

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

September 20, 2013

JO ANN HARMON-ARNOLD INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Blanche Touhill: Why don't you introduce yourself.

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: Well, I'm Jo Ann Arnold, probably most professionally known as Jo Harmon.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about your family when you were young, your brothers and sisters, where you grew up. Was there a teacher that really helped you to see yourself in a more complete way or encouraged you, or was it your family? Just talk about your early days and what was important about that.

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: Well, I had a wonderful growing up life. I came from a big family. We didn't have a lot. We had plenty but it was a wonderful, warm family. My mother was well educated. She had never worked and she really was a wise person. We're five children, I'm the oldest of the five and I'm the big sister. I have brothers and I actually will say that I think that made a difference in my career, learning to work with men at a very young age and being able to respond to them. I went to Alton High School, a very small town but a large high school and I can't think of any particular teacher, but I think my experiences, my life experiences when I was in high school, junior high school, and so on, made a big difference. They prepared me for certain things that I didn't anticipate. My mother was very much one who wanted to encourage me to be in plays, to be a cheerleader, to be active in student council, and always, always, from the time I can remember in grade school, my mother encouraged me and she encouraged me educationally as well, and frankly, when I first went to school, to college, I went to a small college and my mother had a little trust and she paid by the quarter, \$62.50 and that was wonderful. I always worked while I

was in college but I never felt anything about working while I was in college. Actually, it set me up for a wonderful future because I worked in the steno pool and I typed and I typed papers, people's theses and that sort of thing. Later, several jobs that I actually got were because I could type so well and once I got there and I was interviewed for whatever reason, I was given the opportunity to do other things. So, yes, I grew up in a healthy, warm atmosphere. My father worked in a factory; my mother was an at-home mother. You would like this: My mother made my gowns when I would be in homecoming or something and she couldn't sew so she could visualize them and I had creations but they were all stitched together by hand so I couldn't move a whole lot. But it really didn't matter. I knew what the game was and so I would just march up there in my beautiful confections. But I would owe a lot to my family, my mother and father, wonderful people, growing up in a very sane, stable environment and people encouraging me to be more than I thought I could be, and that happened all the way through my career.

Blanche Touhill:

Now, when you graduated from high school, or even in college, when you graduated from college, did you go to work right away? How did your career start?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Well, I did go to work right away. I worked at McDonnell Douglas as a typist that summer and then my mother said, "I can pay for the first quarter," and I had money and so I went near my home to college, to Southern Illinois University and I worked there, as I said, in the steno pool and that because I typed in the summer. I couldn't take shorthand or be a stenographer but I knew how to type. So I worked all through college and we did a lot of things there. We organized a sorority. We made it like a campus, myself and several other women. We had the best time and it's funny to be a founder of something at this age, but anyway, I did that. Then I was married in my senior year because the man I married was going to be sent to Azmir, Africa. He had graduated a year before me and he was going to have to go in the military so we were married and we moved to Boston, to the air base in Ayer and I, again, applied for a job in the newspaper, a blind ad, that wanted someone that could type accurately at 100 words a

minute, and so I applied. They called me and when I was asked, where was I going, they said Harvard and so I went to Harvard and the day that I interviewed, they said, "Well, you almost have a degree in psychology. Would you like to be on a research project?" and I said, "Sounds wonderful." So I became a research assistant and we did the research, the interviewing of people in the north end of Boston. They were tearing down the north end of Boston, the Scully Square area, and those people were being relocated and they wanted to understand the subcultures that were there and how things interacted and so on. It was delightful. I followed several families and they were delightful people. So I did that, driving my little MG and my brother had taught me how to do things with the car because in the cold weather, the MG was stubborn. It was just glorious to drive those little roads in, but not in the winter, and so I knew how to jumpstart it and do things and people were always like, "Are you kidding?" It never bothered me. I just did it. I had to get home. So that was a wonderful experience and we were allowed to go to class and we didn't have to pay so I took every class I possibly could at Harvard, primarily in psychology. Then, my husband was sent to Vietnam, I stayed there. Then when he was out of the military, we came back and my daughter, Elizabeth, was three months old and I, of course, had to work. We didn't have much money and he was going to work for an advertising firm and needed suits. So it was simply that, I applied at Kelly Girl, the part-time services, again, could type and they sent me on an assignment to Emerson and while I was there, I worked just doing filing and typing and all that in the personnel office and a job came open, it was a new job they were creating for their college recruiting program. They were setting up a centralized college recruiting program and they asked me if I would like to go to the campuses and introduce the company to the admissions officers. Well, I thought, that sounded like a pretty neat thing to do. So I took a full-time job with Emerson in 1966 and that's how it all started and 40-some years later, I was a corporate senior vice president. I worked very hard. I loved every moment of my career. I never once had any idea about where I was going or what I was doing. It was just, as opportunities came along, I would do them. I always thought, this is it; I have arrived,

and, you know, for me it was always about the job. I wanted to do the job as good or better than I thought that I could and I worked very hard. I, fortunately, again, had this wonderful mother and she was able to babysit for me because I traveled a lot and I would drive from Emerson in St. Louis to Alton, which is about 45 miles, drop my baby off, come back and then I was going to school to finish...I didn't ever finish so I had to go back to school and I did that and I would drop my daughter off, go back. I first went to SIU, got my degree and then I started going to Washington University for an MBA and that ended one day while I was walking down the hall at Emerson and the CEO then, Chuck Knight, said, "Where are you going, Harmon?" I said, "Well, I'm going to school. I'm working on my MBA." He stopped me right there, took the books out of my hands and said, "Harmon, I'll give you your MBA right here. You don't need to go to school." And so I finished the semester because I had paid for the semester and I never went back and I have lots of hours but the bottom line was that he did deliver; I mean, he was a wonderful mentor and a great teacher, tough, but a great teacher.

