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SANDRA VAN TREASE INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Sandra van Trease: Yes, I'm Sandra van Trease.

Blanche Touhill: Sandra, would you talk a little bit about your childhood. Who was it that really sort of stimulated you to think about going to school and maybe having a job or a profession or career, because I think all of us need a little encouragement in our life and I just wondered...talk about your family and who was really instrumental in having you think you're sort of special?

Sandra van Trease: I grew up in St. Louis so my family has been here for a number of years. My parents went to high school in St. Louis and my parents moved out to the West County area before I was born and my brothers were there. They're older than I so I grew up with two older brothers and my parents out in the county, which was literally the country back in those days. So I was around adults quite a bit and my mother had planned to stay home with me when I was born but she was a professional woman and her boss called her about five months after I was born and pleaded with her to come back to work. In the day, she was called his secretary. Today, you would think of her as a general manager and she needed to go back to keep that family business running. So, I had the good fortune of ending up being taken care of during the day by a woman who had her own family, lived across from my aunt, on the way back and forth from my mother's place of employment, and I grew up thinking that I actually had two families, which was wonderful. So both of these women were so incredibly important to me, my mother primarily as a professional role model and then Nana, Mary, who ended up being the role model from the care perspective and both of them in their own way encouraged me to be a professional woman and comfortable in both of those places. So I'd say from a very early age, education was important, doing your best was important, doing what you said you were going to do was very important, and I think those are qualities that are timeless and they instill

a sense of being from a very young age. We had a focus on education, as I mentioned, when I was young. I actually went to school, kindergarten, walked right down the street from where I stayed during the day so it was not at my home base; it was during the day and back then, Mary's husband was still alive. He was one of those people who was bedridden for a period of time and it was through him I learned colors and counting, at a very, very young age. So when I went to school, kindergarten was a little boring because I had had an opportunity just to sit...that's what he did during the day. So it was a great way just to get, as I look back on it, excited about the whole process of learning because to me it was a game and I like to excel at games. So growing up then, I had this one teacher in elementary school, it was first grade, her name was Mrs. Walters. Isn't it interesting how you always remember the names of these teachers. She was an amazing lady, had been teaching for many, many years and one of my most fond memories is the day she brought her butter churn to school and that day's entire lesson was on how to make butter and that's what we did and at the end of the school day, it was ready. She had crackers, we had very fresh butter and it's a memory that has just been one of those amazing things that's lasted all this time.

Blanche Touhill: But you could see the whole process?

Sandra van Trease: You could see the whole process and it was one of those times where you realized that butter doesn't come from the grocery store.

Blanche Touhill: Did you have to churn it?

Sandra van Trease: Hand crank, took turns. Everyone's arms got very tired. You got to see the process. You knew the ingredients, very exacting measurements. It was science; it was social studies; it was math. We were reading about how to do it. She was doing most of the reading, first graders, and then at the end, you had an opportunity to actually have the fruits of your labor all in one day. It was an amazing learning technique.

Blanche Touhill: What about your friends?

Sandra van Trease: Well, so, a lot of the friends I had all through elementary school and into junior high, some into high school, and everyone...it's interesting because people change. You have best friends in certain periods of your life and then people move on and change and develop other interests and I found that to be true and I still find that to be true, different stages of one's life.

Some very influential friends. One of my friends in junior high has the first name that I put as the middle name for my oldest daughter and that's the reason her name is Lynne spelled with an "e" because my best friend was named Lynne in junior high. So I think those are the kinds of things that just...I don't know where Lynne is right now, sadly, but it's one of those things that stick with you.

Blanche Touhill: Did she know that you had named your child...

Sandra van Trease: She did.

Blanche Touhill: Isn't that nice.

Sandra van Trease: She did, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And how was high school?

Sandra van Trease: High school was hard, in a variety of ways. I think high school is hard, it was hard because I did high school in a condensed period of time. We ran out of classes, AP classes, and a couple of kids were like that and so I ended up at the very end of high school going to the junior college for my last year of high school.

Blanche Touhill: And how was that?

Sandra van Trease: It was fascinating. So I would be taking...I had taken an accounting class; I took my first psychology class at the community college. It was interesting because it was the first time I really understood or was exposed to the fact you had to take classes that your university, going forward, would accept. That's where I learned that the University of Missouri-St. Louis would accept these classes, at the community college. I never even thought about something like that before. My advisors in high school were helpful in that regard. One, they allowed me to understand the process, and two, they pointed to the fact that I might be eligible for a curator scholarship because of my ranking in high school. Thankfully, that was the case because I wasn't sure that I would be able to go to college, absent the scholarship, just from the financial situation. So, having that opportunity and having that mentorship, that's why I think it's so important to pay forward with scholarships, which my husband and I do. That's the way he and I both got to college, were based on our high school academic record and curator scholarships.

