age where she attended school in the Boston area now known as Newbury Street. It was here Germaine met her husband, with whom she has been with since she was a teenager. Together, they now share seven grandchildren and three children, all who live in the Northeast. Germaine attended nursing school and worked in the nursing profession for many years. Her greatest passion came from being a lactation specialist where she not only taught skills to new mothers, but also to her fellow colleagues. Throughout her life, Germaine has overcome several obstacles including the loss of her father at a young age, being raised by a single mother, failing out of high school, enduring bankruptcy, and is currently a recovering alcoholic. Despite the troubles she has faced, Germaine expressed her gratitude for the life she has lived, the opportunities she has had to help nursing mothers, to become a mother, to be a wife, and to finally take the time to go back to school at Assumption College and take classes that increase the spectrum of her knowledge now that she is retired. Through her experiences Germaine offered this advice to the next generation of women: “You need to be brave and stand up for what you believe in ... demand respect, I think it’s very important.”

KC: Alright, your full name including your maiden name and married name?

GL: So ok, so I’m Germaine Miller Lambergs.

KC: Awesome, and so were you born in Worcester?

GL: No, I was not. I was born in Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada.

KC: How did you get to Worcester from Canada?

GL: Well, as you get older you start to downsize and we chose—actually we live in Grafton. But we figured Worcester had stores, good roads and all that so that’s why we chose the condo that we’re living in.

KC: When was that?

GL: Ten years ago.

KC: Oh wow, so is your whole family in this area now?

GL: There’s one daughter. She lives in Boylston, so I consider that the area.

KC: Yeah definitely.

GL: My youngest daughter lives in Norfolk, Mass. And my son lives in Brighton, Boston.

KC: Oh, ok so that's still pretty...

GL: We did a lot of traveling, every kid was born in a different state. So, we only have three children. And I said no more. [laughs]. That's it for me. No more moving.

OS: And you said you have seven grandchildren?

GL: Yes, I do, yes.

OS: Could you tell us a little bit about your parents?

GL: My father died at the age of thirty in the United States. We came to the United States—he wasn't going to be able to continue in the military after World War II in Canada. So, there were more job opportunities in the United States so myself, my mother, and my brother and my father moved to Newbury Street in Boston.

KC: Oh wow, that's a fun place.

GL: Well, it is now, [laughs] many years ago it wasn't. It used to be a lot of flop houses actually. Now it's a whole different story. We went to school at Prince Street School on the corner of Exeter, it's all condo's now. We came in I think it was 1948. And he died when I was—fifty-two, I was born in forty-five, so I was seven.

KC: Oh wow.

GL: I'm the oldest of four. My mother became a widow at the age of thirty. And you see we got to experience a social welfare at that time because we had a social worker. Our medical care was taken care of by Boston City Hospital. The social worker used to come every week to make sure my mother wasn't working—see that's where the comparison between what's now and what happened then—to make sure we weren't in trouble. And my mum used that always as a threat you know, “If you don't behave, you're going to get sent away,” kind of thing. My mother died at the age of seventy something, I'm sorry, I don't remember that. But she was a heavy-duty smoker, stopped smoking and developed lung cancer and it advanced to the brain and she died of brain cancer. My life is a little up and down and over and under. Anyway, as the oldest of four, it was my responsibility to make sure we didn't kill each other. Because—I don't know if you have a lot of siblings—and they were relatively close together and I took on a lot of responsibility. My mother I think, well I'm sure you would be depressed when you're a widow at the age of thirty and you don't have any income other than the twenty-five dollars you get a week from whatever they called it back then, Aid to Dependent Children, that's what they called it. So I grew up believing—my mother taught me that you could only go to the bank three times a month,

because that would be when she gets her money and she would go deposit it and that was my belief. We were brought up, we were not wealthy at all, everything was always second hand and it's funny because I shop at Savers now. Which I think is funny.

KC: Um, yes! [laughter]

GL: But anyway, me being the oldest I was in charge of doing the food shopping and making sure the kids did their homework and stuff like that. We lived in a basement apartment. And my mother always hated it. But we were living in a house of an aunt, and we were in the basement, and we had pipes on the ceiling and bars on the windows. So that was always my mother's big issue, "Don't bring anybody in! We've got pipes on the ceiling and bars on the windows!" So, I never brought friends home, never ever. I left home at the age of eighteen because I went to nursing school and I never moved back. At that time, in those years, you didn't go back home. I did not go to college, I went to nursing school, St. Elizabeth's. We were brought up very strict Catholics. That's why I put down Christian, because I'll be honest with you, I am a non-practicing Catholic, but I still believe in the difference between good and bad and moral decision making. Mum was very strict, extremely strict and that's why when I became—of course I'm going to jump a little, when I became a mother I found it so challenging because I wasn't given—I mean if you want to get into that, I was the oldest and I had to make sure everyone was ok and I didn't have the luxury of wonderful walks with my mother or, "Let's go out to eat," I didn't have that. So, when I became a mom, I said to myself, "I am not going to be like my mother," and I think I kind of went overboard with my kids, but that's ok. They know I love them. So I went to Prince School which was on Newbury Street. Then I went to Girls Latin School for three years, and I flunked out... because of the person I'm married to, my husband [pause]. We have known each other since we've been sixteen.