Blanche Touhill:

Did he do that for anybody else?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Yes, he did that but you had to be open to it, and once again, back to my original thought, he always encouraged me to do things. He'd say, "Would you like to take on this?" and I'd say, "Well, I don't know"; "Harmon, you can do it; just go do it. You can do it. If you have a problem, let me know." And, of course then, when I would get in trouble and I'd go into his office, he would always shout at me, like everyone else, and, of course, I was one of the boys. I mean, I was the only woman for many years. Then, in the afternoon or in the morning, later, at some point, he would come into my office, put his feet on my desk, say, "How's your daughter, Elizabeth doing?" and it was a fond and wonderful thing and he did do that with everyone. He would have the meetings that people have heard about where he would argue with people and fuss and so on, but I can tell you that generally...although he could carry a grudge...generally he would sit by that person at dinner and have his arm around them. He had a wonderful ability with people and it's very hard in a CEO, a very tough, grounded

CEO that people respected but also were somewhat in awe of and afraid of. I guess we all were, which made us work harder. I never wanted to make a mistake and I tried not to. Of course I made mistakes, many...

Blanche Touhill:

How did Emerson change in those days under his leadership?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

It grew tremendously. I mean, he was a visionary and the most important thing was, it became much more people-centric than it had been with the previous CEO, not that he wasn't, but Chuck Knight would say...well, the former CEO might say, "Everyone's taking a 10% pay cut, no questions asked." With Chuck, we would try to figure out, where can we do this, and usually we would start with the executives. They would lead the way and if that could deliver enough money...in other words, it was our job...and many, many times I would have to take cuts because we were the examples. So he led by that example and it changed a lot. He also viewed the board as his boss so everything we did for the board...and I worked with the board a lot...we did as best we could, meaning...and also, we gave them as much information as we could. I would often travel out to meet with all the directors, if we were introducing a new stock plan or something, and he wanted to hear both sides and he would make decisions, sometimes, that were counter to his original. One of the best was that we had introduced a new medical plan. Nothing was across the board but to certain labor groups that were wanting a different medical plan and when we did, it did not go down well. So one night he was in his office at 6:00 o'clock and he picked up the phone, his secretary was gone and someone said, "This is Mrs. So-and-So and I live in Jonesboro, Arkansas and you have ruined my life," and she went on to tell him how important this was because it had to do with the retiree medical as well as the current and on and on. I got a call at 4:00 AM, "Harmon, get in here," and he had myself, the head of human resources, several of the vice chairs and he said, "I've made a terrible mistake. We are going to revisit this." Now, I think for a CEO, what better example could you have had. It's okay to make a mistake and to admit, and that was always his thing: "If you don't know, don't come in here and try to act like you know. You better know," and

he had tremendous capacity to ask one or two key questions. He didn't want to spend a lot of time on details but he asked one or two key questions and if you didn't know the answers to those, it was clear that you didn't have the depth that you should have on a subject. So he was a great leader. I learned a lot. It really was sort of like being in training all the time and I took on more and more and more and had great people who basically...my theory was, you delegate and I had great people. You have to put your trust in them, just like my CEO did with me and if, at some point, they do something that...then you have to make changes.

Blanche Touhill: What was your portfolio over the years?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: Well, in the end, what I did...

Blanche Touhill: That's fine, the end.

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: The end, I was responsible for executive compensation which is designing all the stock plans, I traveled all over the world meeting with presidents because the way we did this was we went to each president of each of our companies around the world and they told us...there was a system and forms and so on, but they told me what they wanted to do from a compensation...I told them what was going on in the marketplace; they told me how they wanted to handle that with each of their executives and what bonus. Now, we had a bonus plan that was a calculated one but there was some flexibility which we didn't use very often but in special situations. So that was wonderful because I met fabulous people all over, and then I would bring all that data back, and believe me, we didn't have computers in those days, I would bring it all back and we would crunch the numbers with our adding machine and then I would meet with the chairman and we would go over every single of the 500 of 1000 people and the only people who were in that were the top executives in each of the companies which, each company was individual so there was the president and vice president and then their key players and their future stars, which could change often. That was separated from our evaluation progress and once a year we'd meet with the president and the key players and they would review each of their people in that meeting and the chairman attends every single one