- Blanche Touhill: What was the curators in those days, like, a 3.8 in your high school or...
- Sandra van Trease: In those days, literally you had to have...I don't remember if it was 3.8...you had to be either valedictorian or salutatorian. You had to be number one or two. That was to be eligible for the full four-year scholarship.
- Blanche Touhill: And then you had to keep up the GPA?
- Sandra van Trease: You did. That was 3.8 or better, mm-hmm, definitely.
- Blanche Touhill: And you did that?
- Sandra van Trease: I did that. I kept it all four years, I am proud to say. My husband, however, did not; too bad for him. He got to college and he had a little too much fun at first, but he made it through anyway.
- Blanche Touhill: So, he recovered?
- Sandra van Trease: He recovered, yes, he did. He did, but those scholarships are blessings.
- Blanche Touhill: They are. When you were taking courses at the community college, before you took your first course, did you have any idea what you wanted to get a degree, in what area?
- Sandra van Trease: I had long been interested in two areas, one business. My mother, as I mentioned, was in the business environment and when I was a child, on weekends when she needed to go into the office, I often got to go with her on Saturdays and we would work in the office and Mr. Mello would be there. He was the owner of the company and at the end of the day...because my mother had me do things, filing or something, at the end of the day, Mr. Mello would hand me an envelope and it had money inside of it and I decided this was the coolest thing because I got to do all these very interesting things. I thought it was fun. Again, I kind of thought of it as a game and it was filing in alpha order or doing something with numbers which I loved accounting. Back then I just didn't know that that's what it was, and get paid for that? That was a great deal. So I thought that was pretty neat.
- Blanche Touhill: What did you do with the money?
- Sandra van Trease: Oh, I put it in my bank, I saved it. My mother was very good about providing everything I needed but the things I wanted, I had to go get and

so that was how...if I wanted that really terrific, trendy top that she had a little bit of a cautionary approach to, then I needed to buy that.

Blanche Touhill: And she let you?

Sandra van Trease: Oh, yes. It was up to me to manage the money. It was up to me, and I also used it...that's how I bought things for my parents when it was time and so forth. I used my own money most of the time.

Blanche Touhill: So what was your major going to be?

Sandra van Trease: Well, so, I was very interested in business. I was also interested in psychology but I just thought that was a bit more...because I have a brother-in-law who is a psychiatrist and we'd get into these very philosophical conversations and so I did, I took both introductory classes in psychology and my very first accounting class.

Blanche Touhill: And when you took accounting, did you know it was accounting?

Sandra van Trease: I did.

Blanche Touhill: I mean, did you know it was your field?

Sandra van Trease: This is how I knew that that was what I wanted to go into initially. The instructor that I had for that accounting course would probably not meet your standards. He was okay but it was difficult. He had a difficult time teaching as an instructor so it was a hard class from that perspective and I decided that if I still liked the material that much with a less than stellar instructor, that I would give this a go when I eventually got to the university and that's what I did and obviously I found outstanding professors.

Blanche Touhill: I find people who teach quantitative subjects sometimes have great difficulty teaching because they're numbers people...

Sandra van Trease: That's right.

Blanche Touhill: ...and their brain...when they come to the solution of the problem, they know there are other ways to do it but it's hard for them to teach.

Sandra van Trease: Oftentimes and I think that's what makes...when you're in the quantitative or the sciences, I think that's what makes an excellent teacher, when they can translate it into the relational aspect, to be able

to convey the technical aspects of something like that and when you find people like that...

Blanche Touhill: Your husband is that way, too, isn't he?

Sandra van Trease: He is.

Blanche Touhill: He's a scientist more than a mathematician...

Sandra van Trease: Yes, right.

Blanche Touhill: ...but he's got the scientific method.

Sandra van Trease: He has both sides. He has the scientific method but he has the gift of people. He's a relationship person. He has always been so much better at that.

Blanche Touhill: No, but you have a good relationship personality.

Sandra van Trease: Well, I appreciate that. Thank you. I think some of that I've learned from my husband and mentors such as yourself and others that I've just watched with a great deal of admiration in terms of the importance of building the relationship around a structure to accomplish something that you're trying to. I do think oftentimes we learn as much from those individuals that don't do as well as we do from people who do.

Blanche Touhill: That's right.

Sandra van Trease: So that's how I...I really had a sense that business specifically and then when I got into the accounting area more, that that was really...from a profession...

Blanche Touhill: Did the community college welcome you as really a dual high school colleague...of course, you got credit for the course in both areas?

Sandra van Trease: I did. So the way it worked, as I understood it then, is that I was able to count the community college courses to my hours for the final year of high school so I had those hours, and then, of course, they counted for the academic career in the collegiate setting. I noticed no difference. I didn't really talk to people about the fact I was still in high school at the time. It wasn't really something...

Blanche Touhill: They didn't know really?

Sandra van Trease: They didn't really know. It didn't really come up, other than the advisor at the school and the counselor at the high school.

Blanche Touhill: Were there other students that did this?

Sandra van Trease: There may have been but, from my school, I was the only one that was doing this but I don't suspect...there could be others but I don't know that there were. Again, most of the folks that I took class with were literally in their freshman year of college, but they were great.

Blanche Touhill: But then you transferred?

