

Interviewee: Barbara Guertin
Interviewer: Olivia Bowie and Carolina Santos
Date: April 3, 2014
Place: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcriber: Olivia Bowie and Carolina Santos



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Abstract: Barbara Guertin was born in 1960, in Bay Shore, New York. She has lived in a variety of states, such as New York, New Jersey, and Oregon, she even spent some time living abroad in London. Barbara has been living in Worcester since 1998 and is a recruiter at Fallon Community Health Plan. She contributes a great deal to the Worcester community, by serving on many different boards such as the Worcester Historical Museum and Girls, Inc. Although she has many obligations and responsibilities, she is willing to take time off to fulfill her passion as a professional actress, producer, and director. Barbara is very interested in merging her theater background with her involvement in the Worcester community. She is currently working on having a film studio in Worcester and when finished it will be the second largest in the country. In her interview, Barbara emphasizes her belief in women's potential to hold leadership positions in the workplace. She is a firm believer in applying one's skills to benefit the community and help others, a philosophy instilled on her by her parents.

OB: Alright, so this is Olivia and Carolina starting their interview with Mrs. Guertin. Do you want to start?

CS: Sure. We are completing a citywide oral history, 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/community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with Mrs. Guertin. Thank you for your help with this important project....

BG: You're welcome.

CS: Thank you. Please, respond; say your name and the date

OB: And that you give permission that we can use this.

BG: Sure, my name is Barbara Guertin and its April 3rd, 2014 and I give full permission to use my voice, recording, anything else that you sole desire. [laughs]

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CS: Thank you.

OB: I just want to check... Okay, it's still going, never mind. We're good cause those things lock. [laughs] So I'll ask the first question then. Ok, so what is your full maiden name and, and or your married name?

BG: My maiden name was Bobkowski (??) and my married name is Guertin. My, my middle name is Olga so [laughs] which gives a little clue that both my parents are both from European heritage mainly central- Northern European heritage. So I'm Polish and I am Swedish and German and a little Austrian thrown in there. [laughs]

OB: I'm a little German as well. [laughs]

CS: Where were you born?

BG: Bay Shore, New York. In 1960, [] of 1960.

OB: Okay. And so you have been married; you told us that. What is the name of your current husband?

BG: John Francis Guertin.

CS: Do you have children?

BG: I do. I have two children. Both of them were born here in Worcester. My eldest is Alexis Guertin and she was born []1998. My son is Maximus Wolfgang Guertin and he was born on [laughs] []2001.

OB: Good names, good names. Alright...

BG: I dare say they go to Abby Foster Charter School named after Abby Kelley Foster who was at that convention in 1850 [laughs].

OB: What cultures or ethnicities do you identify yourself with? So your background is European.

BG: Yes, Swedish, German, and Polish mainly. Yeah.

OB: Awesome.

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CS: Tell me about your parents.

BG: Well both of them were first generation American. So their parents, all but my one grandfather who was – he was born here. But both his siblings and his parents were born in Germany, but both of my parents were first generation basically. And they were born and raised in the confines of New York City of what is now known as the borough of Staten Island.

OB: New York, love NY... You said you were born in NY and you obviously live here now, have you lived anywhere during your life?

BG: Oh, yes! [laughs] I have- did a semester in college in London.

OB: I always wanted to go there.

BG: and I moved to Michigan for a few months, my mother had moved there at one point, lived in Portland, Oregon for five years during the mid-eighties. And let's see I'm trying to think and I have lived in NYC, was moved to New Jersey when I was about two and half years old just 24 miles over the George Washington Bridge so I'm really a New York- New Jersey kid. And oh my gosh, and I guess, I guess that's it; living here so.

OB: Do you have a favorite place that you've lived?

BG: I loved Portland, Oregon so you know that T.V. show, Portlandia? It's pretty accurate [laughs]. It was that way in the eighties especially early eighties, very eclectic. Coffee was just becoming a really big thing, the pre-Starbucks days you know.

OB: [laughs] Pre-Starbucks, pre-dunks.

BG: Yes, it was wild. I loved living in London too.

OB: I always wanted to go; I want to study abroad in London so badly.

BG: Yes, London is everything and more that you expect and more. Although, I will say that when I lived in London and NY, you could live there and be poor. [laughs] So unless you're a trust fund baby, you know, I'm a kid who was raised- born and raised by two parents that were both educated which was unusual, I think in 1960. But my father was a rocket scientist – believe it or not you don't make a lot of money being a rocket scientist. And my mother didn't go to work until I was in my teens and she ended up running four newspapers and selling real estate on the side.

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OB: Wow, busy.

BG: So both my parents [are] highly, highly intelligent people. We just never made a billion bucks basically. You know situation, but again living in London, living in NY are great experiences that everyone should entertain at some point in their lives just because the culture and the different personalities and ethnicities that you come in contact with, you'll never be the same after that and I mean that in a very positive way.