of those meetings. So their performance rating came out of that. So we separated, because the chairman felt we should separate pay and performance and so we did. They were linked together from a delivery standpoint. We were all tied to the goals of each of our companies; in other words, we got our bonuses based on that but his theory was that if I'm talking with you about your performance and all you want to hear is what your increase was, they should be a different thing; you should know that. You should know and be talking about how best to handle it. That system that we put in place and the measures of how they're each calculated for each company, each company has a goal: sales; earnings, and whatever happens to be the overall corporate goal for that year, be it cash, be it...whatever, and that's determined. Each of them has a piece of their targeted bonus dedicated to that. So that's pretty much all directed at the business and then we used to have personal objectives but that became so difficult to measure and so basically that became really a financial (inside?) thing, and has been since 1975. It was put in in 1975 and it's still what it...so executive compensation was really my expertise. Then, I was president of the foundation. We gave away about 35 million dollars each year. I reported to the board of directors' committee that reviewed, but I had authority up to, like, \$100,000 that I could designate which would be varying in terms of things but I started out with maybe 25 and so on. Then I, on my own, delegated to someone who worked for me a piece of that, like, \$10,000 or \$25,000 and when it came to be visible in the community...because I was doing other things and because it shouldn't be about me. So I did that. That was a big job. I would meet with people around the country and we would come together to try to do major things in areas where we had operations and if we were moving a plant or something, I would go work with the local mayors and so on to find out what was important and how we could do something to...really not compensate, but just to let them know that we were sorry we were doing what we were doing, yet, it was a business decision. So we created parks and InSinkErator in Michigan and we are in Wisconsin and we built city halls and on and on but always it was just a delight to do it and for me it was a creative source. It was

fun; I liked doing it. Then I had human resources, which was also interesting but I had such strong people, it was great and I had the facilities around the world which was a lot of fun because I had the opportunity to open our office in Hong Kong and that was a challenge because I just went and then I had to figure out how we were going to pay people, how we were going to organize this office. Someone else had already identified the space, which was lovely and central. But it was a challenge so I figured out how to do that and it was very interesting and there were others. With that, being responsible for the facilities which pretty much was, most companies did their own thing but there were often periods where you were involved when they were buying a new facility or they were going to move and it tied into some of the other things like the community and so on. Then, as a part of that, I had planes and trains so I had the aircraft which was exciting because I learned all about airplanes, buying airplanes because Emerson had a number of aircraft because we were located in so many small little out of the way places that that's how we traveled...not all of us but we could travel if we wanted to, but many times you didn't, and we had a helicopter because a lot of things were in Missouri, small towns in Missouri. We were the largest employer for a while in Arkansas and we had a lot of motor operations: (Faxtil Harspire?) Motors that we built in Arkansas. So it was always a lot of...so those were the main things that I did and then in later years, I spent time with the mergers & acquisitions people and that was really interesting and that was tied to executive pay because when we were buying a company, you had to understand the contracts and, of course, the attorneys did most of that but then there was the human side of it and there were many times that I was sent before the attorneys to meet with someone who owned or created a company, to find out what was really important to them. So often it wasn't the money. They'd always had the money. It was amazing, the things one learned but the amazing thing was, to meet these people who had dreamed something and created it and now it was a company. I think of Vern Heath at Rosemont who created a huge company and he and his friend had started it in the garage and almost without fail, except some of those who inherited, these people all had started

in the garage and they all had life stories that were very basic. It was really exciting and the opportunity to meet and know those people and know about them. So that was pretty much what I did. I would be called in also on special projects, to brainstorm something and sit around the table with the executives.

Blanche Touhill:

Tell me about going around the world on all these trips. In one way, it must have been exciting, and in another way, you must have had some trepidation about going to a country, you didn't speak the language, didn't know the people ahead of time. Talk about that a little.

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Well, I think it harkens back to what I said about my mother. My mother would say, "Jo Ann, pull yourself together and just go." I don't think I really thought about it. I figured I'd find a way and you have to think about it; you have to be somewhat creative in that respect. It was funny, I always remember this time I was going into Shenzhen before it was developed in mainland China and I was going over and this was exciting because I was going there to meet with...we were buying a company and it was all engineers and we were buying the engineering talent, we were buying the company, and we had to figure out a way to incentivize them because up to this point, they knew they were going to get a piece of the company. Well, we knew we couldn't give them the whole piece to begin with. They had to earn it...not earn it, they'd earned it but we had to keep them but the real challenge was how do you keep them? And our chairman had met with the chairman of China and so the way had been paved for me to go in and work with them and try to figure out...and I had been thinking about it, okay, maybe we can create some sort of a plan, a savings plan, but of course, no money could leave mainland China so one had to be aware you couldn't do it with stock or anything like that. So you had to create something. Well, the first time I went, I stayed in Hong Kong because at that point...I understand it's a thriving metropolis today but when I was there, it was dirt roads and so I went and this black limo picked me up at the border and I just got in and I later thought to myself, was that ever dumb. My mother would have a fit. That's what I would think, my mother would have said, "Jo Ann, you