Sandra van Trease: And then I transferred, when I finished the high school part. I didn't stay for two years at the community college.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, I see. Then you went immediate...well, because you had gotten a scholarship too.

Sandra van Trease: I went because I had the scholarship. I had the scholarship and so I was able to take...I really only needed three classes from the community college to finish up...

Blanche Touhill: ...the freshman year?

Sandra van Trease: ...the part that we needed, and then I could come over and I did. So between the advanced placement courses I had in high school, plus the community college, and then I'm placing out of certain classes, what was great about coming right into the University of Missouri-St. Louis, was, I didn't have to do any of the very foundational work again. I was able to go right into a number of other classes, which was terrific, let me have a little bit more exposure as I came to the university.

Blanche Touhill: Did you take another psychology course?

Sandra van Trease: I did. I took another psychology course and I took a sociology and an anthropology here at the university, which was great, some of which though waited until almost the end of my college time because I was so very focused in the...

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and (including?) accounting, you have to take the courses in the right order.

- Sandra van Trease: In the right order, you have to take them in the right order and I knew which professors I wanted and so that drove my schedule. Fortunately, by the end...well, fortunately or unfortunately, I was able to take some classes I needed to take on the humanities and social sciences which at the time, I think college students are like this, they just want to stick in their field. They just want to get all they can and don't bother me with that other, and, in retrospect, I would really have enjoyed more of the other because it does make a much more well-rounded person. I was able to take an art history class here at UMSL. I said, I will take this pass/fail and I just want to worry about it. I got the top grade in that class. I loved it.
- Blanche Touhill: You had taken it as pass/fail?
- Sandra van Trease: And I took it as pass/fail, yeah, and she said, "Well, they're choices we make." I loved it. It was a fantastic class.
- Blanche Touhill: Was that the one that the slide projector kept putting the slides...
- Sandra van Trease: Oh, yes, absolutely, and that's how you did your tests. It was fascinating.
- Blanche Touhill: I knew students who took that because they thought it would be easy but it was hard...
- Sandra van Trease: It was hard.
- Blanche Touhill: And then they got in and they said, "Oh, my goodness," but, yes.
- Sandra van Trease: It was hard, it was very thorough and it was not a pushover class. You really did have to pay attention to it and I learned a lot and it had a lot about Europe which I had never been at the time. I had never been to Europe and it also fostered an interest in, wow, I'd like to go there sometime and actually see of this art or go back to the museums and check that out again.
- Blanche Touhill: Now, you and Virgil have a great interest in the arts. How did that come about?
- Sandra van Trease: We do. It maybe even started back then. The other thing, I think, that has fostered it is that neither Virgil or I are talented in an artistic way. We appreciate it, whether it's visual art or performing art but one of the things I did after graduation, I was able to start my career with Price-

Waterhouse. One of the things I was able to do early at Price-Waterhouse...and it really kind of fed a couple of different things...was to volunteer as part of the volunteer lawyer and accountants for the arts organization here in St. Louis and that gave me an opportunity to apply my technical craft to artists who were trying to set up businesses and earn a living. That's how I was able to interface with artists and they with me and other accountants and other lawyers, professionals. We could help them and I'll tell you what they did. They really helped us learn about, one, setting up businesses, but, two, just the artistic side of that and I became very interested, started working with one of their clients on a regular basis. Virgil and I were just talking about the woman who ran one of these organizations and just having conversations with people on totally different subjects. It makes the other side of your brain really engage. I think that's how we started to get interested in art and performance.

Blanche Touhill: Because I know I see you at the opera theater and I see you at the symphony and I see you at theater...

Sandra van Trease: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: ...and I know you like art...

Sandra van Trease: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And I know you have that other side of the brain. I know you have that...

Sandra van Trease: It's in there somewhere. I admire it and my youngest daughter was a performer in high school. She did ballet for many years and beautifully and I don't know where she had the talent. It was in there somewhere but she enjoyed that for many, many years.

Blanche Touhill: And she likes design, doesn't she?

Sandra van Trease: She's, again, more professionally oriented on the business side but she applies that in a design capacity.

Blanche Touhill: She does.

Sandra van Trease: In a retail design/consumer fashion, capacity. So it's nice to see it coming out in a real meaningful way.

Blanche Touhill: And your other girl is really a social worker focused?