CS: [laughs] I know you weren't born in Worcester, but when did you arrive to Worcester?

BG: Well, I moved here in 1998 but I started coming here back in 1990 when I was asked to come audition for a play at Foothills theater and then I moved here. I met my husband I think it was 1995. We dated for three years and then decided, you know, that we'd get married. Then I moved up here and all in one year I moved, got married, and had a baby because I had my daughter the last day. [laughs] She came a couple of weeks early so [laughs] I fitted it all in [laughs].

OB: Did you do the play?

BG: Oh, I did get the play, the first one and I subsequently worked – did seven shows at Foothills theater.

OB: Wow.

CS: Wow.

BG: And I am a professional actor

OB: That's so cool.

BG: Started acting in NYC at twelve years old. I am a member of all the acting unions for several decades now.

OB: Wow, I'm helping out over at the Hanover now.

BG: Oh, you are!

OB: Yes, Assumption is putting on Les Mis [Les Misérables] and I'm stage...

BG: Oh yeah, sure!

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OB: hand for that so hoping that's next Friday; I'm very excited.

BG: Now I've read all about it today, yeah.

OB: It's my favorite musical so I'm very, very excited.

BG: I saw Les Mis the second night it previewed in London.

OB: Ooofff (ph), amazing.

CS: Wow.

BG: Going back to the eighties, yes. And Patty Lupone, don't know if you know who she is. She was playing Fantine and she was amazing, but the show had problems technical difficulties so the show ran four and half hours [laughs].

OB: It was already a long show. [laughs]

BG: It was already a long show and it ran for four and half hours. People were running walking out. You know the Brits, they have no patience for that.

OB: [laughs]

CS: [laughs]

BG: It was a wonderful experience.

OB: My turn, your turn... Do you have any family members that live around Worcester or near here?

BG: I do, my mother actually moved up here after 9/11, she got laid off from her newspapers and the newspaper closed. Because I don't know if- people realized the economic impact that 9/11 had on a lot of different you know companies and industries. It was her time to retire anyways, she was already you know- she was done. So she decided to come up here to be near her grandchildren and she moved up here. She came looking for a house, one weekend- Easter weekend and two my son was just four months old and we picked out a house. She made an offer on Saturday and on Sunday, she broke her hip. [laughs]. And she never went back, she literally had a moving van go to her house and pack everything up and move it all up here into the house that she purchased. So it was a quite unusual situation but she moved up here and she's been here

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you know for fourteen years now. I mean twelve years, sorry. Twelve years she's been here and it's kind of remarkable. And she's still alive but I would say you know not long for the world but she's eighty one and she was born []1933. A remarkable person.

OB: Sounds like it. Definitely, sounds like it.

CS: [laughs]... What challenges do you think this city still faces? What would you change about the city?

BG: Well, I think this town has- so many people that were born and raised here and which is a wonderful thing, but sometimes that also can create sense of people don't like change. So what I run into quite often- I hear the words coming out of people's mouths, well that's not the way we do things. So you know, I'm someone who's extremely adaptable and flexible and I'm always trying to push people behind their boundaries to accept ideas and concepts and visions so for me that is the biggest challenge I think for this town is for people to say you know this has and always has been and is one of the most innovative cities in this country and in the world for that matter. I mean Sigmund Freud came to visit here you know in the late eighteen hundreds and he didn't go anywhere else in the United States. He came to Worcester because Worcester was considered a very open-minded and innovative city and you know all the inventions that kept have gone out of here. I mean Esther Hollander herself in 1850 after she graduated college started her own greeting card company. You know really- they haven't given her this distinguished-distinguishment(ph) yet but she was really the first person who came up with the assembly line concept and the fact that she was a woman, the first woman CEO that we know of [cellphone rings]. There was one or two other people that you know around the country, women that were also doing some similar things, but she really started something that became a million dollar- multimillion dollar industry, greeting cards. But she eventually sold to Whitney who became her business partner at one point and Whitney cards were famous, you know worldwide. So you know I think the concept in this town of allowing new ideas, new concepts, and innovation, we always need to be cognizant about that and open our minds here in Worcester just to have a listen because what you might hear could be the next greatest thing and I think that's where I come in [laughs], in this town and I definitely pushed the envelope a little with some of my ideas and I think people have gotten used to me now. This being my fifteenth year so I do think at this point people know that they can expect something different [laughs]. In fact, they anticipate that I'm going to come up with a concept or an idea that will be something that they never heard or seen before or maybe they have but I've done a spin on it. So that way it's you know a new take on something. I do think that is the main hindrance for this city is just keeping their minds open and you know having that open mind policy.

OB: Okay. What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been like you personally or other women that you know have experienced in Worcester?