KC: Oh wow.

GL: We've been married fifty-two stinking years.

KC: That's awesome.

GL: Well **now**, [laughs] plus add that I got married when I was twenty-two, plus add we met when we were fifteen and a half so add those years in. And what happened was he became the father of the house. He had a car, so he'd take my mother food shopping. He was a male presence and so growing up without a father I have no idea what it's like to have married, mother/father relationship as you become an adult. I had no idea. So again, as a new mom, as a married couple, I'm learning on the go. Like you kids have your role models like your parents. I never had that. [pause] So then I went to nursing school, St. Elizabeth's, a Catholic nursing school. Now if you need more info, tell me because, no really because I'll extrapolate all over the place [laughs]. Graduated from St. Elizabeth's and at that time college for nurses was just being discussed and nursing back then, I was one of the ones with the caps and the white aprons and the stiff cuffs and the patients could hear us rustle, rustle, rustle in and the shiny shoes. You had to wear a girdle, you had to wear stockings. Very structured, very structured. So, at that time, it was the sixties so that started to impact at lot what was going on as far as bras. I'm on the

conservative side so I always wore a bra. They used to have this thing called the pencil test.
(PAUSE)

OS: What's that?

GL: So, the pencil test was if you were able to keep a pencil under your breast you didn't have to wear a bra. So, if you had smaller breasts and you couldn't keep the pencil under your breast, you flunked it. So, ask your mom's, well they may be too young, about the pencil test.

KC: That's horrifying.

GL: Well, you have to understand now, I worked in the operating room. It's funny how they talk about the "Me Too" movement now, which I totally respect, because I didn't have "Me Too" back then. I worked in the operating room with crazy physicians and surgeons. We were treated like cattle. We were called "Lumpies." I loved the OR by the way, best thing of my life, I loved it. Nurses were considered subservient. You had to stand when the doctor came into the room. You never questioned the physicians. You had to follow his orders because he was God. I mean you talk to any nurse in her seventies like myself and you'll hear the same story. That's why when I was working later on in my career and I was in my sixties, I'm calling docs by their first names, "Oh hey Joe, what do you think?" Nobody stands up now. I don't think they stand for anything now, with nursing.

KC: So were doctors at the time just all men. It was like a one hundred percent male...

GL: Yes, they are almost all males. Women were nurses. So, I went to a Catholic high school. I flunked out of Girls Latin because of my husband. I just didn't study. And I went to Cathedral High School...

KC: In Springfield?

GL: No, in Boston at Holy Cross Cathedral. Cardinal Cushing was the cardinal at the time. Again, Sisters of Saint Joseph, very strict. It was so strict that I had very, very long red hair, like yourself. Very long hair and I used to wear it very tight, very conservative. You know very clean cut, very serious. The nuns told me I had to cut my hair because my eyes were exciting the boys. So, as a result, I cut two big chunks of hair to wear over my ears because I didn't want to get the nuns all upset. Now that was at the time where nuns were using physical abuse, not to the boys, because they love the boys. A lot of this is my opinion, but the boys never did wrong, but the girls always got yelled at. Things like that. So, I went to Catholic high school, a Catholic nursing school, and I didn't get to go to college. I worked as an RN, a registered nurse. At that time— what they have now because my youngest daughter is an RN, she has her BSN [Bachelor of Science in Nursing] because you can't work now without your BSN. I did eventually go to Mass General, in the latter part of my life, they grandmothered me in because I didn't have it, but they valued my experience. I've always felt that not being better educated was a detriment to me. That's why I go to Assumption College [Worcester Institute for Senior Education – WISE

program] to take these wonderful courses. I'm getting my education is so many different ways. There's no exams but it stimulates my mind, that's what I love about it.

KC: Well we have covered a lot of things, this is....

GL: Well thank God this is recorded because... [laughs]

OS: What made you want to choose nursing, to go into nursing?