didn't use your head. What are you thinking of?" She would say, "You didn't use your head for anything besides a hat rack," and so anyway, I went; it was fine and more importantly, it was exciting because I was meeting with someone from the party and I'm sitting there and we each have an interpreter and I said to myself, I'm Jo Ann (Secour?) from Alton, Illinois and I'm sitting here meeting with the communist party. But, you know, people are people everywhere. There are difficult people; there are great people; there are wonderful people, but I think no matter where I went, I found people that I could talk with, one way or the other and yes, the challenge was that we don't speak the languages and I think that's a tragedy but we don't. Most of them speak English, or at least someone does but, for example, in mainland China, at that time, no one did and I had to trust the interpreter. So that became interesting and then finally, we brought in an interpreter in that situation who had been at Cornell and who, frankly, ended up running our Hong Kong office and I knew Peter and so Peter came in and then I knew I could trust because it really didn't go down very well the first two days because I don't know...and a lot of that has to do with context. As you know, it's like I was saying one thing but how they heard it may have come out differently. It's like reading into something. So anyway, it was exciting and in the early days, the funny part would be, I would go to these little plants...this more often happened in Jonesboro, Arkansas and all these little plants in Arkansas or Missouri and the wife would meet me at the plane. On those I usually went on the company plane because it's so hard to get in and out. You wasted days. So they would come and meet me and they'd take me to lunch or dinner or whatever and then I would go to the office to meet with their husband and that was...you know, because I was a woman and they didn't quite know what to do with me and that was...in the beginning...and I was perfectly comfortable; that was just fine, just fine.

Blanche Touhill:

Did Chuck Knight know this was going on, that the wife would meet you?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

He didn't but he was a savvy man and I'm sure he figured...I guess what he figured was I'd work it out. I don't know how he knew

that and I have to tell you, I never had a bad experience. There were some wives that were haughty and there were some presidents that were not easy but, for every one of those, there were people who were very kind and, of course, most of the wives were interesting. It's sort of what you find with women, they really feel like they didn't achieve what they should have or had the capacity to. So often I ran into it and it's something to be aware of because you won't win there. You just have to be who you are and be nice and I enjoyed being a woman.

Blanche Touhill:

How did Chuck Knight pick up the fact that you were wanting to do the job and would do the job well? You were in the personnel department. You just worked your way up the personnel ladder and then he began to work with you, or how did he pick you out?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

I don't think he did, actually. I think that what happened was, I had been in personnel and I did the college recruiting job and then a man named Bob Matthews who was in charge of compensation and benefits...and I had met him at some things and he had said, would I be interested in working for him and learning compensation and benefits. It was a lateral move for me and I thought, well, why not? I don't know anything about it; sure. And so I did and I think he was very proud of me because I did work hard and I never once, when they'd say you have to go here or there..."Fine, I'll go," because we'd go out and meet with people and do the job descriptions and all of that sort of thing or we'd be working on a benefit plan, because Emerson had many different benefit plans...that was exciting...and many different compensation plans other than for the executives because when we bought a company or acquired a company, we would leave in place what they had; we didn't have a corporate set, so we'd have to learn about each one of them. It was fascinating. So I enjoyed that too. It was much more technical, which was good for me, and then I became the personnel manager for St. Louis. I went from corporate back to St. Louis and that was hands-on. That was just, there was an opportunity and Bob Matthews said to me, "You know, I think this would be a good opportunity for you. You could manage that and..."...da da da da. I said, "Okay, I'll look at it" and so I did it and it was really fun. But actually, I had met Chuck right

before that, Chuck Knight, the CEO. I was on an assignment in Canada doing a compensation study and I was interviewing the people that I interviewed all day, the employees, and someone came in and said, "Mr. Knight is here and he would like you to go back on the plane" and I said, "You know I won't be finished in time to go back on the plane with him." So they said, "Okay." A while later, I'm sitting in this room and this girl comes back again and says, "Mr. Knight said it would be a good idea for you to go back on the plane with him." I said, "Okay," and so I was, I might say, quite intimidated. I knew who he was and I had met him in passing. And anyway, so, I went on the plane with him and he was delightful and nice and he turned to me at one point and said, "I have to know if you're the person who is in charge of the dress code." I started laughing because in my very early days in personnel, they had me also doing counseling in addition to going out to schools because there were secretaries who needed someone to talk with and I was the only woman in the management scheme and so I was the person. So I had a call from my boss who was the head of HR...or my boss' boss...that he wanted me to go with him to see the then chairman, Mr. Persons who was intimidating...a wonderful man, and so I went up to his office up in another building and he said, "My girls..."...meaning his secretary and the other secretaries who shared the office..."...have put together a dress code..."...this was during the time of miniskirts..."...and we want you to enforce the dress code," and they had made up this little three-by-five card; it was red and it had a ruler on it and I was to go about the company, all over, and go up and whip this thing on you. If your skirt was over three inches above your knee, I could fire you on the spot. Okay, so...and there were other things: you couldn't wear gaucho pants; you couldn't do...I don't know what all; it was just...okay, and there I was in my mini skirt, of course, but that aside, I said, "Okay, sir," so I go back downstairs and my boss goes to his boss who was the vice chairman and we go in his office and they said, "You're not going to do this." I said, "Okay, I'll figure out something here, I guess, and we'll talk about it." Now, that boss was very strong. He was a labor attorney. I loved Jack Rorba but he was no-nonsense..."No, Joe, we have to figure this out";