- Sandra van Trease: She is, very social. She has her Master's of Social Work and she did that for a number of years. Now she's doing it from a family standpoint with her daughter and is very interested in early child education. So it's very fulfilling for them.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you think she'll ever write about it?
- Sandra van Trease: She has written a little bit about it occasionally. She's a very good writer and I think, as her daughter grows and her family solidifies, she'll use those outlets in a very constructive, creative way.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you think your other daughter will get a graduate degree?
- Sandra van Trease: It wouldn't surprise me, it wouldn't surprise me.
- Blanche Touhill: In time.
- Sandra van Trease: In time. She wants to solidify, I think, her professional...
- Blanche Touhill: Yes.
- Sandra van Trease: Which I think will help her.
- Blanche Touhill: I think it's good.
- Sandra van Trease: It is good. She has some professional experience. I think that she'll see the benefit of the continuing education. Her husband has a Master's and his family is very focused on education so that wouldn't surprise me, in due course.
- Blanche Touhill: In due course. Well, go back to college. So when you took accounting here, you said to yourself, "This really is it"?
- Sandra van Trease: Mm-hmm, I did. It was something that, it resonated in terms of being an important thing for just business at large that not everyone could do and that required professional capacity and capabilities and if you were good at it, it would take you in places that perhaps other types of professional endeavors might not. It made sense to me and nothing came easy when I got to the hard part. It was all very difficult but...
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, it was difficult?
- Sandra van Trease: Of course, I studied a lot. I studied hard, I studied a lot.

Blanche Touhill: It's a lot of judgment, isn't it, where you put things?

Sandra van Trease: So there are rules, there are standards just like many professions, where there is a consensus, a governing body that develops standards around how accounting is performed so that if I pick up financial statements and you pick up financial statements and we have the same framework in which we are evaluating those, we will likely come to the same conclusion. So there's structure around it. That said, where the judgment comes in, and I think where the value on taking it to the next level is, it's not just about debits and credits. It's about the application of these techniques to a business environment and some people are focused in tax. That was not my area of expertise. That was, for me, it was a little too rule-driven. I prefer to use it in a consultative and an audit perspective where you are really being the individual upon whom others rely for the credibility of what you are presenting.

Blanche Touhill: I always thought accountants had to be honest people.

Sandra van Trease: It helps. If you're not, really bad things, as evidenced by some history, that sadly we have in the accounting profession: Enron and others, bad things can happen. You have to be, I think, very conscientious about how you apply these rules. Not everything is black and white and they can be stretched and professional judgment and skepticism and the capacity for having a high degree of integrity, very important.

Blanche Touhill: You know, at one point...I don't know if they still do it...but this college of business required their students, especially in accounting, but I think it was all business majors, to take an ethics course.

Sandra van Trease: It's a requirement for anyone who wants to sit for the CPA exam. You have to pass an ethics test and you are actually only certified as a CPA once you have practiced under the supervision of a CPA and passed ethics, and I suspect, and I know that today the requirements to pass that exam are even more stringent than when I went to school but it wasn't just finishing the four years and you were automatically a CPA. You sit for the exam, you pass an exam, you have to practice a little bit of an apprenticeship, you have to pass the ethics exam, and then you...

Blanche Touhill: I did not realize that. I thought once you did the CPA...

- Sandra van Trease: No, you're not done yet. That is the first step so your coursework is the first step, really. The exam is another step. Practicing under a licensed CPA and passing the ethics exam are the final two.
- Blanche Touhill: So you went to Price-Waterhouse.
- Sandra van Trease: Went to Price-Waterhouse.
- Blanche Touhill: That was the day when they probably had maybe eight of these big...
- Sandra van Trease: They were the Big Eight. They were called the Big Eight. You are right. It was called the Big Eight back in the day.
- Blanche Touhill: And you got one of those jobs?
- Sandra van Trease: I did.
- Blanche Touhill: And that wasn't easy to get.
- Sandra van Trease: You went through a very rigorous interview process. The Big Eight were all very active on campus in terms of interview. You practiced interviews. Your professors helped you prepare for the interviews, everything from what to wear, brushing up on the unique cultures of those respective firms, all kinds of advice that went far and away above just the technical and they all would come on campus and the weeks that they were up here, you certainly knew because the Business School just really dressed up. I mean, you suited up for these. You didn't look like a traditional...
- Blanche Touhill: You bought your first suit? If you hadn't bought your first...your black or gray suit...
- Sandra van Trease: And the women, of course, we had the big bowties at the time and this was when we all had very large shoulder pads. Yes, it was an interesting thing, to watch young women walk in heels and hose that they had probably not put on for two years but it was very exciting but competitive, very competitive, to get an interview.
- Blanche Touhill: AT the time, you had to line up.
- Sandra van Trease: Yes. Well, you know, what you had to do was, in order to request a slot for an interview, you had to go to the career center and sign up and so the earlier you got there, the more slots would still be open and if you wanted to interview with all eight...well, sometimes there were more

than eight. The Big Eight were here and then there were a couple of other firms that would come, both businesses, a Monsanto or an Anheuser Busch if you wanted to go into that area, or some of the other firms, but if you didn't get there early, the slots would be full. So, it was like getting concert tickets. You had to go early and sign up or pay someone to go sign up for you but I never did that.

Blanche Touhill: There were people that did that?

Sandra van Trease: Of course there were people who did that, yes. You had to secure your place.

Blanche Touhill: You had to get in line?

Sandra van Trease: And then, after that, again, just because you signed up, then you were vetted by the firm to see whether they...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, they looked at your credentials?

Sandra van Trease: Exactly, so you might not even make the first cut, depending on your grade point, the classes you had taken, your outside curricular activities.