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BG: The minute you said that of course my mind goes back to history, having been on the board of the Historical Museum, having known people who written plays about the Worcester corset factory, I think of the fact that was a factory that was, it was populated and almost every employee was a female how interesting that is. I think that's probably one of the few factories in the world.

OB: Definitely.

BG: That was set up that way but you know what was life for women back then. I think this town does have a lot of growth potential in you know thinking of women in bigger positions. At one point in 1990, I was a director of member relations for NY Chamber of Commerce. I was also in charge of staff member. I was in charge of women business council and we did studies and we, we met regularly to discuss the movement of women in the board room. How many women at that time were sitting on major fortune 500 companies? Well it's sad to say that things haven't changed too much since 1990. I think we have one and half more women sitting on the board since those days because I look at those statistics all the time. I will say that my career has taken me into executive and corporate recruitment and I very much have my finger on the pulse of, of women and their growth potential and if their salary are becoming closer to what their male counterparts are making and how much exposure women now have in leadership position across the board in corporate America. I- since I've been in Worcester for fifteen years I've gotten the opportunity to work for a couple of different industries. And in those industries, insurance, health insurance, I've been in biotech, med devices, genetic testing and I think I left anything out- and medical devices, not medical devices but medical equipment. I've gotten to work for some major companies Thermo Fisher, Boston Scientific, Hanover Insurance, etc. and in all of those companies during my tenure at those companies I have seen a, I would say a very nice rise in the amount of women accepted into leadership positions in those companies. Historically, the head of HR is usually a female; I mean that has been typically the case that's only the department that they would allow women to be in charge basically to be in charge of [laughs]. But nowadays it's very comforting to know that you see them in CFOs, they can be the head of claims, they can be the head of a laboratory. You know, biotech I will tell you in any of the scientific genres there is definitely candidly less amount of women in those management positions but I have to say when I worked for Athena Diagnostics which was bought out by Thermo Fisher and now is owned by Quest Diagnostics. While I was there, I increased the amount of women lab techs by at least a third and I was there close for three years. Well, that's a significant number.

CS: Yeah.

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BG: I hired about, I think it was a fifth of the graduating class of WPI who were bio majors so, I know for a fact that a good portion of those were women that I hired but WPI has made a pointed investment in hiring more women to scientific positions. So I do think that, getting back I guess to the question, you know this is something that is near and dear to me. In Worcester, I- I mean obviously being here for fifteen years I've seen a large change and just working for Fallon for the last two years I've seen a significant increase in some of the leadership roles now being populated by women. So I do have to say I see it on the rise; I loved to see a women sitting as city manager now that we're looking again for city manager wouldn't that be interesting especially you know I don't want to say it's been a old boys network here but it has been a boy's old network here.

OB: [laughs]

CS: [laughs]

BG: I don't think I can broadcast that any louder. [laughs]

CS: [laughs]

BG: So..

CS: Okay, where you attend school? Was it mostly in NY?

BG: I went to- do you mean high school, secondary school and so forth?

CS: Yes.

BG: I was in New Jersey and I went to Rutgers University but I went to the Women's College at Rutgers which at the time up until a couple of years ago was the largest women's college in the nation. But Rutgers decided to dissolve the colleges and now there are no more colleges at Rutgers; it's all Rutgers University. And that's an unfortunate thing because it was quite a legacy and I recently went to my 30th reunion, I think it was about a year or two ago, I can't remember [laughs] signs of aging. No, it was two years ago, it will be in May but what an amazing group of women were there at this function and practically every one of them a leader in their fields, PhDs, MDs, you know that have gone to have major breakthroughs in science and healthcare, in legal areas, running companies and major corporations, and I guess they say that women that go to women's colleges are more likely to have an advanced degree, to be running a company, and to be involved with volunteer opportunities. And I'm two out of three on those [laughs]

OB: [laughs]

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CS: [laughs]

BG: I did on several occasions almost go to graduate school but life happened and you know at one point I was in a PhD program- I was hopefully getting into a PhD program and they said we really want to accept you- I had exceptional grades undergraduate- but they said we feel like if you got a part of something, you would just leave

CS: [laughs]

BG: And they were absolutely right because three months later, I got a great part in something and I would've left [laughs].

CS: [laughs]

OB: [laughs]

BG: So I think that's answering the question.

OB: Mmhhm, yes. Did you have any challenges in your education, at all?

BG: No, I was a very good student and I loved- I was asked to be the student liaison- they've never had one before so I could talk with the professor and the students and be sort of like the go between so no I thoroughly loved college and when Facebook became popular that's when one of my college roommates said you have to go on this thing called Facebook and within 24 hours I was connected up with all my friends from college, it was quite amazing

CS: Oh, wow.

BG: And then 24 hours after that everyone from high school so I loved school and that's what surprising I never got an advanced degree but you know it's kind of like my next stage I've decided- I think I want to learn some more.