“Okay.” So we had three buildings on the campus. It got pretty funny. People would see me coming and they’d go sit down. So anyway, I called a few supervisors and would say, “Could you just deal with this” and da da da da. But, before that...and I left out a part...I went back to my office and my boss went back to his office and I got another call to come up to the chairman’s office again and there was no boss in there, not my boss, just him and he said, “You will do this.” And so, I did it, in my way and then it sort of faded out because it wasn’t right and, of course, I wasn’t going to fire anybody. It wasn’t my responsibility in the world, even though the chairman had given me the authority. So anyway, when I got on the plane...back to the point of how I met Chuck Knight and so on...was that he said, “Were you really the girl who had to enforce that,” and we both started laughing and he handed me a copy of the red three-by-five card and we both laughed. You know, he was a regular guy and a nice person. He was certainly known as a tough man and he was but we laughed and talked all the way back and I guess, out of that conversation, he sort of...and why he wanted to meet me, I later learned, was that Larry Browning, who was then the vice chair, a wonderful man, had met me when I’d come up to Browning, his company and I went there to do a compensation audit and I spent time talking with he and his brother, Bob, who were running the company and they were in Maysville, Kentucky and they were regular people and I just had a delightful chat with them and we had lunch and I did my compensation study and came back. Larry was vice chair and chief administrative officer and he had the corporate budgets and the executive compensation and all these different things. So at some point, he asked me...he, Larry...said, “Would you like to come work for me and learn executive comp. You’ve been in compensation. Would you like to learn it?” So I thought, well, going from personnel manager to working in the corporate office isn’t such a bad idea. I’m happy to go back there. So that’s what I did and I did all the books for the committee and what that is is that’s the details of everything you want to propose to the compensation committee who was made up of all CEOs of other companies and Larry Browning would take them, and let me tell you, he was so exacting, he could pick a bad number out in two

seconds, and I had to be able to do those error-free. It was good training; it was great training. At some point, he began to give me the corporate budgets to figure out what departments, to work with the departments; okay, that was interesting, and what we needed to do if we needed to do anything like the lay-off. We didn't do many of those. We never were people heavy and then, I don't know, different things he would ask me to do and one day he said to me, "Jo, you need to go to the compensation committee today..." This is like, oh, my gosh, what do you mean? "...with Mr. Knight." I said, "Oh, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, I can't make it today." Well, I was petrified because this was very intimidating because we viewed the board of directors, as I said earlier, those were the CEO's boss and everything had to be perfect and we had to tell them everything. So, I went, and of course Chuck Knight was wonderful and he was great with the committee. He handled most of it because he knew I couldn't but he, at least two or three times, turned to me on a subject which he knew I knew the answers to because I was the one who put it together, and would ask me questions. Shortly thereafter, Larry Browning said he was going to retire and after I had done maybe four of those meetings with Mr. Knight and apparently Mr. Knight was pleased and so that was it, and frankly, I had a person working for me, Cynthia. I loved Cynthia. She recruited her out of tax law. She was an attorney and Cynthia sort of followed that same route. She had executive compensation which had gotten so big, you couldn't...I mean, I managed it because I had Cynthia who was wonderful, and I mentored her and she became the vice president. She is today. She's in her 60's so I don't know how much longer. I'm very proud of that because I used what I learned from Larry Browning with Cynthia and what I loved was I had to de-lawyer Cynthia and she would even, after I retired and I was a consultant for the company for eight years after I retired, Cynthia would originally call me and say, "Hey, how do I spin this with the board? Tell me how to approach this" and she'd have her legal approach and I'd say, "Well, they all don't understand these things. You've got to...you know, they're smart people but this isn't something they deal with." So I put it in to a language and we'd both laugh together and figure out how we could best

communicate it because, you know, one of the things that I saw so often with women was they weren't there to do the job; they were there to get ahead and it's really, when you hire people, I didn't care if I hired men or women, all I wanted was the person who would work for me and be dedicated to getting the job done in the way I wanted to get the job done and finding people in your own likeness, to some degree, people that are smarter than you, my gosh, Cynthia was so much smarter than I and others around me had so much more capacity. I loved it. I learned from them, I drew from them and I internalized from them and, you know, I can't tell you, in my career, that I could have been successful had I not had those wonderful people around me. Anyway, I'm very proud about mentoring Cynthia. I had other women that worked for me, several, who were promoted but at different levels because they had different levels of education and then there were the ones, sadly, that were the unhappy people who had a big agenda; they wanted to go here and there, and it doesn't always work that way. So I don't know, hopefully I answered that question for you.

Blanche Touhill: You did. So, really, you didn't hit the glass ceiling?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: No, never.