Blanche Touhill: Did you have letters from the faculty as well?

Sandra van Trease: Not at that point. That would come after, if you actually had garnered an interview and made it to the second round.

Blanche Touhill: Did you interview in Woods Hall?

Sandra van Trease: I did, yes.

Blanche Touhill: They had a very nice suite for interviews.

Sandra van Trease: Yes, they did. It was one of the nicest.

Blanche Touhill: It was one of the nicest and it was private.

Sandra van Trease: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: We really weren't able to copy that when we went over to the new student center. We tried to do it but there were needs of other groups that...financial aid, they didn't want to be discussing somebody's finances in the open so they eventually moved into those little rooms.

Sandra van Trease: I see.

Blanche Touhill: Which was, that was a very sad day for me.

Sandra van Trease: It's a challenge, yes, and I don't know...I wonder, I didn't know that because what I understand today is there really aren't as many of the accounting firms, for example, that particular profession that are coming on site to UMSL for interviews. They, too, have changed over the years and have consolidated a number of their interviewing to larger metropolitan areas which I find very sad, given the quality of this program and, frankly, when you look around St. Louis and you see how many highly successful people who came out of that program and where they grew up professionally, whether it's Warner Baxter or Steve Swyers. You can name many, many people and had they not been here and had those firms not been here, think of where those organizations might be today. So, I recognize change is inevitable but it's an outstanding program.

Blanche Touhill: When you graduated and you went to Price-Waterhouse, did you go on any audits and find or suspect things weren't right?

Sandra van Trease: I did, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And was that difficult?

Sandra van Trease: It is because when you are dealing with a situation that is real flesh and blood...these are still people and when you're finding things that just don't look right, when you're a very young professional, you think you know what you're supposed to do and you really need the experience of the people who have done this for many, many years and certainly that's what the partners in these firms had been around for quite some time and there were people who lost their jobs over things that were not of the highest integrity but that was clearly the exception, for the most part. Many times what happens is there are honest mechanical mistakes that get made and they're easily corrected and that's part of what we do. What I found the most valuable about that whole learning experience, Blanche, was that it did allow me to see so many different organizations at different levels. I had the opportunity to work in everything from service industries, manufacturing, mergers & acquisitions work, venture capital work and that was terrific, from my personal growth perspective. I could really have a wide-ranging view of how things worked professionally.

Blanche Touhill: How long did you stay at Price-Waterhouse?

Sandra van Trease: I was with Price-Waterhouse for 12 years.

Blanche Touhill: Twelve years?

Sandra van Trease: Twelve years, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Then why did you leave?

Sandra van Trease: I had been at Price-Waterhouse for 12 years. There were no partnership opportunities.

Blanche Touhill: There were no women or...

Sandra van Trease: Actually, one of my colleagues who started the same year that I did at Price-Waterhouse, she was in the tax department and she actually was made partner that year in the tax department and stayed there for many years as well but in the division that I was in, there was not going to be that opportunity and I could have stayed a bit longer but it happened that one of the partners at the firm with whom I'd worked knew that one of his clients was looking for someone who had the kind of experiences that I had been having the last three or four years. I had been working with companies taking them public, so I was doing a lot of IPO and securities, SEC work, Securities and Exchange Commission work, so taking companies public, I'd been doing a lot of debt refinancings, working with the boards and the CFOs and the CEOs and one of his clients, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Missouri at the time, wanted to go public and I didn't have healthcare experience per se at the time but I had that experience and I was asked if I wanted to interview. They were searching for finance executives who had that kind of experience. I did and within a couple of months I was the Vice President of Financial Analysis at Blue Cross. We took them public. I eventually became the CFO and eventually the President and COO at Blue Cross and I stayed there for 10 years.

Blanche Touhill: I was going to say, how many years were you there, and you were there 10 years.

Sandra van Trease: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And that was the time of the difficulties?

Sandra van Trease: We had some serious challenges at Blue Cross during the time. The process by which Blue Cross went public included a conversion from a not-for-profit status to a for-profit status and in that process, there was litigation by the State of Missouri, engaged in litigation with Blue Cross relative to the establishment of what the state believed was important. The value of the assets of a not-for-profit, it's part of state law, that if a not-for-profit converts, the value of their assets is owed to the state, the people of the state. And so there was litigation with respect to that which took a number of years. Concurrent with that, we had some challenges, the board and the CEO had a number of issues that ended up in the CEO leaving and having other personal difficulties, lots of transition that, again, you learn a lot from those difficult situations...

Blanche Touhill: I knew the wife who was a teacher.

Sandra van Trease: Yes, a lovely lady.

Blanche Touhill: A lovely person, lovely person.

Sandra van Trease: Yes. Things just, it didn't work out well for them but ultimately, organizations survive and people who on and move on with their lives and I think that's the case here, for the most part, and I think it's now...obviously it's a very strong organization and now part of the Wellpoint organization which...

Blanche Touhill: Now, talk about Wellpoint.