CS: Yeah.

OB: Never too late to keep learning.

BG: No, no.

OB: You gotta keep learning.

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CS: Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

BG: Well.

CS: I know you said you wanted to go to graduate school.

BG: Yes, I did- was the last person cut actually for Yale Drama [laughs]. It was between myself and one other person and that sort of was my dream to go to Yale Drama and once that didn't pan out, I just thought I will just work, I'll work in theater and so forth. Granted, I always had a day job, I always tried to find day jobs that were flexible and that's how I got into recruitment because even till today I'm still a working actor. I may work here and I have a very serious position here but I do have time off and I will take time and I will get calls to do parts or extra work or something on a movie set and I will absolutely do it. [laughs]. Just because it's a change of scenery and even though I am technically working, I'm taking a vacation day to work, I enjoy that so much, the change of scenery, I learn something every time I do that. So last year, I took about five days, I shot a online brokerage, a video for Fidelity and I got to work within a scene with American Hustle and worked on actually two days

OB: I loved...

CS: Yeah.

OB: Loved that movie. Loved that movie.

BG: So I got kissed by Jeremy Renner

CS: Wow [laughs].

BG: Double kiss cheek and shook- got to shake hands with Elizabeth Rohm no I kissed her too because she played his wife and got to shake hands with Jennifer Lawrence and Christian Bale.

OB: He's my favorite actor, all-time favorite.

CS: I loved him.

BG: What a scene and by the way that all

OB: Next time I see that, I'm going to look for you

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BG: Well, you'll just see the back of my head because the scene basically got cut out, all the dialogue and everything but that's what you get when you're an actress, you have to just know that you'll probably going to get cut out. I've been cut out of Woody Allen's movies [laughs]; I've got cut out of Labor Day which just got released, I played a waitress in that and got cut out of that [laughs]. So but you know that's

OB: Still an experience.

BG: A wonderful experience you get to work with famous actors in fact they called me to work on Sunday and I'm like you know what I need a day of rest so with Jason Sudeikis, I'm going to guess Tumble Down so it's fun, it's fun that I had been able to do all these things in my lifetime but I had no idea what I was going to do when I got out of college and believe it or not. I had Shearson Lehman which I'm not sure if you're familiar with that term but that name or that company. They were one of the major Wall Street houses back in 1982; they wanted me to come work for them as a stock broker which was kind of interesting because if they saw my math grades [laughs] but I think they saw something else, they saw somebody who had chutzpah and was very confident and you know I know enough about myself that I'm not a dummy and I think a lot of people would say I'm fairly bright and I could pick up easy. That's a thing as an actor, you have to have great improvisational skills, and you got to pick up really quickly and you have to be very adaptable, so you have to go with the flow. And that's everything for a broker if you're looking at a skill set to have that's everything that you need to. The only thing I didn't have was the love of money, I really unfortunately – if there's one downfall I can say for sure that I have it's that I never loved money that much. Now I have grown to appreciate it though [laughs] especially when I get to raise it for other you know foundations, you know for nonprofits so forth also for all my ventures that I've worked on. So hopefully I answered that question.

OB: What support networks and groups have been important to you?

BG: That's a great question; I think my college and high school friends you know leaning on them. But when I moved to Worcester, one of the smartest things I did was I joined the Junior League. I have attended and almost joined the league in NYC but I was just too busy at the time but I knew I was moving here and I was settling down and I was having kids and it was the very right thing to do because the Junior League is a wonderful nonprofit organization of women that their main focus, their mission is to help women and children in this community and through that organization I learned about all the different nonprofits and that's how I got hooked up with many of the nonprofits and that's how I ended up on the board on the [Worcester] Historical Museum, Girls Inc. These are all – these are nonprofits that the League helps with, they help support but the League is just made up of some of the most amazing, talented, women so it has been- till today they have been best friends in town. The first friends I made are still my friends

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so I think right there if there's a league in anyone's hometown, I mean join it [laughs]. I might also add I have a wonderful, my church has a great women's group as well. I should always mention that because I spent a fair amount of time especially with young children, you know with the play groups at church and things like that.

CS: I know you work outside the home, when did you begin working and what did you do?

BG: When I began working like my first job?

CS: Yeah like your first job.

BG: We had a next door neighbor who owned a camp up in Maine so I would do all the landscaping and mow his lawn while they were up in Maine all summer and I took great pride in gardening horticulture activities [laughs]. I think they paid me like fifty dollars for the whole summer and I was happy [laughs].

OB: You have done so many-like-different jobs, and you're a member of all these different boards, and you're an actor, and all these things. Do you have a favorite thing that you've done? Like a favorite job that you've worked on, or a favorite board you've worked on?