Blanche Touhill: Opportunity came and you took advantage of it?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: I would say that's true. I didn't have a goal. I didn't go there with a goal. I went there because I needed the money and I was given opportunities and, you know, the first one was the best because the old cheerleader felt very comfortable going on a college campus, even though I hadn't gone away to college, but I was very comfortable walking into the admissions office. Well, I was certainly intimidated and afraid and I wasn't sure what I was going to say but I had a job to do and I knew my company and, frankly, while I had been working in personnel, I had done a lot in employment and some days I'd have to...because they didn't have enough people; we didn't have a lot of people...some days I'd have to help interviewing the laborers because we'd have masses, believe it or not, outside our building, applying for jobs in our factory and there weren't enough people to move them quickly so

I would be interviewing the laborers. So I had gone out into the factory and I wanted to know what a punch press was. I ran the punch press. I ran different things. I just wanted to be able to see what I was talking about, not that I really knew everything. So I did that and another part to the company, I had been lucky, I wanted to understand about the motors. If I was going to talk about a motor, I wanted to be able to understand it. So I felt I came pretty well prepared when I went to those campuses, not to talk about the laborers or the motors, but if someone said, "Well, what kind of engineers do you want?" I could say, "We primarily hire electrical engineers because what we're doing is this," and some of that was initiative on my part, I guess, but also just that I didn't want to be dumb. I didn't know what I didn't know. So, no, I don't think I really hit the glass ceiling because I didn't have a ceiling for myself. I thought I, as I'm repeating this, I thought I had arrived, I mean, every time. I was going back to corporate to work in comp and benefits and I thought I had made...and I was making this money I couldn't believe and it was wonderful and I wasn't trying to do anything else.

Blanche Touhill:

Well, but you were. By the time you retired, you were the top woman in Emerson?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Oh, yes, yes. We had had women presidents of the divisions but we didn't have anyone else as a senior executive. We had a chief marketing officer who was very dynamic and did wonderful things for the company, but she was not a corporate...she was an officer but she wasn't a senior officer and they don't have a senior officer even today. So I had most of the administrative duties. I didn't have law or finance. Those were so big by the time...you know, the company had grown from '66 to when I retired, in '99, I guess, or 2000.

Blanche Touhill:

What would have happened to your career if you had been born 50 years earlier?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Fifty years earlier? Well, I would have probably been the head of the PTA. I don't know, something like that. I would have followed in my mother's footsteps. She was very involved with our church and she was room mother for all five of us somehow and she

never drove a car and she rode the bus everywhere and I would have probably followed in her footsteps, although I did get to drive. My dad didn't let girls drive but I had a boyfriend that taught me how to drive and, thank goodness, because when my sister was born who was 17 years younger than I, I drove my mother to the hospital because it was icy and my dad was working nights. He got there before I did but anyway, I think I would have probably been involved in the PTA because I would have liked that. I would have been a room mother like my mother. I wasn't as creative. I couldn't make all those little favors and things. My mom...always we had cute things mother made. And I would have had more than one child, for sure. I don't know that I would have had five like my mother, but I probably would have had...as my daughter, who has three. I mean, she grew up being an only child. I'm not sure I answered your question but I think that's what I would have done. I think I'd have been involved.

Blanche Touhill:

How did your career affect your daughter?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Well, that was interesting. I'm not really sure except she viewed Emerson as part of her life and Chuck Knight was great about making sure that I went to things. He'd say, "Harmon, don't ask me. If you need to go to the play, go to the play," or whatever and I had a lot of...after I was in managerial positions, I had flexibility and I had a husband who was wonderful and he was always there. He was an engineer and he traveled a lot himself but we worked it out, and of course, mother was always there, and frankly, we moved back to Alton at some point so I'd be closer to Mother, as my job got bigger and bigger and I traveled more. But my mother was so wonderful. She and my daughter were very close, that my mother would not make her feel like I had left her, plus the fact that, I was always in charge of the company picnic, which was huge, huge. It got so big...and the service award dinner. The last one was 1200 people and my daughter helped me with all of that, even when she was a little girl. I'd bring her along and she'd be a part of it. There were no rules then. Like, if I we're going to Arkansas and I was going on a Friday so I had a weekend, I'd take her with me and it didn't cost the company, frankly. I wouldn't ever have done that but we were in the same car and I only did it

if it was a weekend so I wasn't taking another day off of work. But she would go with me and lots of times Mother because Mother didn't drive and she loved to travel and my father worked nights and days and he also wasn't...we took a family trip every year religiously but he didn't go on sporadic trips, occasional trips. So she would go with me. When I was working in Ireland and there for months, my husband had her fly over for spring break and, after my assignment was done, I asked if it was okay and I got a car and she and I drove all over Ireland. We went to London together. I took her as many places as I could and she would just stay in the room with me. Every summer I would go to California and spend one week, because we had a lot of companies out there, and I would go out there and, here I was meeting with the presidents to get their recommendation for compensation, because I had to go and review it all with the chairman before October, which was the beginning of our fiscal year. So we would go in July every year and we would stay at the same place in Laguna Beach. It wasn't fancy but it was on the ocean and my mother loved it and my mother and she would take the buses everywhere. They went to the studio; they went here; they went there, and I would drive to wherever my assignment was, every day and sometimes I'd be back for dinner and sometimes I'd have dinner with the president or his wife or somebody or others. So I think I integrated her into Emerson and she had a career and I don't think she would have had one if we hadn't pushed her a little bit because she was an only child. She went to college and she was in medicine and that's all she ever wanted to do, is be a pediatrician and at some point, we decided that that wasn't working for her. She was away at school and she was getting too thin and she was trying to be everything. She was in the sorority and little sister to this fraternity. She was sort of discovered by the boys when she got to school. I always said I really retarded her, sending her to all those religious schools. But anyway, she was dating a young man and his family were politicians and he suggested that she might like to interview in Washington and, of course, my husband and I were just hysterical because she had just graduated and gotten a job with Price-Waterhouse, which was one of the Big Eight then, accounting firms and she was doing

