

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS**  
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**JULY 10, 2014**

**CHRIS CHADWICK INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL**

Chris Chadwick: ... St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Chris, would you talk about your early life: your parents, your siblings, your grandparents, your neighbors, the children you played with, your elementary school, your high school. Who was it that really said to you "The world is ahead of you and we want you to be happy but we want you to know that you can sort of do what you sort of want to do," within limits and then talk...just talk.

Chris Chadwick: Okay. You know, when I reflect on growing up, I think I had a really idyllic childhood. I grew up in the northern suburbs of Chicago and it wasn't really even a neighborhood; it was a lane or sort of a country road that really wasn't developed when we first moved there. So, I am one of six children. I'm the middle child and so I think that that has been a big part of who I am because it made me be more independent; it made me be more competitive in many ways; it made me be a better listener and observer. I had an older brother and an older sister and three younger brothers. So that really, in many ways, shaped me. I was brought up by two incredibly loving parents, one a devout Catholic and another, Presbyterian and that also was something that I thought about a lot as I was raised a Catholic but my father was always home on Sundays making hundreds and hundreds of pancakes and I always thought he was going to get to Heaven before any of us were, being dragged to church. We also were raised with my father's grandmother who was an immigrant from Scotland so she lived with us and extended family was really important. So Sundays were a day we always looked forward to because it was a day where my other set of grandparents came and cousins and aunts and uncles for a big Sunday dinner. So, in many ways, I was brought up with a lot of freedom, doing things that kids got to do back then that today, I

think, my children and my grandchildren, they're just more restricted, you know catching fireflies and climbing trees and riding bikes forever and our rule was my mom would ring the big farm bell and when we heard the farm bell, it was time to get home for dinner and we even got to know the different sounds of the farm bells. Some of our neighbors had those as well. My mother was a homemaker. She was terrific, if you can imagine raising six children. She was a gardener, she was a volunteer, she was a great cook, she was really athletic and I remember, there were always parties. My parents were always throwing fun parties that all six kids had to sort of march down and be introduced or be a part of hosting in a small way. My father, I think, really, in many ways, shaped me. He was very loving, very open. He eventually was the president of a metal manufacturing plant and so I often would go to work with him and while inside, he was the big boss. When we would go out into the plant on a hot summer day, he would always say, Chrissie, hold my hand, there's lots of dangerous machinery around, as they were slitting the steel on the different kinds of metals. I would notice that he would say hello to everyone. It didn't matter if a man was in overalls and sweating, the man might have been a different race or ethnic background and my father knew their names. He would ask about their children, their wife and to me, I remember thinking, you know, how does he know all these people and why does he care, and when I look back, that really made a difference. So I went to a Catholic grade school. I then went to one of the best high schools in the country, New (Trier?) High School and then I went on to Arizona State University and I remember when we moved to St. Louis in 1977 and people said, "Where did you go to school?" I would always say, "Arizona State" and they'd sort of look at me like, "We don't care about that," like, "What high school did you go to?" and I remember originally thinking I was so proud to say New Trier High School like they would know and recognize it and in most cases, as we know in St. Louis, that if you weren't from here, it sort of didn't really matter. I was at college...I always thought that we were sort of poor but when I think back on the fact that my parents said to all six children, they were college graduates which I was so proud of because so many of my friends' parents didn't go to college, they said, "You are going to go to college and you can pick any college you want to go to," and I realized later what a privilege that was, that I could go out of state and, being one of six, we really never got to travel extensively. We would go to Wisconsin and

Michigan, places that we could all pile in the car and go for family vacations. So I decided this was my chance to go someplace that I had never been, to experience different cultures and travel and sort of see the world. So I applied to KU, Arizona State and U of A, never been to Arizona before in my life, never seen a cactus and decided that I would go to Arizona State because it was the closest to the airport. And my parents basically just packed up a trunk, waved bye-bye to me, put me on a plane and off I went and that was really humbling. I'll never, ever forget arriving at that airport thinking, where have I landed? I'm going to this huge school and I know no one. But to me, I took it up as a challenge and when I think back on my life so far, that's sort of how I thrive, it's doing things that people don't think I can do, sort of taking risks, having adventures and that's what college was for me. It was just a chance to, again, really deepen this part of my life that's been so important to me, which is being around people that are different than I am and learning from them and learning about different cultures and races and religions because at Arizona, it was a place where there was just this mosaic and mixing of different kinds of people that I hadn't had in grade school or high school. So it was a time of wonderful freedom, no social media. You know, you called home on Sundays. You wrote letters. My parents had no clue what I was doing but I was respectful and worked really hard to get really good grades and I was very diligent but I also had the time of my life, just experiencing that freedom and really coming into my own. I think the Civil Rights Movement, certainly the Viet Nam War, really hit home for me. My brother went off to Viet Nam so we would get letters from him.