GL: Well it's a funny thing. I think it's a genetic thing, I'll be honest with you. My grandmother was a nurse, her mother was a nurse, my mother became a nurse once the kids were out of the house. Well actually no that's not true, once the kids were older then it was ok for mum to go to nursing school you see. So, she went to Shepard Hill LPN, Licensed Practical Nursing. There are very few left, and she was a nurse. So, my whole life has been as a nurse. Now my middle daughter, Zayah, is an ultrasound technician, and she doesn't want to be a nurse. She's smart [laughs]. I'll say again, nursing has changed. Anyway, I think I want to help. It's really deep inside me. A lot of times that can be a problem in the healthcare field because you can get sucked in to wanting to help that person. To take away the hurt to whatever. And I ended up for nineteen years as a Board Certified Lactation Consultant. So, what does that do? I educate, it supports and helps mothers breast feed because at the time, although it's getting better, breastfeeding, the way we were taught breastfeeding and what was being taught to the mothers was inaccurate. So that was kind of like an advanced degree because it is international. It's not just a lactation specialist. And I really enjoyed that work, I really did. Some of the other nursing careers they were always in OB. Once I left the OR, I hated Med Surgery, as any nurse will tell you. It's really heavy-duty work. Medical surgical nursing. And then I went into, because of my OR experience, into scrub C-sections. They call me up and say, "Can you scrub a C-section." And I'd say, "Oh, sure." I loved it. And then I went into obstetrics. And I worked at Newton Wellesley Hospital. I worked at St. Vincent's in Worcester, which was really funny. But the old St. Vincent's...

OS: That's where I was born.

KC: Me too.

GL: Oh well, I may have seen you as a baby [laughs]. That was interesting for me because I loved that field. Because we had moved—once my son was born in seventy-three, we had moved from Brighton to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. And that was after the Susquehanna flooded the city in seventy-three. We stayed there about maybe two years and then my husband got another job and we moved to Springfield, Massachusetts where my second daughter was born at Baystate Medical Center. I didn't have to work that time, thank the lord. And then he had another job offer. To be honest with you, he lost his job six times in ten years. He was in the financial industry. And in that time 2008, you know, we had the big dump, and things were not very good, so he had to work very hard to get work in the field whereas I, as a nurse, didn't have any problems at all getting a job. That's a good thing about the career, about that profession choice. We were in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for two years. Then we were in Springfield for two years and then he got a job in Cleveland, Ohio. And that was when the river was on fire [pause], do

you remember that? I don't know if you remember that. But they had this mayor. And he was crazy. But the river was on fire. And at the time Cleveland was kind of the armpit of the world, ok I'll be honest with you. A lot of poverty, and we lived outside of the city in North Olmsted. And we were there for another four years. Then he had another job change and then we moved back to Medfield, Massachusetts. And we lived there for twenty years. And then he had another job loss and we moved to Southborough, Massachusetts. And he had another job loss, then we went bankrupt. And that was at a time when everyone was going bankrupt. It was the social thing to do. I had a car—what is it when they come to take your car?

OS: Repossession.

GL: Repossession. Never ever ever had this happen before. So those parts of my life were really life adjusting. So, at those times I went to work fulltime. Thank God for St. Elizabeth's. They gave me a full-time job. Newton Wellesley gave me a job. And then the economics of hospitals, they wanted to downsize people. I was the last one in the first one out. And then Mass General had an opening for an OB nurse. They hadn't had OB's since the fifties, and they were starting a brand-new unit it was so funny because I sent my resume in and they called me back the same day and I almost had a heart attack. Because you never know. And sure enough I finished my career at Mass General. Which I really loved, but with any job, as you'll find as you get into your careers, there's a stress level that takes quite a bit out of you physically. I had both hips replaced. You talk to people my age; they're had something replaced in their bodies. Now that I'm retired, I'm sort of almost enjoying my life. Because what happens now are the health issues. Not so much for me, but for my partner.

KC and OS: Mhhhm

GL: Ok so, those are things we didn't know about. We didn't even think about. So that's sort of like where like what my life has really been like. So now this time I'm able to get to go to school. I'm able to go to Tower Hill and smell the flowers. I also babysit a lot for my youngest daughter. I babysat for my middle daughter. I never really have left my family and that can be a negative because I better just shut my mouth and not ask so many questions. Because I don't want to get too much into their weeds you know, give them the respect to say, "Okay, you kids make your own choice". But they're all married, and they all have jobs. I think this a time for me to kind of, I don't know, blossom. I just took a class on French Impressionism. Oh my God, I loved that class. There is a whole—it's for seniors and this is nothing I ever learned in nursing school. You didn't learn dabbing, or what did she call it, pixilation. You didn't learn about that in nursing school. So that's why I'm trying to fill that part of my education.

KC: That's awesome. I love that.

GL: Thank you.