executive tax planning. But at some point, she convinced us that this would be a good thing to do and it was the best decision we ever made because she flew. She went to Washington and she was selected to work at the White House under the first George Bush, H, and after he wasn't reelected...or after his term, then she went to New York and worked for a PR firm and then she was recruited by Estee Inc. and did work for Aaron Lauder and that set her up and then she met her husband, who was a banker and they were transferred to Houston and she's there in Houston and she has three children and she's been room mother for all three. She's just started an interior design business and she's very feet on the ground, very natural. She's a real Midwest girl and she does well because of that, I think, in certain respects. She's able to survive and I think, you know what? She has good coping skills. So I'm very proud of her. She never wears it on her sleeve. She's just one of those people that integrates and I think that's part of my mom. My mom gave her great things. But she keeps those Irish traditions alive that my mother had, with her children, and oh, by the way, those were sacred with us. When you ask how that works, we made cookies, Christmas was sacred and her birthday was sacred. It started five days before because when you have an only child, you can put a gift on the pillow every day. We made those cookies just like my mom did, and with my mom for many years, and then the two of us. All the birthdays were special. You know, you had to make it that way. You couldn't be everything to everyone but you had to find the special things and I think they were special because she does them with her own children.

Blanche Touhill:

How did you get into the International Women's Forum and, do you want to comment on that organization?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Well, I don't remember how I got in. I think I was invited. I don't remember but I think I was invited and the people who were in there were very impressive and I was in awe and, you know, it was wonderful for me because one of the things that happens in corporate life, particularly when there aren't many women...I think even if there are women, you're in a position where you can't get too close to the people that work for you and you have to figure that distance and often, the other women in an

organization who are close to your level, are busy themselves. So, you really spend your life with men, and one of the things I had missed and didn't realize I had missed were associations with other women. In my younger years, I was in sororities and I was always with women and suddenly I was with me and it was fine. They were like having another whole family of brothers but what the International Women's Forum was to me, I met these women who became life-long friends. In the early days, people that I met who had had careers, we could speak the same language. We understood each other. You didn't have to be worried about the things you said. As I said earlier, you know, when I would meet those wives, I was always very cautious about what I was saying. I didn't want them to think that I was after their husbands which was the last thing I wanted, and also, I didn't want to be in competition because I had read into it, over the years, that many of them were frustrated that they hadn't...or they thought they could have done what I was doing better than I, I'm sure. So, you know, these were women you could really say whatever to, for the most part, and talk about business, which was interesting to me and I didn't do that with women that I didn't think were spending their time...as they got older, you could do that but at the time they were involved with their children, you really didn't have a topic to discuss, and as a married woman, I was often at events with other women, wives. So the Women's Forum provided me that women interaction, interaction with women and it also...I don't know, I just felt very close to those women because we understood. We don't call each other on the phone every day. We don't have to do those things. We all are busy and yet, we feel close to each other. And it's interesting because all these years later, these women...let's say six of those women, are still the people that I feel very close to and that I consider friends, real friends. So that's what it's done for me and we really do, or have tried...when I was president of the organization, I really tried to make it that kind of a thing, that we were really there to get to know each other as women and to enjoy each other as business women, which is different.

Blanche Touhill:

Would you talk about...I know you were head of the foundation. Could you talk about some of the things that you're proud that the foundation sponsored, financed?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Well, what really happened was when I became the head of the foundation, it was really kind of...they didn't have a strategy and they really weren't...you know, "What are we going to do?" It was kind of, requests came in and you kind of made decisions. So Chuck Knight, the chairman, and I, sat down together and said, "We really need to go to the board." Well, basically it was his idea and I was excited..."Put together a strategy, Harmon and we'll go to the board and we'll let them know what our plan is and then when we go to them with requests above our level, they'll know what we're trying to achieve." So we wrote a policy that basically I was very proud of, which basically said that our objective was to provide a better place in those areas where our employees lived and worked. So what that covered was all kinds of things. You know, if it's in Arkansas, it's Pork Steak Day or it's a run in such-and-such. Those are small things, and then there were big things, like I spoke to earlier, like, if there was a park and they needed support, we'd have the division money and then we'd put the corporate money in, but our strategy was to make a better environment for our employees to live and work in. And that was our strategy and there were a lot of wonderful...we built this wonderful heart hospital in this town which was very interesting. It was in Ohio where we had an air conditioning company, a big one, and they had a lot of heart disease. It's hard to understand why. It was a decent sized town. It wasn't just our employees, and I worked very closely with them to do that. In St. Louis, of course, we had the opportunity to make major strategic investments in the city and really, when the chairman of the company had come to St. Louis from Chicago, he had gotten involved in the city schools right on. They were going to eliminate athletics in the schools and that was before I knew him, but he got intimately involved in that. He was involved, and so they didn't and then later, in terms of getting a football team, he was always active in all of that sort of thing and Emerson would put in money and we would bring things. But again, creating an environment, a community environment where there's a lot, the symphony, the