Blanche Touhill: Did he live through it?

Chris Chadwick: Yes, he did, fortunately, but I remember my boyfriend, my high school sweetheart who is now my husband of 43 years, was in the draft and just sort of the pressure and emotions around, would he be sent off to this war. So it was a heady time, just of trying to survive and discover who you were and what you wanted to be. One of the reasons I went to Arizona State also was that I wanted to be a teacher and it was one of the finest education schools in the country and so when I reflect back, I guess I've always wanted to be a teacher so I was never really told "You could be the president of the United States, Chrissie," by my parents but, yet, I don't ever feel like they held me back but I took very female, traditional routes. I was a Home Ec minor and an Education major, but again, a great

influence from my mother who was a seamstress, made all of her clothes and because I was so tall and gawky growing up, I couldn't really go buy clothes that fit properly, nor did we have the money to go do that and so I learned to sew and admired that she could, that she had that skill. So I really followed very traditional, sort of female routes in terms of my profession but it was what I wanted to do and I've never regretted it.

Blanche Touhill: Now, you talked about, there weren't any barriers put on, but did a school teacher say to you, "You really have something extra ordinary"?

Chris Chadwick: You know, unlike so many people, I didn't have one teacher. I think it was more my family that surrounded and supported me and, really, my grandmothers played a big role, being one of six, especially the grandmother that didn't live with us, she was the one that would sort of take me for an overnight on a weekend and take me to do something special and she would tell me how special I was. So it was more my extended family and my parents that...and my siblings, as much as they made fun of me, like we all do in a family with six kids, as you can imagine. It was a very loving environment and to this day, all six of us are still alive, thank heavens, and healthy and still really, really close and now our kids are close and now our grandbabies. So this notion of...you know, I've thought a lot about...I've been asked this question and we ask it a lot at Focus-St. Louis, "What is your legacy?" and really, when you peel back all of the layers, my legacy is going to be my children and my grandbabies and so I've always loved children. I have four of my own with my wonderful husband and now three grandbabies and hopefully more on the way. So, that was always important to me.

Blanche Touhill: Did your sweetheart go to Arizona State as well?

Chris Chadwick: No.

Blanche Touhill: Was that hard, to leave him?

Chris Chadwick: So, Dave and I both applied to KU and then he applied to some other schools and, as you heard where I applied to Arizona, when it came down to it, we both sort of...he was a really good soccer player and they had a good soccer team where he ended up going in Ohio and I wanted this adventure and we just decided that if it was going to work, it was going to work through normal coming home visits. I went to his homecoming every year; he came out to Arizona in the spring; we would meet in New

Orleans for Mardi Gras. So we met as often as we could but we also decided that we were going to date and enjoy college and, again, if it was meant to be, it was meant to be. So, we were supposed to get engaged the Christmas of our senior year and he got cold feet so I said, okay, I'm going off to Europe right after I graduate and that spring he basically proposed and we got married that August, when we had both just turned 22 and then I taught school.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to Europe?

Chris Chadwick: No, I did go to Europe later with my grandmother. That was the first time I went but, no, we got married instead that summer.

Blanche Touhill: When did you go to graduate school?

Chris Chadwick: I never did go to graduate school. So immediately...22, a young 22, got married, got my first job. It was really the only time I ever interviewed for a job which was interviewing with the Pastor/priest at a grade school, to teach third grade and got the job immediately and taught there for five years and then started having our own children. I loved teaching but I wanted six kids myself so we had three in three years and then I had a miscarriage and then I got our last little guy, Adam, and my husband sort of looked at me and said, "Honey, we've got four kids, two girls, two boys. They're healthy. I want to do stuff when we're not too old to enjoy each other again and we're going to put these kids through school and help them out so can we stop?" So, there are days where I wish I still had a bunch more but now I have three wonderful in-laws and so now I'm up to seven and soon, hopefully I'll be up to eight children and many grandchildren.

Blanche Touhill: It worked.

Chris Chadwick: It worked.

Blanche Touhill: So you taught school for five years and then what happened? You had your children and then what drew you back into the working world?

Chris Chadwick: So, our first child was a Bicentennial baby in 1976 and that was Brian, and then Anna came along in 1977, and at that point, my husband was offered a position with a different company and to move to St. Louis to open up a branch here.