BG: I love the historical museum. I think it is-its-a group of people, that you know-lead by Bill Wallace, the executive director. He's a remarkable human being, one of the smartest men I've ever met in my life, and yet such a great sense of humor, so it's been an honor to work with him. The board as a whole just is – it's not a stuffy board, you know, you really feel like you have an impact. The museum never has a lot of money so we have to be very creative and that board has allowed me or given me some entrée to try some pretty crazy things. So, such as the ghost walks which we have regularly where I hire the actors, I costume them and we put on these really fun programs where we can highlight Worcester's finest or in some cases Worcester's criminals [laughs] it can be just outrageous things that we do and the museum has allowed me to do that. But in general-you know-I've loved acting my whole life, and I take it very seriously. I love producing, directing, and acting in all assets of performance, whether it be filmed or live performance, I mean that's where I'm at my best.

CS: Okay. How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

BG: How have I what? How I've balanced it?

CS: Yes [laughs] balanced it all.

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BG: Well [laughs] depending on who you would ask, you know, I don't know whether balance should be that phrase, but first of all family comes first. It does and I think sometimes people see my pictures in the papers and magazines and so forth, you know, "Oh she's out and about all the time". There's no way I could be, you know, I've got two kids and they're very high maintenance [laughs] and I'm with them, I'm basically home cooking dinner every single night which is not standard. I think a lot of working women don't do that. Cooking is one of my creative outlets so I enjoy it. It also helps me maintain their weight and their nutritional guidelines and, you know, I don't make – and I make home cooked meals. I don't do a lot of out of a bag or a box or something, so I think it's important that any parent is cognizant about that. And, you know, I do try to be a part of their schooling, they're now in sixth and ninth grade. But you can't do it all for them, they have to do a lot for themselves too and I never think anyone would call me a helicopter mom, however, I've been told that I'm more involved, you know, with their health and well-being than a lot of parents are. So to me, that's the best compliment, but it's not like it's overly obvious, I'm not one of the parents beating down the school doors [laughs] "I need to be in that classroom watching over my Johnny" or something so I've never done that. But I have when I was in the earlier grades I was definitely one of the moms that always went on the field trips and I was always reading up until fourth grade, you know, you can go in there once a week and read to the kids which I obviously loved to do because I love stories, I love, you know, being animated and-and teaching 'cause that is something that I've also enjoyed. I think anyone who directs and produces is really a teacher at heart, that's why you're doing it you're you know facilitating others to do what you know in your brain, you know, for actors or set designers, anything, you're teaching them, "How about the vision?" and, you know, helping them facilitate.

OB: Do you have any like, costs of the work you-or personal-costs of what you've decided to do like the jobs you've decided to do? Like there's never enough time to do such-and-such or such-and-such. You seem to be good, like if you need a break you will take it...

BG: I've gotten smart in the last couple of years and I've invested in more than I should probably in some family vacations. You work so hard, and my husband works just as hard as I do, he's similarly as the business but he also is a rock and roll drummer and you know, so we're both very creative, we have our yin and yang sides and I just basically said "we're going away!" So the last couple of years we've gone on week long vacations which is new for us. We hadn't gone on one since 2005 and I think it really brings a family closer, you know, I think-when you have a whole family unit together with no distractions it just makes-it makes us all work better as an entity, but you know the cost, the cost is great yeah I mean you cannot go to everything and, I

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don't do a lot of girls nights out let me tell you, I don't really have that opportunity. I don't go to a lot of Pampered Chef parties, and Silpada [Jewelry] parties. I would love to, but, it's just enough for me to go to rehearsal a couple times a week when we're doing a play. So, you know, I cannot take that time cause I do go to a lot of board meetings, I sit on a lot of different boards and when you're on a board you're also on a committee of some sort, at least one, if not two or three committees. So there is always a committee meeting that I need to be at. I look at my calendar for the week and sometimes they're at 8 o'clock in the morning, sometimes they're at 5 o'clock right after work. So, I mean, I'm usually going to a meeting sometime during a given week.

CS: Okay. What type of work did your husband do?

BG: He owns his own company, he owns Guertin Graphics and Awards, and it's been around. His father started the trophy business, he started the t-shirt business in college, and he was gonna be – he actually was a pre-med major and was planning on going to be a doctor and he made so much money his first year making-selling t-shirts he said [laughs] let's rethink this...

OB: Nope that's it [laughs].

BG: So, you know, he actually got his executive MBA a couple years ago from BU [Boston University] and I was very proud of him for that. He's actually suffered from MS for the last 13 years and because we caught it very early and he's been on some great medications, he's been able to stave it off really well, so no one would ever know that he has it. He is the energizer bunny. He's in an Irish band, he's in a Jimmy Buffet band, he's in a, you know, a classic rock and roll band. He's played with Orleans, the well-known band who wrote Still the One, I got to go on tour with them a couple of times..