cultural institutions of every kind, the educational institutions, taking care of people in the inner city. I was very involved in the inner city with the Urban League. I was chair of the Urban League forever, it seemed like, and I've been involved forever. There we supported things that we felt were important, not every little dance and event and that sort of thing but big things that we felt that could be accomplished. Any one thing, it's really hard to think of. We've had a long association with Interlochen Arts Academy up in Michigan which evolved...again, I think a lot of this does, because the chairman's grandfather had had a home up there and he had gotten to know about this place. So, I became involved with them on his behalf and I happen to still be. I'm a trustee and my term will be ending soon but we created these scholarships and the scholarships were for children all over the country, wherever we had operations. So the schools were to submit tapes to the school to be reviewed and they would choose the best and we would award a scholarship. I met so many wonderful children and one of the best parts of that has always been that if I'm up there and I have my trustee thing on, I've been approached more than once by children saying, "You gave me the opportunity of a lifetime. I'm here with people like me." Can't you appreciate that? I mean, these are children who weren't the jocks, often...sometimes but often was the child that was focused on the music or the arts and writing and this was a summer camp that we paid for, there's a school as well, but that's been really exciting and I've been so much a part of that, but I've been so much a part of so many things in this city that I really feel like...and it's funny, when I'm out with my husband, I often find that I know so many people. I'm always surprised. It's just sort of how it is but it's because I was involved with the symphony; I was vice chair of the symphony. I said, "No, I can't ever be chair because I'm traveling so much" or chairing the Urban League. I never saw those as me. Those were Emerson and yet, for me, it was an ability...it was something I was either committed to or I wasn't but I never did anything I wasn't committed to.

Blanche Touhill:

Is there something you'd like to talk about that we haven't mentioned?

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: Well, I'd like to emphasize one thing, even today, and I see it when my daughter was...and I've interviewed many young people. I'm always interviewing someone's child: They can be intelligent, so intelligent but if they're too driven...somewhere we get the idea that if you don't tell someone you want to be president of the company, then they don't want to hire you. You don't seem ambitious...wrong! That may be...get to know the organization before you go on the interview and always it's about the job. If you remember that you're there because there's a space here and someone needs to do this work and that's what they're looking for. They're not looking for someone to move up the ladder. Great if that happens but do the job and I think women...since this is our subject...are more prone to say, "Well, they didn't give it to me because I was a woman." No, if you want to take all the time off and be a mother, you have to find the ways to do that. You have a job to do. Now, if you can do both, I'm all for you. I've had people working for me who had their babies, stayed home and worked and were able to do it, manage their workload but more importantly, it's just when you're there, do the job, and there are 20 other people that are just as good as you are, more than that in many companies and the one that's going to get ahead is the one that works the hardest, not the one that plays the games. Fortunately, the atmosphere that I was in was not as political as some. It was probably more so among the men than me and I will tell you one last story because this anecdote is exemplary of what I didn't have to put up with: One day I was in an executive meeting with the three vice chairs and a couple other people and I came into the room and one of the vice chairs, sort of a cigar smoking guy, macho, but I always loved him, said, "Hey, Harmon, get me a cup of coffee," so I put my books down and started to walk over and get the cup of coffee and in walked the chairman who had been just outside the door apparently and said, "You know what, Al? I'll get your coffee. Harmon, you sit down."

Blanche Touhill: That's a wonderful story.

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold: But that same cigar smoking guy one day said to me after the women's rights movement came in, "Harmon, am I supposed to let you go first on the elevator? I don't know what to do." I said,

“Al, I’m a lady. I’ll always be a lady. You just treat me like a lady. I’m still a woman. I’ll take you on...” ...and I did, all of them, but, you know, I felt that it was my job to make them comfortable because, again, if I didn’t, I couldn’t get the job done and that was always my whole focus: get the job done, and if I alienated them by saying, “I expect this and I expect that,” and da da da da, you’ll get them. They grew up just...actually, most of them are four or five years older than I so we all grew up the same era and they had learned to relate to women in a certain way and I didn’t have to crawl on my knees. They knew the difference. Also, I had the power of the bonuses that I was working on with the chairman...that was just a joke...but anyway, I really have to say that I felt that I didn’t really have that problem because I related to them as brothers and I wanted them to relate to me as a woman and I wanted to make them comfortable up to a point so that I could work with them.

Blanche Touhill:

Well, thank you very much. It was a wonderful interview and I appreciate your coming today.

Jo Ann Harmon-Arnold:

Thanks.