KC: Kind of going back a bit.

GL: Sure sure.

KC: When your kids were growing up, were you working or was it in between when your husband was working, like when...

GL: Well God was very good. In that the only time I had to work when one of them was a baby was, I worked nights, which was awful, for my son when he was born that was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. And that was terrible. Working nights when you've got a two-year-old at home. He won't lay down for a nap with mommy. So that's when my husband lost his job. Although, I didn't really have to go back to work until we went to Medfield and the kids were older. I worked for an agency doing Med/Surg, which I didn't like. Then I found a job for Newton Wellesley. So, I've worked part time. The only time I've worked full time was when the kids were really older, and we were bankrupt. I had to do a forty hour; you know because I was the only money maker at the time. And that's why I keep telling my daughter, the younger one that's a nurse, "Don't ever lose your job." And I don't want to impact them or make them think they'll lose their job. But that's the first thing I say to Mya, "Is AJ ok, does he have a job?"

KC: On of the other things I had had a question about, that I wrote down was, so this was so interesting. You said something about back when you were working as a lactation consultant that there was a bunch of information out there that was inaccurate and things that weren't right, So what was wrong?

GL: Oh, mother of the church! So, a little mini history on breastfeeding.

KC: Ok cause I'm very interested.

GL: Well because it used to be the norm, way back like when your grandmother might have breastfed, or her mother may have breastfed, but then mothers were taught that formula was just as good as breast milk and why would you want to look like a cow to have a baby—I'm just giving you a shortened version—to have a baby sucking on you when you can go out and be yourself and have someone bottle feed the baby. It also came around during the wars when mothers had to leave the children with—they didn't really have nannies back then, but you know the nanas, and they went to work in the factories. Who's going to feed their babies? So, Enfamil, Nestle, all of those, the pediatricians started to fuel that this is just as good. They were never trained. One of my positions at MGH [Mass General Hospital] was teaching residents how to breastfeed because it wasn't taught in nursing or medical school. It is now, they have a two-second course, but the younger physicians now are very aware of the importance and value of a mother's milk. To me it is a miracle fluid. I used to tell mums, "You look at that formula and it's the same, the same, the same. It comes from a cow. The animals feed their babies and a mother feeds her baby cow's milk? She should be feeding her milk that's natural. And they would ask mothers, "Do you want to breastfeed or do you want to bottle feed?" And the pediatricians would say, "Don't breastfeed, it takes too much time. Oh my God, just bottle feed." So, it took me some time, to be honest with you, it took me quite a bit of time to re-educate in a gentle way. Because you don't want to embarrass anyone if that's their belief that breast milk and formula are the same. To understand the value of a mother's milk. My youngest granddaughter is being breastfed and I just love it. Oh, she's just growing and when you understand what it does to a newborn

baby right when it's born for God sakes, it protects the kid's gut. And it enables that baby to be bonded with the mother because having the baby in the nursery is what we used to do. They took the baby right away put it in the nursery and the mother couldn't see the baby. Now when the baby is born, it comes out of the vagina and they put it right on the mother's chest, naked, which is where it should be. And the mother's breath initiates the baby to breath, the mother's body, the antibodies she produces in that breast milk specifically for that gestational age for the baby, because it changes.

GL: Is what the baby needs at that time. not 2 ounces of frickin' formula! [laughs].

KC: Right.

GL: I also had to fight a lot with the staff, because we were trained as nurses, we had to make the formula when I was in nursing school because who would want to breast feed? And then when I was teaching initially and I wasn't an LC, we were taught 10 minutes, 10 minutes, 10 minutes, every 3 hours. No breast baby feeds like that.

KC: Right.

GL: No breast baby eats like that. It might be for an hour and a half and sleep for two, if you were lucky. They're not supposed to sleep through the night because their brains aren't mature enough to be able to take that deeper sleep. So yes, they do get up and nurse at night. How long should you breastfeed? And I would say, because I used to do a lot of teaching to parents and I'm not going to sugar coat it, this is exactly what you may experience, and I want you to be prepared for it. I used to say that breast milk digests, an ounce of breast milk digests in 20 minutes, well it takes an hour for formula to digest, but half of it is pooped out the diaper. Breast milk, if you look at a breast baby's stool, I can show you pictures if you'd like, [laughs] its seedy, it's because the majority of the nutrients are absorbed by the baby and when it passed its liquid. Whereas the diaper of a formula fed baby, is solid. Now, okay, I would never chastise a mother for choosing not to breast feed, I would try to educate her in a way to help her feel empowered, to make her own choice. We got to the point at Mass General [Hospital] where if a baby was in the NICU or the special care nursery, we would purchase breast milk. They would have milk banks, professional milk banks, this isn't something you do on the internet, Hey I've got breast milk, you want to buy it?! No really! Because that's exactly what they do, but think there used to be one in Worcester, there isn't another I don't believe. There's one in Newton and insurance companies will now pay for that breast milk for a very ill baby if a mother cannot breast feed and some mothers were so intent on nursing, I don't know how many times I, several times I had to breast pump a mother who was incubated.....