OB: That's so cool.

BG: I mean, you know, we'll go to the islands or something or Florida for a week, you know, Disney World you know, I mean its great fun. I mean he's playing the whole time, though so. Yeah but that's our life. Our family is definitely off-center, I don't think anyone would say, "Oh they're the perfect American family." We can kinda look like that, you know, but in reality, he dresses up as Elvis, you know, every Halloween...

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

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BG: I dress up as Priscilla, I wear a wig, you know, for those who can't see me, obviously I have very blonde hair, so I wear the Priscilla wig and we welcome about 400 people to our house, you know, we-we redid the whole front of our house to look like Graceland, it's a hoot. [laughs]

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

BG: We're a little different [laughs] but you know what, people expect that, as I said a couple times, they expect that from us.

OB: Do you consider yourself active politically?

BG: Because I ask for so much money from so many organizations, I don't like to side with any like-I don't visibly like to say I am this or that. But I grew up in a very political household [laughs] and I don't need to really say but my parents both worked for – they were campaign managers for folks in New Jersey, and because of that, you know, and I had a brother that was an environmental scientist, so he was very political and he helped stop, you know, endangered species-he got them on the list, he got to stop developments projects and so forth. I've just always kind of – people don't know what I am, I'm kind of ambiguous about it, however I, you know, the people know that I will support them financially, so, I'm just quiet about it. That way I don't-you know, people say, Ooh I don't want her on the board of this committee or why should I give her money, she's..." I really feel like it's a private choice, but however, I definitely, you know, I'm from New York, I'm in the arts community [laughs] I don't think it take a genius to figure out which way I sway [laughs]. So...

CS: Okay. I know you're very involved with the community with the board of in the art museum...

OB: Historical museum [laughs].

CS: [laughs] historical museum, and also Girls, Inc, what lead you to this work? To be involved in it?

BG: To be involved in general? Because my parents, you know, when I was 9, 10 years old I remember we were on weekends going to paint the local mental institution, that's what we called it back then because they needed it painted, and it had the horrible walls from the fifties, that horrible blue green color, that they used back then, and this was a way that, this is what you did,

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you, feeding over the years-you know-feeding the homeless, helping people out we had so many people coming to live with us over the years [laughs] you just-you help people. And what astonishes me are how many people don't even think about that on a daily basis, if somebody comes to me and says "I need help"-I try to help people with finding them jobs, that's why I love what I do, my day job as a recruiter. It's the best job on the planet, you know, helping people find work, finding that connection because so many people are kinda lost.

OB: Mhmm

BG: They say-oh they raise their hand for a job and I'll say oh, well you don't have the skill set nor do I think that's really what you're good at. Why don't you look at this kind of-line of work, so-you know-whether or not I can actually find them an actual position or just lead them in the right direction I feel like I've done something really good for humanity, from that perspective, but when it comes to sitting on boards, you're helping so many people, especially with-kids. Because the historical museum you're helping-we have a whole educational initiative for children, and that's one of the reasons I decided to join and I have been instrumental with-you know-moving along-you know-putting together out whole exhibit that we have now for kids. And then with Girls, Inc, STEM program, I've already expressed how important it was for me working in a scientific area, to have women become more and more a part of that population and-you know-having the stem program at Girls, Inc is a major thing for the young women in this town. And my daughter I'm proud to say is part of their Eureka Program and she won the leadership award there last year.

OB: Wow, that's really good.

CS: Yea that is, pretty good.

OB: What role has religion played in your life? I know you said you were a member of your church...

BG: Yes.

OB: So is religion important to you?

BG: You know, I grew up at a time where religion was becoming passé, and- so my parents sort of moved away from it, and then I went to college and found myself going to church for no reason, I just – I mean, my friends were going, "Folk mass Sunday nights, maybe I'll go." And I really enjoyed that and then when you live in Manhattan nobody goes to church [laughs] I'm

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sorry you just don't-you know-you're out and about. And then I started going my last year, I had a friend who would go and I would just-I always kind of-it wasn't like a huge part of my life, but when I moved here I found this church, which as it turns out my mother was Lutheran, I had no idea I was born and raised Catholic, and Lutheran, is-as you know it is-they consider themselves Catholic [laughs]. Martin Luther-you know-moved away from-you know-he just started his own church, which is all the Catholic doctrine, so to me, it's not – it's a no brainer, I mean it's not like I'm becoming a 7 Day Adventist or something, but I do think having a – I love the pastor at my church, she's amazing I've loved every pastor that's been there has been terrific, but I really have a connection with her, and she helps me through so many times, I can't even tell you. And I didn't expect that from religion I just expected it to be something for my children, but for me it has defiantly been an anchor and I--its not for everybody and I don't look it as a place where-you know- I go for help, I go there, as-this-for me its community and has been a community or me and I've been very involved, I'm a regular lector there and I taught Sunday School for ten years, which I just laughed, I thought, "They're asking me to teach Sunday School?" [laughs].