Sandra van Trease: Wellpoint bought Right Choice Managed Care which was the publicly traded name of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Missouri and so I was the President and COO of Right Choice at the time we sold to Wellpoint. Wellpoint was also a very large...a combination of a couple Blue plans...Blue Cross Blue Shield plans headquartered then out of California and we did a transaction with Wellpoint and I stayed with Wellpoint for two years after the transaction as the CEO of a national insurance plan they had called Unicare and it was based out of Chicago. So I was the leader for that organization for two years before coming back to St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, so you lived in Chicago?

Sandra van Trease: Actually, the way I did this, Blanche, is I had a place in Chicago but we had our home still here in St. Louis because my children were in high school

or early college and, as I said earlier, my family was here, Virgil's family is here and I could do that commute, and frankly, a lot of what I was doing was in Chicago but an equal amount, because this was a national organization, I was just on the plane a great deal. I really did travel for two years. We had offices in Boston, in Detroit, in Dallas, in Chicago, and then our home office at Wellpoint was out in California so I did a lot of flying. American Airlines liked me a lot for quite a while.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you were home on the weekends?

Sandra van Trease: Exactly.

Blanche Touhill: And there are a lot of people in this country who have that kind of a work schedule.

Sandra van Trease: That's right. It's doable. Air traffic makes it that way and today, frankly, even more technology than was even in existence 10 years ago when I was stopped doing that much travel, has developed so much in the last 10 years that many people literally live in one spot but conduct their professional business in another. But it was a couple of hard travel years for me and it was great to get back home.

Blanche Touhill: Were you one of the first women that was traveling around like that as the president of a company?

Sandra van Trease: Well, I think, Wellpoint had a number of senior executive women and so that was not unusual, for Wellpoint in particular. I think different organizations evolved to that stage where they have a good balanced representation. I would say, while there were other women, I was probably the only one with a family, with children. Most, if I recall correctly, most of the other women did not have children. So that was a little bit unique but there were women.

Blanche Touhill: And you probably talked to them every night?

Sandra van Trease: Oh, absolutely. I wish we had had Skype back then. That would have been fantastic, and again, Virgil is just such an amazing father. He did double duty for quite some time.

Blanche Touhill: Well, there was always the story that he was asked not to go to the Girl Scout meeting?

Sandra van Trease: That's right. So, the challenges of being women can be applied to men, too, so Virgil wanted to join, be a co-leader or be one of the adult sponsors for my oldest daughter's Girl Scout troop and they declined his involvement and he took it very personally.

Blanche Touhill: Well, he told me too that the girls in the troop were shocked.

Sandra van Trease: They were shocked.

Blanche Touhill: That their leader was being...

Sandra van Trease: Right, discriminatory against...

Blanche Touhill: And do they allow men today to be...

Sandra van Trease: I don't know, and I don't know, honestly, if it was one of the scouts, per se. I don't know that that's the case. I think it was the local leader's decision that, "Thank you very much but I'd prefer not to have you be a part of this." But that wasn't always the case. Certainly, he did...also, he did a lot when our youngest daughter was going through a lot of the ballet and performing and he was very involved in Dance St. Louis, much more than I was able to be. So he and another gentleman were kind of the dads on stage with the moms on stage and it was great, too, because they certainly brought...you know, they brought a whole nother dynamic for those girls and it was a good thing, right.

Blanche Touhill: So you came back to St. Louis?

Sandra van Trease: Yes. So, it was interesting, the way it came about because I was working with Wellpoint. I had come back for a weekend, a charity event, a dinner that I was going to after getting off the plane and went to this event and it so happened that the CEO and one of the board members of BJC Healthcare was at this event and literally, I think I was walking by his table, where he was standing, and he said, "Sandra, you know, I'd really like to get together. Are you going to be in town sometime?" and I had known Steve but I hadn't really worked with him much. I worked with a number of his colleagues because we had interfaced as the Blue Cross Blue Shield plan...provider and the payer and so, yes, we agreed to meet and we began to talk and he began to share a vision about what he and the board were thinking long-term as the world of healthcare evolved and recognizing that they have tremendous professional capabilities in

our hospital leaders and they were looking to think a little bit outside that box and bring in other parts of the industry and other skill sets to BJC to keep, again, rounding things out, which of course, I commended him on. I thought that was brilliant. So we had conversations and they asked me to come join the senior leadership at BJC and so I did that and...

Blanche Touhill: Were you nervous when you made the change?

Sandra van Trease: Well, you know, it was different, of course, because these are...I had always had an amazing amount of respect for BJC, a system that came together, at the time it had only been together for 10, 12ish years, maybe, so very young as a system and had gone through its first set of leadership changes from the original CEO, then to Steve and we're still learning about how to act as an organization, and then all these very top flight leaders who run these sophisticated hospitals and other service organizations. I was so impressed with the organization so it was great to be able to be part of it and learn and it was another one of those, I get to learn how to do this and get compensated for that process and then hopefully bring some of my learnings and perspectives to that team?

Blanche Touhill: Is he a doctor?

Sandra van Trease: Steve is not a physician.