KC: Oh wow.

GL:under anesthesia, because she was in a coma, or something and I would teach the nurses how to massage the breast to get that breast milk. And we would go through the medications to make sure it wasn't going to hurt the baby. I was really the only lactation person in the entire hospital. So, you'd get to see a variety of very sad cases of mothers, they couldn't produce milk,

supposedly, and you'd have to kind of walk them through there are ways to get the baby to go back to breast. You have this little lube, a supplemental breast, the baby thinks it's your breast and it's actually, you might have to use some formula, but it's okay, it's alright. And that it's okay to carry your baby, it's okay to hold your baby, because your grandmothers were taught, maybe even your mothers, don't hold that baby you are going to spoil that baby! That baby will NEED you. Can you imagine? A baby needs you! For God's sakes!

KC: Yeah.

GL: Really! I mean, a newborn cannot fend for itself. So, it needs an adult and generally it's the mother. Now I know this may sound very strange to you. We have some fathers who are so connected with their babies, they would put the tube on their chest so the baby would nurse. And people would say, because they knew the value of what that milk was if the mother was that ill, and there are cases where men can produce milk. Under certain conditions. When we would have women partners, the female partner many times would start stimulating her milk supply before the baby came so she would be able to breast feed the baby if her partner couldn't.

KC: That's awesome.

GL: And that made hairs stand up on my arm. Oh wow. And then, I always had, whatever happened I always had some positive feedback. Even when mothers were coming back with their second or third kid, they'd say, "Oh I remember you!". And I keep saying, "Oh gee, I hope I didn't do anything bad!" [laughs] So what's happened now there's much better understanding of the value of that milk. As a matter of fact, Mass General is doing stem cell research on breast milk.

KC: That's cool!

GL: Against cancer! As a treatment for cancer.

OS: That's very interesting.

GL: Oh yeah and every time that baby nurses the milk changes. The nutrients in the milk change. So why does the baby stay healthy when it nurses? Well let's say sometimes they're sick, but they get better, they get healthier faster. I just read that when you look at your breast you have your nipple, that's got about 10 pores and then you have these little pimples around, those are called tubercles of Montgomery; they also leak milk. So, the baby goes to breast, the baby is sick, the baby exchanges saliva with the mother's breast milk, it goes into her system, she develops the antibodies to pass onto her baby when she nurses. Now how good is that?

KC: Yeah, that's so much better than what you would be able to get out of a bottle. I never knew any of this, this is so interesting.

GL: Well that's why I'm saying it! So, our culture today, their formula full! And you know what they did in Africa and the poorer countries? They would send over free formula for six months

and the mothers would normally have breast fed, couldn't! And then, they would have to make their, quote unquote "powdered milk" with dirty water and the babies came down with dysentery! So, Nestle is, I mean don't get me going on that. But it really, they really worked against mothers doing in the poorer countries what they would normally do. When we would have moms from countries that naturally breast fed, they had to formula feed. You want to know why? Because it's the "American way." The other thing is, and this was kind of sad, this gets a little political, we have nutritional programs where formula would be given to the mother on discharge even if she was breast feeding. Just in case, just in case. That takes away the mother's sense of "I can do this." I can't remember the name of the organization, it will come to me, but now they don't do that anymore because they realized the value of that breast milk. You know?

KC: Right.

GL: Don't ever get me goin' on breast feeding.

KC: [Laughs] Kind of changing gears a little bit, but going off something you said a little bit, do you consider yourself like actively political? Like at all?

GL: Okay you may not like the answer, okay. And I don't talk to my brother anymore about politics because he's on the other side. And actually, I've lost a few friends because they are on the other side. And I get so angry watching the television that it, it really upsets me to see what's happening. And I feel very sad. I really do I feel very sad. Because it, I mean, what is it, Ellen DeGeneres was sitting next to President [George W.] Bush.

KC: I saw all of that.

GL: And the twitter accounts start busting her chops because she's sitting next to a Republican?

KC: Yeah.

GL: But she handled that beautifully.

KC: I loved what she said. It was nice.

GL: Oh, she was good, I liked her. So, I, we don't really contribute to political parties.

KC: Mhmm.