Blanche Touhill: Where were you living, in Chicago?

Chris Chadwick: We were living in the suburbs of Chicago and so we saw it as a real adventure. They said, "We want you to go to St. Louis for three to five years." We had been to St. Louis many times. My parents had dear, dear friends here that, actually, we called Aunt and Uncle so we had come here almost every Thanksgiving of our life and so we thought it would be fun to come for three to five years, have this challenge for Dave and then head back home. So we came and it was really a fun period to sort of come to a place where you really didn't have grade school and high school friends and you just could be yourself and if people liked you, wonderful, and if they didn't, it really didn't matter. The world was sort of wide open to us. I remember the realtor taking us around and I kept saying, "I want my children to be able to walk to town," and she kept saying, "Well, you just go to that mall" and I said, "No, I want to be able to walk to town." So finally she said, "Well, then, you're going to have to live in Kirkwood or Webster Groves" and I think back now, interesting that U City wasn't mentioned. But it was a time of transition for University City and I don't know if steering was going on but we ended up with a home in Webster Groves, lived there for 33 years, raised our four children there, loved it, loved it.

Blanche Touhill: And they could walk to town?

Chris Chadwick: Yeah, they could walk to town, and interestingly enough, about four years into our living in St. Louis, we were told it was time to come back to Chicago and Dave and I looked at each other and we said, "You know what? We love St. Louis. We have made wonderful friends here" and we loved the fact that you could get to the city so quickly, that you could really get your arms around civic affairs in St. Louis, unlike Chicago. I felt, even as this young mother, that I could make a difference. I could do something here whereas, again, in Chicago, it was just so overwhelming. So we decided that we would make a leap and Dave would start his own business here in St. Louis and, if need be, I could go back to paid employment and so we set a little budget up and, lo and behold, Dave did very well which was no surprise to me. So I was able to be a stay-at-home mother for that period when the kids were young and then I threw myself in so that I could keep my brain stimulated, into volunteer work.

Blanche Touhill: During that time?

Chris Chadwick: During that time, and it was a fabulous way to get to know this region, to get to know St. Louis because the first place...two places, one was the St. Louis Zoo because I could not believe that I could take my kids to the zoo for free, and as soon as they started crabbing, I could just haul them all back home. We hadn't spent \$50 so we were going to spend the whole day there. We could just come and go. So actually I was very involved in starting the whole volunteer program at the St. Louis Zoo because...

Blanche Touhill: How did you do that?

Chris Chadwick: Because, the first thing I was doing was engraving parent program plaques in the basement by myself and I would go down there once a week, get a babysitter. The treat was, as soon as you engraved enough plaques, you could go out to the grounds and hammer them in. This is back in the day. Obviously everything's computerized now. But I would go and there would be mounds of these plaques I was supposed to engrave and I thought, this is ridiculous. So I went up to one of the secretaries and just said, "Is there a way that we could put a call out because there's got to be lots of different things here that volunteers could do" and so the program was really in its infancy at the zoo.

Blanche Touhill: Was that Charlie Hoessel

Chris Chadwick: Oh, yeah, and Charlie became a dear, dear friend.

Blanche Touhill: And did they agree to put the call out?

Chris Chadwick: Yeah, so we sent out these little yellow postcards to people to come on a Saturday to learn about different volunteer activities and I think, for that first session that I was there sort of running in tandem with Charlie, I think there were 50 or 75 people there and they were shocked. So, anyhow, they took it and ran with it.

Blanche Touhill: Did you run the volunteer program?

Chris Chadwick: I didn't run the volunteer program. I stayed as a volunteer. I worked on Zoofari, the big fundraiser for many years. I joined the Zoo Friends board and eventually became the president of the Zoo Friends board. So I became, and still to this day, am a volunteer at the St. Louis Zoo. The other organization that...

Blanche Touhill: Did they have any other volunteers?

Chris Chadwick: Oh, yeah, they had people like me that just loved the place but it wasn't necessarily an organized kind of structure.

Blanche Touhill: And there weren't a lot of them?

Chris Chadwick: No, to my knowledge, there weren't. There probably were more volunteers doing the veterinary sort of animal, those kind of things but not a lot of fundraising or clerical or support kinds of things that they definitely needed help doing. And the other organization that was very pivotal for me was the Junior League of St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: How did you join that?

Chris Chadwick: My mother, who was not a member but had friends that were, when we were being transferred to St. Louis, my mother said, "You know, Chrissie, you need to join the Junior League" and back in the day, I think it was, like, a secret thing.