Blanche Touhill: Does he have a degree in hospital management?

Sandra van Trease: He does and Steve literally worked his way up in hospital administration. He started as what's called a unit secretary so if you've been at the hospital and there are these men and women who are sitting at the stations where the nurses are working, and today they do a lot of the computer work, but if you need to find a nurse or a physician or if you have a question, the administrative support for that particular unit...and as he was working through school, he started as a unit secretary in one of the hospitals back East and, as he tells it, he was a really good unit secretary and just kind of grew up through the ranks in hospital administration.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think it's wonderful if you can get a leader who has come up that way.

Sandra van Trease: Yeah. He's lived it and has experienced and his involvement now, when you think about BJC and Steve and the role that the organization and he, in particular, are playing, part vice chair of the PCORI organization that the administration's recently set up. He's been on the Federal Reserve. We're blessed in this community to have an organization like BJC and some others who have a national presence and a national say. I think that's important.

Blanche Touhill: What role did you play in the expansion of BJC, because it really has grown by leaps and bounds.

Sandra van Trease: It has.

Blanche Touhill: I know that the various hospitals have joined it, all had sort of outreach but to bring that together and then have it grow, that's what you all did. You grew it.

Sandra van Trease: Right. You know, the organization, our hospitals, when I came 10 years ago, we were, as I said, learning how to behave more as a system as opposed to the individual hospitals. There was a great deal of autonomy, pride, unique cultures in all of these hospitals and what we worked on, I'd say, for the first number of years, a couple areas: one is bringing people together as a leadership team that thought about BJC as an important part of their responsibility in addition to their individual hospital responsibility, and think of how we could, frankly, leverage the system structure that didn't really interface with the patient...it wasn't really important to the patient, it was really the back office things: how do we go further faster by taking the best and applying it across the system while maintaining the unique cultures and patient interface that we've all come to expect and deserve and building the trust among all of our physicians and our administrative leaders, to really make that come together, and I feel really good about where we are today. We've embarked today on something...a whole new set of work called making BJC better. We think we're pretty good but we recognize that there's more of this that has to happen. So, building that as a foundation has been great, building our medical group, expanding the reach of our physicians and our medical group, working with our Washington University School of Medicine colleagues and, again, bringing people all together to focus on the translational capabilities from the research and the bench to the bedside and sharing Best Practices, to the latest

development of BJC, Blanche, which is, we formed a BJC collaborative which now spans six hospital systems across the region that is a new organization that we formed, a new LLC and BJC and three other organizations, St. Luke's in Kansas City, Cox Health System in Springfield, Missouri, Memorial Health System in Springfield, Illinois and BJC are founding members of this new collaborative and we've recently added two new systems, one in Carbondale and one in Quincy and what we're doing as a collaborative is taking things we've been doing each individually as systems and doing it on a regional scale. Our reach is 11 million people and the opportunity for working together collaboratively...

Blanche Touhill: So you could bring a patient from Quincy, within the system, to BJC or to someplace else that had the specialized treatment?

Sandra van Trease: Sure, and so we can do that. We've always been able to transfer patients but what this collaborative does is it...I liken it to taking something that was a dirt road and making it into a four-lane highway and it's by building the physician relationships and the patterns between physicians and/or administrators so that ultimately what we're doing is enabling patient care close to home, the highest level of patient care close to home, eventually using remote monitoring, telemedicine, but having direct and immediate access, cutting through some of the red tape that is just part of the healthcare bureaucracy and getting immediate, faster access whenever possible in situations where the local service provider doesn't have whatever requisite resources might be needed for that particular patient. So, this collaborative spans everything from, again, working to take advantage of all of our fixed cost infrastructure and spreading that over a wider group so that we're not recreating the wheel and spending money we might not need to so we can save that money, particularly for...in this environment, we have to make this purse string go a lot farther so we are finding a great deal of success in spreading our fixed costs. We've already found multi-millions of dollars so we're saving money here so we can invest in the technologies and this population health concept across Southern Illinois, Missouri and into Eastern Kansas.

Blanche Touhill: What role do you play in this?

Sandra van Trease: I'm really responsible for leading all the activities in the collaborative. We have a board and there are three members from each of the systems on the board and I'm one of those and then the administrative

organizational budgetary personnel responsibilities are in my camp. So, that's my leadership role.

Blanche Touhill: I'm going to change the subject for just a minute. If you were born 50 years earlier, what would your life have been like?

Sandra van Trease: If I were born 50 years earlier, the early 1900's, I would probably have been in trouble a lot. I would see myself as being one of those very strong women in a family or a community. I would have wanted to do more than have a lot of children and not be very active in a community involvement. I probably would have had more children than I did but...do you remember that show they used to have, Dr. Quinn?

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, yes.

Sandra van Trease: Yes, something like that perhaps, maybe not as quite as professionally oriented in science but I would see myself doing something...I would have been in the suffrage movement so I probably would have been arrested had I had the opportunity to work for women's rights.

Blanche Touhill: Would you have married the 50-year version of Virgil?