GL: Okay as far as politics, I believe I work on trying to be conservative, I mean conservation. I don't—I'm not as intense in my feelings as AOC [U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez] has for climate change is going to kill us in 12 years. No, I don't believe that, but I do support getting rid of the plastic bags. I support—I know straws are a pain in the neck but watching that straw come out of that turtle's nose almost killed me. And then looking at these two really cute guys on TV that started some program about plastic. And they go underneath the water and they scoop up all the plastic...

KC: The water! Oh, those things!

GL: Oh, I love that!

KC: That's so cool.

GL: That's really good!

KC: Yeah!

GL: So, I think our country is working very hard on trying to be—I mean, not everybody, you still see litter, but changing Styrofoam. We recycle plastics and stuff like that and when I go food shopping, I bring the same brown paper bags. I don't have to take a bag from the Stop and Shop. [Laughs].

KC: That's awesome.

GL: So politically active, I wouldn't say we are activists. But we are very aware of what's going on.

KC: Right.

GL: Very aware, and very unhappy. For both sides.

KC: I was going to say I feel that's what most people say at this point. There's no one that's pleased at the moment.

GL: No! For either side!

KC: Exactly, exactly.

OS: Do you have any involvement in volunteering or community work?

GL: I used to. I mean when I was a younger mother, I was the Brownie [leader], I was the soccer coach, I was very involved in the school association. Any programs that the schools had I—my son went to Xavierian Brothers High School, this is way back. And they had bingo night, okay, but there was so much smoke you'd come out smelling like it. But I did not go, so anytime there was a need, I met that need. Right now, my focus is on helping my daughters as far as childcare. Like today helping my daughter. I'm trying to think, I don't volunteer like I used to. But I don't consider the babysitting and the childcare and all that 'volunteering.'

OS: Mhmm, that makes sense.

GL: So, I don't feel guilty. [Laughs]

KC: Right.

OS: You've talked a lot about going to Catholic schools, but now you consider yourself more of a Christian? So, would what would you say, what role has religion played in your life?

GL: Well, you know it's funny, people talk about religion, I guess I put it in another way. I do a grateful log every day and that's helped me. I am an alcoholic, have been one for fifty years and I have been alcohol free for almost 300 days. And it's this app that I have called Alcohol Free and it's from London. And it's a beautiful support group, it really is. They have just as much trouble as we do. I never got into drugs, but my drug of choice was alcohol. And back in the time it was very common to drink excessively. My husband's European, he's Latvian, and you'd go over to his brother's house and my God we are doing shots of schnapps and doing this and doing that so, my mother didn't drink so what did I know? You know? And that has changed for me a lot. I enjoy my life more I think now because I don't drink. I just want to—I don't want to proselytize my children because they'll shut you right down. What else was in that question? You had something else?

OS: The role that religion has played.

GL: Oh, religion okay! So instead of religion, I believe in God. Part of me is extremely angry with the Catholic church because of the shit—oh, the the...

OS: It's okay.

GL: ...the abuse that has occurred, that was occurring when I was a little girl. And the understanding that the nuns are not saints as I found out when I took care of them because they were yelling just as loud as everybody else. So, I became very disillusioned, I really did. It doesn't mean I don't pray; I do. I believe there's somebody up there and I thank him or her every single day that I wake up, giving me another day to do good. But we don't go to church. We don't say the rosary like we used to, we don't do novenas. Our daughters—all of our children went to Catholic schools. Our two daughters went to Newton Country Day, which is in Newton. And our son went to Xavierian, and the only one that goes to church is my son. My two daughters, I don't really call them atheist because they do believe in God, they just don't practice the strictness that the Catholic church had. You couldn't eat fish on Friday because then you would go to hell. And then Saint Christopher isn't a saint. My brother is named after Saint Christopher, you know all of a sudden, they change these rules! And we were taught you have to believe this. So, I'm very—I'll use the big D word, disappointed in the church and I'll say blah blah blah no way. And when I talk to my high school friends on Facebook, we all have the same feelings. You know, not everybody. But I just have no warmth towards that church, and I have really no warmth towards any church. But I don't consider myself a bad person, because I want to do good for people. And I want to do good for myself. Live healthy. So that's about it for the religion, you know religion kind of thing.

OS: That makes sense, I think your answer it makes sense.

KC: Yeah.

OS: I get it.

KC: Absolutely.

GL: You talk to people my age that went to Catholic school, no it's disappointing. I love going to mass, I love that whole thing, that whole ritualistic, ritualism, it seeing all the incense and all that. And then they take the statues down, they turn the thing around and it just, I don't know I just started to pull away.

KC: Kind of winding down a little bit.

GL: Oh sure.

KC: Based on your life experience, what's some advice you'd give to women of today?