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

BG: But I did and I actually loved it, I absolutely loved it. It's just this year, I've just – I had, because of my mom being ill and I have to take care of her every morning, so I just – it was hard for me to get there to teach.

CS: Okay. How has like health issues-like your husband's illness, impacted your life or those in your family?

BG: Health has been, for the last 12, 13 years, I would say the overwhelming factor in my life. I have been blessed because up until the last 12, 13 years [laughs] it was never an issue. I was always healthy myself, there were no issues, but right after my husband got diagnosed, and then my mother broke her hip, my brother moved up here, my brother Tom Bulkowski.(??) He moved up here to take care of my mother and within a year there was something wrong with him, it turns out that he had Parkinson's, but he had a very aggressive form of Parkinson's which I soon discovered – well soon after discovered, was a genetic fixture in out DNA so it made sense. I had a cousin contact me in New York, he just got it at 50. All the men – the first born men -- get this aggressive form of Parkinson's and they're gone, in five to seven years.

OB: Wow.

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BG: So my brother died two years ago, on February 27th. He was not married he was a zoologist, PHD, ornithologist, he wrote several books on birds and he – frankly he was a brilliant scientist an amazing scientific writer. But I had to help him. I had to help him through the last couple years of his life. I was his healthcare proxy. I was constantly, you know, dealing with the doctors and neurologists, everyone, and [cries]

CS: I'm so sorry.

BG: [cries] it's just one of the most devastating things, to happen to me, when one of the good one's goes, it's always horrific. And then both of my parents right now, they're still alive, but my dad's – he was born 1930, he lives in Florida, and currently right now just getting out of a hospital and in a rehab, but is not long to the world either. So, you know, but at least they're old, and they've lived their lives, it's just devastating to lose a sibling, who had so much to give the planet.

OB: I'm so sorry.

CS: Yeah, I'm sorry.

BG: So health has been a major issue, and even myself, I've always been super, super healthy and a year ago – June 1st I ended up in the hospital and found out I have AFib [Atrial Fibrillation] which for a younger – I'm only 53, but they said it's probably – I just have to sleep [laughs]. I have to sleep and I have to try not to be so stressed out, they said I'll probably be fine. But, you know, it turns out that my dad has it, so its genetic, but it's unusual to find it so early, but I basically crashed [laughs] 'cause I do too much [laughs]. But that's what I do, that's how I'm built, so.

OB: Have you had-like good experiences [phone rings] finding like, quality, affordable healthcare?

BG: I work for Fallon Health.

OB: [laughs] well so yes obviously.

BG: I know all about the affordable care act [laughs].

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

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BG: I hire people, that support this.

OB: So you know.

BG: I'm a big supporter of this initiative, because I see how it works and how it had to change, and find the opponents to it-you know-basically just ignorance, and-unschooled and not asking the right questions. Anyone who has worked in or around healthcare or for any industries, such as the diagnostics world and medical devices, etc, pharmaceuticals, I mean, I think what happened with the pharmaceuticals, you know, the fact that they can just ask for any price, providers of care hospitals, I mean, their prices are out of control. This had to happen and if people don't understand that's what the whole point of this is, they're just angry, because, you know, maybe they have stock in some of these companies [laughs], "sorry!" You know-you're not gonna be making that boatloads of money anymore, you know, we're all paying for it with our taxes, and I know exactly how this is soaring up all those excesses so, so I believe in, you know, in the Affordable Care Act. And, you know, I think, because of what I've just gone through with my brother – Fallon has a new program called Fallon Total Care. He would've been on this program had he lived for his last year, which would've helped him. He would've had the support and resources necessary for somebody under 65...

OB: Mhmm.

BG: that gets chronically ill. And for me, it's one of the-the biggest debacles in this nation, over the last 20-30 years, the deregulation of things like our finance, our banking industry, as well as the healthcare, the Medicare, Medicaid fraud its just – its disgusting what greed can breed. And I'm always gonna be someone who's going to say, "Lets stop this now," so-sorry to be so outspoken.

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

CS: No it's great [laughs].

BG: I try to tamp that down [laughs] you know after going through-you know-ill people.

OB: Yeah.

BG: You know.

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CS: Okay. The first question?

OB: Yeah.

CS: How do you identify yourself as a woman living in Worcester?

BG: [laughs] That's a great question. Well it all depends on the audience, somebody asks me who I am. If I'm at a children's function, I'm Alexis and Max's mom, and if I'm at some type of business function I'm probably from Fallon Health [laughs]. If I'm with the film industry folks I'm an actress, producer, director. You know, I think it really depends on the audience, but in general I just think that I like to think of myself as someone who's trying to make a difference here in Worcester. Someone who's trying to create more jobs, redirect people to the right ones, open up avenues for economic growth for the city that have not formerly been there. Such as building a film studio, which is one of my projects, additionally, starting a new theater company and hiring actors for events all over the city for all of the different cultural institutions, whereas they used to ask people to do it for free. I went from free to \$25 to \$50 a gig [laughs]...