Blanche Touhill: I think it was hard to get into the Junior League.

Chris Chadwick: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: You did have to have some kind of connections.

Chris Chadwick: So I remember, I didn't really know...none of my friends...but I started my first year in Chicago and then transferred to St. Louis, having done most of the requirements but I remember the transfer committee sort of adopted me immediately and I remember my first meeting, sitting in the very back row with probably 500 women. The Junior League was a machine back then, and I remember the president up at the front, addressing all of us and I remember so clearly thinking, she's a god; how does she stand up at that podium and talk so comfortably to all of us about the importance of this organization in the community? And long story short, later, many years later, I was standing up at that podium and I always looked to the last row and I looked at the women back there and I wanted everyone to feel like, if I could do it, they could do it. But that was an organization that pushed me into what the issues in St. Louis were, what the really systemic heady issues were and also, at the same time, gave us a lot of training: how to run meetings; what was conflict resolution; why was mentoring important; what was strategic planning all about; how did you raise money, all of these things that were so



instrumental in the skill set that I, in a very safe place, got to practice and so many amazing women in that organization where I really first learned about formal and informal mentoring because there were women that...I remember the nominating committee coming to me and saying, "We see you as presidential material and so we want you to do x, y and z to broaden your resume so that you will be ready when the time is right" and I remember thinking, oh, my gosh, what do they see in me? And maybe it was that simple adage, that I showed up, that if I said I was going to do something, I did it. Maybe it was that simple, that I was hungry to learn but I realized the importance of being mentored and how special that was and to not take it for granted, but I also learned that you didn't have to have a formal mentor, that there were so many women in that organization that I admired and respected that I would sort of follow them. I would sign up for their committees and I would watch, what was it that made them effective in running a meeting; how did they engage people; how did they make it fun. So that was really a pivotal time for me because it gave me the skill set and then it helped me understand the community and we were doing...when I was president, we did the first Walk for Aids in this community and people could not believe that the Junior League of St. Louis, which had a reputation in many arenas as being sort of a white glove organization and my motto during those two years was, we took the white gloves off a long time ago and we have work gloves on. But that was back in the day when people thought you could get AIDS by sitting on a toilet seat. So the combination of this small little AIDS organization and this powerful machine with the Junior League partnering up to raise awareness of what this was and why it was important in our community was something I'll never forget. The Crisis Nursery was something else that the Junior League had been doing a lot of research around child abuse and neglect and this was a time when I realized that anyone can step up to be a champion so that any cause, again, needs someone to say, "I'll do it; I'll lead. I'm going to need people to surround me but I'll do it." The person that was supposed to take the research to reality moved away and I was the vice president of this area of the Junior League and I kept sort of saying, "Would someone take this" and no one really wanted the responsibility so I stepped in and said, "We've got to open up a St. Louis Crisis Nursery. This is right for the region. We know it's an unduplicated service" and so basically I am

considered today the mother of the Crisis Nursery but it was sort of in my kitchen that a small group of people would meet on a regular basis.

Blanche Touhill: You got hospitals to take in these children, didn't you? How did you do that?

Chris Chadwick: Well, we knew we needed a home so we knew we needed money, we knew we needed a home. We had the research so we knew we had the compelling case so that we could sell it. So we looked around at the different hospitals because we felt like it would be advantageous...as scary as a hospital can be for people to come into, we realized that if we could get physicians to do physicals on these kids when they came in, if we could have the shared services of a hospital: the food, the diapers, so we approached Deaconess Hospital at the time. Richard Albrecht was the CEO at the time and we knew that their mission was compatible to our mission and went and had a meeting, just these young women with this passion and he basically said, "You know what? This makes sense. I'll give you two rooms at the end of one of our wings and a sunroom and if you can make it work with two hospital rooms and the sunroom, we'll open up the first St. Louis Crisis Nursery."

Blanche Touhill: Now, what did you have to provide?

Chris Chadwick: So, then, obviously, we had to become a 501C3. We had to hire the staff and create the volunteers, get all the supplies: the cribs, so our first grant was a United Way Venture Grant and so they gave us \$25,000 and then we realized that we really needed to reach out to the broader St. Louis community so we asked the Coalition of 100 Black Women, Dr. Freda Witherspoon was the president of the organization and Freda and I became dear friends and the trust was built and she understood the need so she went to her constituency and they decided this was a good project to be a part of and so they were part of the founding organizations along with the Junior League of St. Louis and Deaconess Hospital and United Way were sort of the...so, my job was sort of to get it off the ground. I was the first board president for a couple of years, to build a board. That's when I also realized that these were brave souls because they weren't coming onto a sexy board, a board that had a reputation. They were coming on in many ways because they were my friend but they also, more importantly, believed in the mission of what we were trying to do, so, again, a really, really exciting time.