GL: I will tell you, I am so happy that our young women have so many choices, and you're not being boxed into a channel. You can only do this, you can only be a mother, you can only do this, you can only do that whereas we boxed, boxed. You have a lot of more educational opportunities, especially in the sciences. It's funny I was having my hair done and the young lady that was washing my head, she says she's going to school to be a physicist and I said "HALLELUJAH!" There's more women in medicine now, because the 'big boys' understand women bring a different, not a view, but a different understanding. A now there can be miserable women in medicine but there's a gentleness, there's an inclusiveness. It's hard work to become a woman today because you're getting so many mixed messages as far—well I'm on Poshmark [clothing resale app], okay?

OS: Mhmm.

GL: And some of these people that want to follow me, some of the outfits they have, they're what I call "slutty." And I, well you want to look attractive. You want to look becoming, but you don't need to look like a 'street person' to attract the right guy so I worry about Tinder and I worry about Craig's List and now that my daughters are all married, [laughs], I'll just start worrying about my granddaughters!

KC: [laughs]

GL: You know, I think you need to be brave and stand up for what you believe in. Don't be abused, demand respect. I think it's very important from whomever you're with, especially if it's your partner, that you do have a voice and you need to use it. And you do have an opinion and it's just as correct as his or her opinion. You know? Because we were always taught to, "Shhhhhhh don't upset the apple cart!" You know? You've got to make things smoothie smooth. And that's how I was brought up and my daughters aren't like that, I don't know how that ever

happened? They speak their opinion. But I think, women have come a very good way, but I still think there's a lot more. You know? And I think- just value yourself as a human being. As a woman you are very special. I used to teach a sex education class, for Saint Edward's when I was going to church and I used to talk to teenagers about—well because you can't talk birth control in the Catholic church. But I used to say, "Now remember, you have a gift of fertility." Because I was trying to get it across to them that that is such a special area of both the man and the woman; but especially the woman. If you are choosing to have children, you bear these children. And you feed them, and you care for them. I think, there's wonderful positive things for today's young women but then you also have things that are more challenging for you. I think the #MeToo [movement] has done a great job, I wish I'd had a #MeToo. Finding out all of these things, but still, I'm sure it still occurs. It doesn't go away. And then when you're the only bread winner you have to be careful how you handle it. You know, if you're the bread winner of the family.

KC: Right.

OS: How do you feel about the choices you've made in your life? Like are there things that you wish you could go back and change or are there things that you think... oh I'm really glad I made that choice.

GL: I'm really glad I became a nurse. I really think that's such a deep part of me. What I regret most is not going to college. Because I just, I have this need to want to learn. And at the time, I didn't. Because it was all about making money. Becoming a mother was an absolute bang my head against the wall moment. I had no idea how rough it is to be a mother. I think a lot of that had to do with the fact that I didn't really have that close of a relationship with my mom, so I didn't have a role model to understand this is what mothering is like. So, I had to learn. By the second and third kid I got it down pretty good, but the first one was a shock. And I was a nurse! I should have known. I thought my work and career choices were very good decisions. And making the choice not to drink anymore has been a major impact on me. It's like I wake up and I'm going, "Oh my god! The sun is out! Oh, Its raining!" No, It's the weirdest thing, you know? When you've been drinking for that long and you're in a constant hangover state and, you know, I've learned I can't be a moderate drinker. Some people can drink one drink fine, nope, not me. And so, to understand at my age, 74, to understand that, "Okay Germaine, you made the right decision," I think that's a big event for me.

KC: That's pretty much all we have unless there is anything else...

GL: [laughs] Well would you like to know more about breast milk?!

KC: I love that.

GL: I have a tendency to over talk so...

KC: No this is fantastic!

GL: So, I want to make sure all of your questions are answered.

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KC: No, I mean I think we are good unless you have anything else you wanted to add? I feel like we were so nervous we wanted to get all of our boxes checked off with this information...

GL: Oh! Do I understand?! YES.

KC: And I feel like it went so perfect, it couldn't have flowed better, this is great. I feel like...

GL: One of the things I feel so sad about is my memory. I've had mini strokes in the past.

KC: Oh wow.

GL: From hypertension—don't get hypertension! [Laughs] And that's impacted my memories and I feel sad about that. I really do, but learning something new I find I remember better.

KC: Yeah.

GL: Just don't ask me what's going on back there! Like your names, I can't tell you what they are.

KC: That's okay.

GL: Olivia is one.

OS: Yes

GL: Krysta?

KC: Krysta, Krysta.

GL: Very pretty names.

OS: How old were you when you were allowed to date?

GL: Oh mother.

OS: And when you did date were like place that were acceptable to go on dates?