OB: Wow.

CS: Wow.

BG: ... for all of my actors. So I have already made a huge impact [laughs] when it comes to the acting community. They're very happy that...

OB: [laughs]

BG: because every little bit counts and it just raises the level of professionalism. I ask a lot of them to, I ask that when they are working for me, it isn't like, you know, they're not in high school or college anymore. This is a professional gig, you need to show up on time, you need to have your back story as an actor, whatever it is. I have an actor who does Robert Goddard for me. He started out doing things for the historical museum. He's now moved – he's been doing now Goddard for the Ecotarium for numerous events. Somebody found him there, they have him doing events at WPI and he has now, like created a career out of playing Robert Goddard. [laughs].

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

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BG: So, I think the way I've just-you know-I am somebody trying to make a difference here and create jobs. And also raise the level, if I can just say that, raise the level of professionalism in no matter what industry I'm working in. It needed to happen here in Worcester.

OB: Yes.

BG: It really did. That's the New York in me coming out. [laughs]

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

OB: Alright. I think that we got all our questions in definitely.

CS: Yep.

BG: Okay great. [laughs].

CS: Thank you so much.

BG: I didn't even talk about the film studio and everything. I don't even know if you know that I have all

OB: Yeah. So do you wanna talk-just quick about the film studio? You wanna try to organize a film studio to happen up here?

BG: Yeah the plan is to – when I helped produce a film a couple years ago I realized we don't have any equipment or anything here. Wouldn't it be nice if we had our own little studio. Well now it's – my own little studio has grown into – we're building up the roof on this, it'll be the second largest film studio in the country.

OB: Wow.

CS: Wow.

BG: So it isn't a little film studio.

OB: [laughs] it's a big film studio!

BG: And, yeah, it's a pretty impressive space, I've tried to align myself with some folks, we're trying to make this happen. We've already raised a significant amount, but we're hoping to raise

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a good deal more and build it out the right way. And I – we do believe the films will come. I was interviewed by, what’s her name, Shea, Andrea Shea, I think for WBUR or NPR in Boston. A couple, or about a month and a half ago and that was for the American Hustle filming here, and she went to one of the producers of American Hustle and said if Mass Studios – that’s the studio building – if it was open when you were shooting here would you have used it? And he said, “Absolutely I would’ve used it.” So we know that the need is here, we know that they’ll be coming here, we went from 0 to 7 films in the last 5 years. Last year shooting in one year, 7 films shooting in Worcester. It’s happening. So I’m just proud to say that I – everyone says I’m the little engine. [laughs].

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

BG: Because people can’t believe I’ve been – this has been – I’ve been tooting my horn for four years that we have to make this studio happen, and by golly we’re in the space and we’re building it out.

CS: It’s happening!

OB: Definitely happening.

BG: So it’s happening [laughs] So, I had someone come up to me the other day at the [Worcester] Art Museum event and say, “Oh so sorry I heard things didn’t work out.” I said, “Who told you that?” [laughs].

OB: [laughs].

BG: I said, “We’ve been in the space for almost 6 months,” and he was a little surprised. So, that’s kind of the Worcester – the old Worcester, you know, people say, the naysayers. We have to, we have to really mitigate that, and move forward and it needs to be a glass half full community.

OB: Mhmm.

CS: Mhmm.

BG: And similarly, with the theater company – Foothills unfortunately went by the wayside and I don’t think Foothills in today’s world may have been able to exist anyway so I’m retooling the

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concept of a modern day theater company. Which you know as I've mentioned using actors for all these different reasons, you know, for ghost walks to doing staged musicals or you know stage readings, and full length productions, a children's theatre and an educational touring component. Where I want to, next year tour around two shows that were written by the late Mark Smith, who ran Foothills, that are going to be for children to learn about what happened in the Holocaust. These are things that mean so much to me, and I think will broaden the educational horizons of all the students in Central Massachusetts. So for all of those reasons that's why I've created this theatre company, created this vision, created the film studio, because I believe that the film studio, the theatre company, all of it is intertwined and all of it will be communicating with each other and using each other's surfaces and resources. So it'll be a very different world in the next couple years here in Worcester. And I'm proud to say, that I'm glad I stuck to my guns [laughs].

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

BG: Although I'm not a proponent of guns... [laughs]

OB: [laughs].

CS: [laughs].

BG: Stuck to my ideals [laughs]. Thank you very much ladies.

OB: Thank you so much.

CS: Thank you.

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