- Blanche Touhill: How many children did you have at the beginning?
- Chris Chadwick: So we had the capacity of taking seven kids at a time. It was 24 hours and the idea was for...families had to come in because we provided services right away for the caregivers, the families and we tried to empower them so if electricity was turned off or there was an abuse or neglect situation or whatever the crisis was at the time, that we could help them begin to resolve it, but also, more importantly, know that their children were in a safe place, and quite frankly, as a mother of four, fairly well off economically, I realized how stressed out I got. What would it be like if my heat was turned off or my lights were turned off or we didn't have money for food or I couldn't buy diapers? I started thinking, what would that feel like? So, I spent a lot of time at the Crisis Nursery because I wanted to understand what the barriers were. Also, if people were brave enough to bring their children to us, entrust their children in this space, what did it take and how did it feel and what was the result? And so we learned a lot and, to this day, there's several other sites. The dream was that we could go out of business, that there would be no need for a St. Louis Crisis Nursery. That unfortunately has not proven to be the case.
- Blanche Touhill: How many children do they service today?
- Chris Chadwick: Thousands, because now we have, I think, seven sites and the age parameter has been pushed up a little bit.
- Blanche Touhill: To what age?
- Chris Chadwick: You know, I think it's maybe seven now and it's just driven by volunteers and lots of practicum students coming through and lots of high school students come and do their senior year volunteer projects there. So I think the fact that it's open seven days a week and 24 hours a day too, for people that work full-time or have crazy shifts but also want to give a part of their life to be a volunteer, this is as place that's open where so many other places are 9:00 to 5:00 and don't fit into people's schedule. So anyhow, that's...
- Blanche Touhill: Do you ever have a family who takes the child there and then doesn't come back?
- Chris Chadwick: We didn't when I was intimately involved with it.

Blanche Touhill: It was just a temporary emergency?

Chris Chadwick: Yes. So, I fell in love with volunteerism; I fell in love with boards. I would say most of my volunteer service, I've served on over 35 different boards in this community and been board president of five of them and been involved with a national organization that really was a fun, exhilarating...it was the Regional Stewardship organization and this notion...I think we were ahead of our times but it was people from all around the country that cared about regions that really, in this global marketplace, it wasn't about cities and municipalities and counties. It was about regions and coming from a bi-state region, being more complicated than...

Blanche Touhill: And what year did that happen?

Chris Chadwick: So this was in the mid '90s...no, it was probably more in the early 2000's. How time flies! But it was, for me, a time to sort of get away from...it was when I was working full-time at Focus-St. Louis so I had moved from doing full-time volunteer work into a consulting practice so I sort of fell into five years or so of my own consulting firm.

Blanche Touhill: Who hired you?

Chris Chadwick: So, my specialty was non-profit management, workforce diversity and strategic planning.

Blanche Touhill: Did you take the non-profit management courses at UMSL?

Chris Chadwick: No, I didn't, but it mostly was from all the boards I served on and from my Junior League training that...I served on small dysfunctional boards and I served on really sophisticated boards and so I sort of began to be a student of what made non-profit boards work and be successful. So I did that for five years and absolutely loved it and, really, when Focus-St. Louis was formed or being formed, one of my mentors, Carolyn Losos, I happened to be her board president, volunteer board president and I was...

Blanche Touhill: At Focus?

Chris Chadwick: No, at the Leadership Center at the time where Carolyn was the executive director.

Blanche Touhill: And where was the Leadership Center? Is that part of what...

Chris Chadwick: That's who Focus is today so it was Confluence-St. Louis and the Leadership Center.

Blanche Touhill: And you were the president of the board of the Leadership Center?