Sandra van Trease: If I would have been so fortunate, if he would have been the same, that would be excellent. I think it takes special people to make relationships like the one I have with him or you have with yours or some of our friends and our colleagues around town. It takes a special combination of people to make that work because they're both really strong personalities.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. Do you want to comment on the International Women's Forum?

Sandra van Trease: I would love to. The International Women's Forum, I came to learn more about that, really, just five or six years ago in a meaningful way and it's been around in St. Louis since 1988, I think, and colleagues around town had been talking to me about my potential joining and would I have an interest and I will tell you, Blanche, I said no several times.

Blanche Touhill: I know you did.

Sandra van Trease: And you were helpful in getting past that, as were a number of our friends and, the more I learned about it and had the opportunity to talk to people who spent time working within IWF and just having the

opportunities, it sounded better and better, particularly as I got further in my career, thinking about where I wanted to go next and where I wanted to spend my time and what I like about IWF is I think you get out of it what you put into it and you can stay very, very locally-focused; you can go national, or, as you say, it's an international women's forum, you can do things on an international front. Maybe someday I will get to that point. Today, what I really enjoy about it is what I'm able to do more on the more local and regional front, all the way from the very basic fundamental things, of sharing leadership experiences with people in similar circumstances, really understanding the depth and breadth of what they're dealing with and how they're dealing with it, whether that be the professional side or the personal side. I really enjoy the connections it provides in terms of our community and how people trust each other when you have an opportunity to work in that kind of a circle. Then the most recent thing we've been doing in IWF, I've been personally involved in with IWF, is reaching out more regionally, not just our local community, but asking other women who are of this standing that might live in another city close by, who may or may not be participating in this kind of an event, to come meet our women and I've had the opportunity to do that a couple of times now, inviting people from other boards that I sit on who come from other cities, to meet the local St. Louis women leaders and they have enjoyed that phenomenally. So it's been a real good...

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know we have members from Columbia, Missouri and that they drive in.

Sandra van Trease: They do. We just recently had a dinner with a co-board member of mine who lives in Kansas City and introduced her to a number of people. So I'm not sure what will manifest out of that but hopefully something good as well.

Blanche Touhill: Did you ever get an award or awards that you're particularly proud of?

Sandra van Trease: Well, you know, I have this pin that says "Number One Mom" on it so I would say that's one. My children don't lavish praise a lot but they give me something like that, I do have to say that's pretty precious. I was honored, Blanche, that the University of Missouri-St. Louis, granted me an honorary doctorate. I never, ever expected that. I was deeply humbled. I still am when I think about it. That just really meant a lot to

me. I care so much about the University but for the University and the curators and the people who made that possible, I would never have had the opportunities and that was just kind of a capstone to that whole period of time and what I hope to accomplish on behalf of the University, as part of the chancellor's council now, and maybe more in the future. We'll see. But that was particularly wonderful.

Blanche Touhill: I'm always looking for what, in your youth, focused you on your career? Do you think it was more your mother than anything else?

Sandra van Trease: Well, I would say it's both my mom and her professional experiences. If I think about it from a career standpoint, my mother was very smart, finished high school, didn't have any post high school education, worked very hard and literally, I do believe kept that small business afloat through very difficult times and good times. I never really appreciated it as I was growing up and it was only as I became an adult and started in my own professional life, working with other businesses, honestly, it's one of those things that you never really realize how smart your parents are until you're somewhat more into that vein. And so I do attribute some of that learning just somewhat by osmosis but I attribute a lot of other values that I hold to my relationship with Nana, Mary, and her family. They were not really all that business-oriented but the deep family values that they held and the way they cared about community and how involved they were, whether it was in their churches or their community, fundraising. Mary didn't drive but she was one of the best fundraisers for her community by virtue of what she did and so I think it's an interesting amalgamation and I did have really good mentors in my professional career that, I think, kept me focused. Some of the professors here, Dave Kance was a great role model in terms of how to take a profession and make it tangible, real and keep a community involvement. He was the leader of Beta Alpha Si which is where I really first got a lot of my volunteer experiences and understanding that collegial life wasn't just studying, and I also had a family during my college years. So it was school and family, worked part-time in the Business School office, and yet, Dave and others encouraged me to stay in the volunteer mode too. So just learning how to balance all of that and watching people do it was really very critical to my, I think, ability to figure out how to place priorities and anyone I've seen who's successful learns how to manage their priorities.

Blanche Touhill: What is your actual title these days?

Sandra van Trease: I have a couple titles. My title at BJC is Group President. I'm also the President of the BJC Accountable Care organization. So I have two.

Blanche Touhill: Okay. If you looked into the future, do you know which way or what you're going to be doing?

Sandra van Trease: Well, as I look in the future, I think what I want to do is to continue to make a difference in our community, in the health of our community and in the education of our community. I spend time in healthcare, in education and in environment and ecology and my husband and I have committed that those are our three areas of focus in terms of our time, talent and treasure. And so in the future, I hope to be doing something meaningful in all those areas.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Sandra van Trease: Thank you.