GL: Ohhh.

OS: Because I feel like that would be, that's an interesting point to talk about.

GL: My mother was very strict. But somehow my husband, I actually met him at CYO, Catholic Youth Organization. And I had no idea he was interested in me. Mom always said that you're

never going to have a boyfriend and I was 15. So then, what he would do was he would bring by bicycle spokes to the house to give to my brothers and so he wedeled his way in. Dates back then, remember this is the 60s, we had no money, he was like a carpenter and so we would go to Hayes and Thick Bridge for a pot of tea. Or movies were 25cents, we'd sit in that thing all day for 25 stinking cents. The biggest shows that we went to was Ray Charles at Blinstrom's, I don't know if kids remember Blinstrom's, but it burned down. Everly Brothers, Righteous Brothers. I remember when he first kissed me. We were playing Santa Claus upstairs.

KC and OC: [Laughs]

GL: Because I had no privacy! It wasn't like I had a porch to go on! We were in a brick building. So, the entryway had a chair and I was sitting on his knee and for some stinking reason he said, "Let's play Santa Claus," and that started the whole thing. So, he was actually my only boyfriend.

KC: Oh wow.

GL: Yeah, all through high school, all through nursing school and then we were engaged for a year and my mother said, "No, I don't want you to get married because you don't know him well enough." Well I'd known him since I was 15 and I was 21. And so, we got married in '67, that's what it was. Yeah, and then I had my first baby at 28. So, I worked for 6 years as an OR nurse. So, dating back then was completely different. It really was, it wasn't, it was so different because people didn't have the money, the expendable income that we have now. And I think my wedding cost \$600 total. I got my wedding dress at I. J. Fox for 50 bucks. [Laughs]. So, when you look at, when I look at my daughters' weddings, 25,000 stinking dollars. I'm sure if you talk to your moms about that too or your grandmothers, your nanas, about how things were different back then. And I don't know if it was, if it's better or not actually, you know? Because I grew up with not a lot of material things. Not a lot at all. When I told my husband, we could only go to the bank three times a month he almost laughed his butt off. "What do you mean three times a month?!" Because that's what my mother told me.

KC: It's like a cap, you've got your three times, that's it. You need a fourth? It's too late.

OS: So, another thing you talked about, you mentioned Poshmark, which I love. I love Poshmark.

GL: I have a business, on Poshmark. I made \$50!

KC: YES!! (Laughs)

GL: And eBay I do eBay too.

OS: What was considered fashionable when you were young? When you were our ages, what was your idea of being fashionable? What were things that were typical then that we maybe don't see as much now?

GL: Well, a lot of it is coming back you know? Bobby socks, poodle—well I never had a poodle skirt, you had to be wealthy to have a poodle skirt. Jeans, jeans rolled up with a man's shirt. See I didn't have a lot of clothes. Fashionable... you remember the circle? I don't know if you remember the circle pins with the flowers and the one who was the fashion maven was my sister-in-law and she died. But I would get my clothing ideas from her, and I would go to Filene's Basement, which was really cool. Down at the bottom. And pick up stuff there you know? If you look at the fashions coming back like the palazzo pants, the one-piece thing you put on and it zips in the back? It's pants with the top connect and I can't think of the...

OS: Jumpsuits.

KC: Jumpsuits.

GL: Oh yes jumpsuits were very popular. Except if you had to go to the bathroom, you ...

KC: [laughs] Take off the whole thing.

GL: Put a little zipper there so you can go. Fur was popular. But now you don't wear fur. I wasn't really big into jewelry. As a matter of fact, this was my engagement ring, so this is specifically for Latvia, put it on my right hand and then we were at the parking lot at WBZ in Brighton and that's when he asked me to marry him—how romantic. I took the ring off and put it on my left finger. And then when I got married, I had the gold band, so its very traditional. And when I—thank god for the first boy! Remember they're from Europe so the son is the—so I had them soldered together. I wasn't really into jewelry back then. And I'm still not really into jewelry. I forget to wear it.

KC: Me too.

GL: I do, honest to god you get so darn busy.

KC: Plus, I know I'm going to lose something I'll drop something.

GL: Oh yeah!

KC: I'll crack something.

GL: Now my daughters, [laughs] they love David Yurman. They love this, they love that. You know? My middle daughter has a fetish for pocketbooks.

KC: Ooooooo.

GL: [Hermes] Birkin. Rebecca Minkoff. You know the whole—well if you go on Poshmark, you know?

KC: They have some cool stuff.

GL: Kate Spade. But to me, this is my pocketbook, [laughs], don't need a lot more.

KC: Love that.

KC: I feel like we've heard a lot of stuff.

OS: Yes.