Chris Chadwick: Yes, but I also served on...I'm going to have to circle back to the Regional Stewardship conversation...I also was on the board of Confluence-St. Louis which was formed by one of the first Leadership-St. Louis classes. So there was a lot of synergy and so often, when I was at the Confluence board table and the Leadership Center board table, I would be the dot connector. I would be the one that would say, "Have we talked to Confluence?" or if it was something that was happening at Confluence, I'd say, "Have we talked to the Leadership Center?" So, it turned out that two different times I served as paid interim executive director at Confluence-St. Louis and it was during the second time that I was brought in as the paid interim executive director that I was also the board chair of the Leadership Center and I remember going to Carolyn Losos and saying, "You know, could we do a SWAT exercise? Confluence is going to go out and hire another dynamo executive director but now is an opportunity: could we do a SWAT exercise? Could we look at the strengths, the opportunities, the weaknesses and threats of what it would look like if we came together?" and to Carolyn's credit, she said, "Go for it." So, in an executive session, we did that exercise. It turned out to be very positive, sort of surprised all of us. So I went over to Confluence and talked to the board president there and I said to her, "We did this exercise. Would you do it here?" and she agreed, and to make a long story short, we started the merger conversations, also bringing the CORO Midwestern Center to the table because they were very similar to the Leadership Center. Once again, I played a funny role there. I was interim here, board president here and, because I had a consulting company, we went out for an RFP to bring a consultant in to help with this transition to move towards merger; couldn't find anyone that would move us as quickly as we needed to and since I was trusted and knew the cultures of these organizations, I sort of played that role as well. We voted to do the full-blown merger. The next step was to hire an executive director of this brand new organization, Focus-St. Louis and I was asked to apply. I was named the interim COO. Carolyn Losos was named the interim CEO. Carolyn, to her credit, knew

she could not continue as the new executive director because it would look like a takeover so she knew she was going to step down. I loved my consulting company and my children were at sort of pivotal ages where they were going into college and high school. I knew they needed me around and so I declined and Carolyn was sick because she wanted me so badly in the role and I remember so clearly, we were upstairs renovating the new space for this brand new organization and they were bringing in individuals to interview for the executive director job and I realized at that point I had made a huge mistake. The good news was, they did not find someone that round and they did come back and ask me and so I had 18 wonderful years shaping that organization.

Blanche Touhill: And what does the organization do?

Chris Chadwick: The organization today is considered the region's premiere leadership development organization. We have six different leadership development programs and so we do a lot of citizen engagement work and community policy work but probably our biggest gift is our leadership development work. I will say I'm proud that three years ago we were able to incorporate the CORO-Midwestern Center into the fold, gracefully put them out of business and bring in the very respect CORO fellows and Women in Leadership Program. So today, really, all of the robust leadership development programs are now housed in one organization which makes a lot of sense for synergy purposes.

Blanche Touhill: And you have six programs so there's a lot of variety?

Chris Chadwick: From juniors in high school all the way up to senior level executives, but, you know what I think is so transformative about our programming is it's immersion-based. It is not so much skill-based, the traditional different skills that leaders need and can benefit from but it's more about, you are a leader; we all are leaders. We can shore up our skills but, most importantly, leaders, we need to strengthen our community. So we want you to know about all of the different assets and challenges that face our region and then hopefully, again, going back to that "you need to be a champion of something," find that passion; find that cause and whether it's individually or with your class or with a small group, go out and do something. So we have 8,500 alumni today, people that are...

Blanche Touhill: How do you cultivate them?

- Chris Chadwick: So we have alumni programming. So we'll bring them back and we'll do days of learning; we'll do dinners to keep them connected across different classes and programs; we have a robust website...
- Blanche Touhill: And who supports this?
- Chris Chadwick: Who supports...
- Blanche Touhill: Financially?
- Chris Chadwick: Focus-St. Louis? Like any other non-profit but I'm proud to say that we have a very diverse funding portfolio so it's individual donors which I think is something I'm proud that we really have built up because with corporations and foundations, those are sort of fickle with mergers and acquisitions and so individuals are really sort of where the stable funding source is...memberships, special events. They're fee for service. We run a small consulting practice out of the organization which sort of followed me but we were very clear what our sweet spots were in terms of delivering towards the mission of Focus-St. Louis but I think it was that entrepreneurial component that I think healthy non-profits have today.
- Blanche Touhill: You are very entrepreneurial. What does that go to?
- Chris Chadwick: I think it goes back to, at a very young age, being that sort of middle kid, wanting to be protective. Then I started working at a very young age. I made potholders and sold them around the neighborhood and then I babysat. I worked as long as I can remember because I wanted to have, to be able to give and so I've loved challenges.
- Blanche Touhill: And your mother was a volunteer.
- Chris Chadwick: And my grandmother and so it was just part of how I grew up, and again, to be privileged that I could be a stay-at-home mom. I had the disposition to be a stay-at-home mom. I know that I've learned that as well, that not everyone wants to be at home and so I think that entrepreneurial spirit is, I think, what sort of keeps me growing if there's a challenge and a risk that energizes me.
- Blanche Touhill: Let me change the subject for just a minute. Do you want to comment on the IWF?

Chris Chadwick: So, I think the IWF...I remember, again, through Carolyn Losos, that she was a member and a lot of her peers I just looked up to. There was a bit of an age difference and so I could really learn from them, listen to them, admire them and so she talked often about this group and I got into some other women's groups but I always, in my mind, thought, oh, some day, if I could be asked to join this organization, how special it would be and I remember being asked at Layton's by a group of very cool women, if I would consider joining and I jumped at the chance-mostly because it was something for me. I think as women, too, we do, we do, we do, for others and I saw this as something where I could be around inspirational, courageous, talented women and I could learn from them and hopefully I could also give back and be a part of the fun.

Blanche Touhill: Is there any award or awards that you've gotten over your life that are very, very important to you?

Chris Chadwick: The best mom ever and the best grandma or "Noni," I'm called. You know, when I was younger...I mean, I've gotten...I've been just blessed to have been recognized with a variety of different awards and recognitions. When I was younger, I got the Woman of Achievement, when I was fairly young for volunteerism and, oh, yeah, I just remember sitting up there and all of my family and just...and I still have that sterling silver platter and look occasionally at it. It's pretty tarnished but I think that wonderful quote about "You know you're a leader when you don't care who gets the credit," I really saw that evolution in myself, that when I was younger, I did want those accolades and I did appreciate them and I still appreciate them but it doesn't matter as much anymore, especially now, when I was just a week ago moving my office and I have boxes of this stuff that, you know, there's no place to hang them anymore. I don't really have...I have a laundry room but it's not big enough. So it's flattering and lovely and it was almost more for my husband and my children because my husband was so supportive of all the things that I did and I wanted my children to see and have a role model because I wanted them to know how important volunteerism was.

Blanche Touhill: Are any of your children interested in volunteerism?

Chris Chadwick: I think they all are and will be. They've very career-oriented right now but it is something that, even if it means writing a \$5 check, that that's



something that's important, to not only give your time, but your talents and your treasure as well.

Blanche Touhill: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what do you think your life would have been like?

Chris Chadwick: You know, I hope not much would be different because I think I probably still would have wanted to be a teacher. I still would have been pretty handy with my hands. I love all of those different things, to cook and to sew. I haven't had as much time now. So, the doors might have been more shut for me as a woman, but because of the paths I took, which were fairly traditional, I don't know as it would have been...I don't know. That's an interesting question.

Blanche Touhill: What do you plan to do now that you've retired?

Chris Chadwick: I'm really, really excited about the next adventures and the next chapter. I have watched so many people that I admire retire from something they've loved and then jump into too many things too quickly and then sort of ask why they did that. So, again, I've observed and watched and so I'm going to take the next couple of months. I've said no to a lot of things. I want to continue to learn. There's still a whole bunch of things, courses I want to take and traveling that I want to do to continue to learn about different cultures and religions and history. I want to spend more time with family and I just realize how fragile health is. My mother died at a young age and I now have friends that, they're healthy one day and the next day they hear horrible news. So I just want to sort of be a little selfish now and do the things that I sort of want to do that I've put aside all these years. So I'm excited about it.

Blanche Touhill: Do your children live in St. Louis?

Chris Chadwick: No one lives here. So this is another thing that everyone keeps saying: "Are you moving to Chicago? Are you moving back home?" and I love St. Louis and so, no, we're here but it does mean I'll have the flexibility to travel more so I'll look forward to that.

Blanche Touhill: Did your husband retire from his office?

Chris Chadwick: No, my husband is still working so that's another challenge for the next couple of years but I have said to Dave that...so I'm going to Turkey and

Bosnia in October and so he knows that I'm an adventurer and that I'm not going to be held back but there are certain places that obviously we'll want to go together so I'll hold those trips off.

Blanche Touhill: When you went from high school to the Arizona State and you felt that you wanted to meet a variety of people, what drove you to do that?

Chris Chadwick: I think, again, it was just this opportunity to learn more about myself and what made me tick and where my passions might lie, and again, I think that's why most of the volunteer work that I've done in my life and Focus-St. Louis, one of the things that I'm most proud of there, in that organization, is what I would call authentic relationships among diverse people. So sometimes I think when we go to parties in St. Louis, I call it "polite diversity." In our organization at Focus-St. Louis, again, it's sort of going back to my father and holding his hand in that plant, when people greet each other, they've been in each other's home and they know their children and they know more deeply about the people than just sort of the surface. So I don't exactly know why that passion. Maybe it was the Civil Rights Movement, again, the injustice but that is something that I've been very proud of about the work that we've done at Focus and a lot of the volunteer work that I've been a part of and look forward to continuing.

Blanche Touhill: Going back to the Civil Rights Movement, it was not only African American but it was women too. Were you as aware of the women's civil rights problems as you were of the African Americans?

Chris Chadwick: Probably not, in reality. Now when I look back at the footage or read more...no, it was more about the color of your skin.

Blanche Touhill: And Viet Nam.

Chris Chadwick: Mm-hmm, and I think that is something also that I have really worked hard at over the years, to talk about white privilege, that even a poor person that is Caucasian has benefits and avenues that a person of color just does not have open to them by virtue of their skin color and for many whites, that's something very hard for them to understand, what is white privilege. They want to go back to...many people want to go back to, "I worked really hard. I had to pull myself up so why can't everyone else?" and it is very different for people that are not Caucasian and that's not to say that I haven't also learned because I've done a lot of work in

this area as well and everyone's at a different place on their journey when they care about this but I think in St. Louis, this is a big issue still for us. It's a generational issue much like the women's movement is a generational issue. I think for people that have struggled through it, you don't want the younger generations to not honor it and understand it and be appreciative of it. The younger generation seems to just feel like it's about the economics, just, "I want a job; I want to be successful" and so there's this compromise that I think needs to be met in terms of, yes, I think we've raised our children in a very different kind of world. It is a global world. To survive and be successful, you have to be able to pivot and weave among people that are different from you but honoring the past and knowing about it is very important.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk about the idea coming to St. Louis of regionalism because both St. Louis and Illinois, because of the river, have really been separated and then I remember, all of a sudden we began to talk...I'm not sure exactly...let's say the '90s, maybe it was earlier...about viewing St. Louis as a region, as a 12-state region, 6 counties on one side and 6 counties on the other. Would you talk about that?

Chris Chadwick: That's, again, something that I'm proud of. When we came out of the box with Focus-St. Louis, we decided that we needed to sort of claim the regional civic space. There was a regional business organization and a regional public organization but really not a regional non-profit organization and at the time it was 12 regions. During the 18 years I was at Focus, we moved from 12 to 16 and now we're 15 counties that make up our region. It is a concept that is very challenging, I think, for normal citizens and so it is something, again, that we embed in all of the work that we do at Focus-St. Louis and I was really privileged, probably about a decade ago, to be asked to join a national movement called The Alliance for Regional Stewardship and the notion is, if you think of the word "stewardship," it's sort of the careful and responsible management of something entrusted in your care. When you add region to that, it's "I'm going to take care of my region." So we really promoted this movement of being a regional steward and so it was fun to learn from these brilliant academics from around the nation and foundations and I was asked to join as a practitioner because I was in the field doing this work and so it was really intimidating for me to be at these tables. I did eventually become the president of that organization for two years but it was

wonderful for me to be able to bring that back to our region, to have the time to think about how important that was, to talk to other people in the regions that they were operating in. So I think this notion, again, in a global world today, is that for St. Louis, for us to be successful, we have to act as a region. Companies don't care about counties and municipalities. They just want to know how they can make the deal work and I think it's just confusing to people when we talk about it and the reality is, how fragmented we are when we think that there are these artificial boundaries. These issues that face our communities spill over. They are regional issues. They are national issues and so I think it's exciting for us to have a bi-state region but it's also incredibly challenging but I think it's something that we all need to honor and take hold of, that we are all regional stewards.

Blanche Touhill: Do you think it's more in the consciousness of the people who live in these regions now than it was before?

Chris Chadwick: Absolutely because 18 years ago, I would say "region" all the time to people and they'd look at me sort of with glazed eyes and we have maps and I would always talk...today I hear that word quite often and it just is exciting to me, that people now understand the importance of...and there's a lot of discussion now about, should this city re-enter the county or should there be a merger. So I think the future is exciting.

Blanche Touhill: Maybe it's because you were seeking a diverse group when you went to Arizona State and regionalism brought in quite a diverse group from both Illinois and Missouri.

Chris Chadwick: Well, it's something we worked really hard to do. It's not something that happens naturally. I remember the first time we brought a woman of color to the Junior League of St. Louis and then we went and asked her to then go bring other women in and I remember she looked at us and she said, "This is not my problem. If this is important to you as an organization, then you go out and bring in other women of color" and I never forgot that. So this is not...it's everyone's responsibility and we can't stop working.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Chris Chadwick: Thanks.